

Hello all,

Welcome to *Alternativz* Volume 2, Issue 7. Following on the heels of my last article, ***Chakras & The Dvadashanta***, I've decided to tell my own story of Kundalini, an account that I've kept pretty private, except within a very small circle.

While I've read of other's personal accounts I don't know anyone else directly who has experienced this most bizarre psycho-physiological phenomenon. Luckily, by chance or by destiny, when it did occur I knew exactly what I was dealing with, only because my events were "textbook", here I mean straight out of Arthur Avalon's *The Serpent Power*, a book that I'd come to know very well during the 70s, that I'd first run across during my lunch breaks at the local library while poring over "The Far East" section. It was here that I first learned of Kundalini, the phenomenon, and of Tai Chi, and was practicing both "yogas" soon thereafter. In 1985, a decade later at age 33, kundalini began to stir, bringing with it 10 very long years of extreme phantasmagoria, euphoria, and suffering, mental and physical.

During this time, while varying in frequency and intensity, I experienced "events" every few days. It got to the point where anything could trigger it, how I breathed, what I ate, how I sat, excitement. The "stirring" scenario was completely consistent, it was as though my intestines began to crawl, exactly like a coiled snake beginning to awaken and move, ever so slightly (the classical experience). Within moments "rising" occurred. Here there were 2 basic scenarios, one that occurred when my body was upright, i.e. spine vertical, and the other when I was horizontal, the nature of the experiences being very different. When I was vertical, the experience was thunderous, like a lightning bolt rising through my body. I've described the experience as being like sticking your fingers into an electrical outlet and simultaneously dropping from the highest roller coaster imaginable. With it came kaliedoscopic vision, sometimes seeing the world upside down, thunderous noises in the ears, the feeling that the body is in an extreme over-current condition. A vertical event could go on for many minutes - seeming like many hours. Often it would happen when I was around others, and I would carry on interacting, while at the same time trying to manage what was going on internally. It helped that no one seemed to notice anything different about me, even though I was in complete crisis. When a vertical event ended, I would be completely spent taking days to recover, sometimes falling ill due to exhaustion. And when I recovered, it would happen again.

The horizontal scenario was very different and a lot more pleasant. Here all I had to do was lie flat on my back, breathe and relax, and within a few minutes, my consciousness would unzip and float upward and out of my body. If I did this during the day, my consciousness would hang around the ceiling of my bedroom, looking around. I could see myself and my wife lying in bed. But at night, every night, I would soar, a favorite pastime being cruising the tree tops, looking down at Earth and up at the night sky. In order to soar, I would simply run and jump into the air and up I would go. Let me say that this was not a recurring dream, it was pure "out of body" experience. I got so used to doing it at night, I almost thought I could do it under normal conditions, I still feel that way even today, almost 20 years later.



Figure 1: The Cobra – The Classical Kundalini Symbol

How did this come to happen – to me? Was it an outcome of good yoga practice, good fortune, divine intervention? Was this spontaneous rampaging kundalini a successful outcome? To this question, my answer is “No”. In fact, it was mostly an outcome of wrong living. I’d been studying, and practicing yoga and meditation “very hard”, and this had certainly prepared me for it, but by living life in “overdrive” for a long period, I’d created an underlying health condition that promoted it. In traditional Chinese medicine, this condition is referred to as “yin deficiency” – profound yin deficiency – but at the start I didn’t understand this.

As an R&D professional I was averaging intense mental work for 60 hours a week, most nights working late. Then I’d be up early meditating, doing yoga or tai chi for a couple of hours before work. In addition, I was working out at the gym 3 or 4 times a week and swimming a mile on off days. On weekends, friends and I would hit the road and ride 50 miles or more. I was doing all of this on a mostly vegetarian diet that I’d been abiding by for about 15 years. All of this activity, combined with an insubstantial diet was burning my candle at both ends. But at the time, I was of that mind that more was better. As I continued to live this way, my spontaneous kundalini events progressed in both frequency and severity. My health was also deteriorating. I had become allergic to everything, many foods and many substances. I was having chronic migraines.

I sought help from the psychiatric medicine department at the UNC School of Medicine. All they could offer was Valium, which I tried, but it didn’t help. I sought out a kundalini yoga master, but after a few meetings realized that the master, while steeped in kundalini yoga tradition, hadn’t experienced kundalini and didn’t know anything about how to coax the genie back into the bottle. I had no where to turn.

In 1995 two things happened. First, I discovered the book Wuji Breathing Exercise and began practicing. Second, we moved from North Carolina to the Dallas area. A couple of weeks after our arrival, I met now good friend and colleague, Meng-Sheng, who diagnosed my condition and got me on the right track with acupuncture, herbs, diet, and counseling. From a traditional Chinese medical perspective, I was suffering from “rebellious qi” rising in the chong meridian (the “thrusting” channel), arising as a consequence of long term yin deficiency. Here we can think of “yin” (Earth) as being a heavy stone that corks the bottle that normally confines kundalini. When the Earth element becomes diminished, the cork blows, like a champagne bottle. Combine yoga and meditation (energy cultivation practices) with yin deficiency, a condition created by burning yin faster than it is restored, and you set the stage for spontaneous kundalini arousal. We can see that these factors play a part in the history of yoga and kundalini philosophies, i.e. hard work, fasting, vegetarian diet, vigorous breathing – *the recipe*. But this path is fraught with risk and in retrospect runs very counter to Taoist practice.

Both of these “treatments” immediately began restoring yin. Within 6 months, my spontaneous events had ended, but I had trepidation regarding their potential reoccurrence for several years after. Around 2000 I began researching the matter anew, looking for the more correct method, leading me to Kashmiri Shaivism.

Thank you for your interest and consideration,

Stephen Elliott, President, COHERENCE

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