



BRAHMA-RANDHRA

THE EVOLVING CENTER IN THE BRAIN

by
Michael Bradford

The developing study of the Kundalini phenomenon has brought out many different points of view as to the nature of this mysterious mechanism, its modes of functioning and the way in which it operates in the physical body. Recently, the effort has been directed towards taking the remnants of the ancient knowledge that have come down to us, combining them with information gained from the experiences of people who are currently undergoing Kundalini arousal and integrating this knowledge with the picture of the body/mind complex presented by such modern disciplines as anatomy, physiology and psychology.

The purpose of this talk is to present one aspect of the theory of the Kundalini process propounded by Gopi Krishna in which he postulated that a complete understanding of this process can only be had when the activation of the center at the base of the spine is considered in relation to the awakening to activity of an evolving or developing center in the brain. This center in the brain has been referred to in some of the ancient East Indian esoteric treatises on the subject as the *Brahma-randhra*, or 'Chamber of Brahma' and, when fully operative, was held by Gopi Krishna to be the source of all the higher mental faculties associated with the enhancement of consciousness brought about by Kundalini awakening.

Many of the current views on Kundalini deal primarily with the psychological aspects surrounding the process and refer to the rising of the energy up the spine and the opening of the *chakras* as the basis for the various mental transformations (and problems) that can occur. But in recent years, Western medical science has made major advances in the area of brain research which indicate quite clearly that many of what were formerly considered purely 'psychological' disorders, or states of the mind, such as schizophrenia or manic depressive disorders, are actually the result of imbalances in the chemistry of the brain at its finer levels.

In order to reconcile the discrepancies between the current medical understanding of brain functioning and the more traditional theories of Kundalini awakening, we must first review the ancient concepts about Kundalini, developed over thousands of years by practical experimentation, from which many the modern ideas on the phenomenon have evolved.

THE NATURE OF PRANA

Many of the ancient esoteric systems are based on the idea that the human body is permeated with an intelligent, vital medium, which has been termed *prana* in the Indian tradition, *chi* in the Chinese systems, *orgone* by Wilhelm Reich, and many other names in different esoteric traditions throughout history. This vital element is said to be intimately connected with the manifestation of life and consciousness in the body and may be thought of as the interface between the non-physical, spiritual aspect of our being and the gross body with which we are directly aware.

If we go back to the basics of the Eastern Indian systems we find that although the ultimate nature of reality was held to be a unity, which was termed Brahman, the nature of creation, as experienced from the limited,

sense-bound human perspective, is of a dual form: the two aspects being consciousness on the one hand and mind/matter/energy on the other. In a general way, these may be thought of as the static and kinetic aspects of creation, as Arthur Avalon has put it in *The Serpent Power* (p 24). In the cosmic perspective, the static aspect is what may be termed Universal Consciousness, called *Paramatma* or *Shiva*, and the kinetic aspect is the primordial, creative energy behind the manifestation of this physical universe, referred to as *Shakti*.

In the human form, which is held to be a microcosmic reflection of the universal form, the aspects of Shiva and Shakti are said to take the form of the limited human consciousness or *jivatma*, and the vital energy, or *prana*, respectively. When the process of arousal of the Kundalini energy is led to completion, it is said to culminate in the opening of the conscious center in the head, called *sahasrara*, or the 'Thousand Petalled Lotus,' with the result that the limited human consciousness or *jivatma* realizes its oneness with the *Paramatma*, or Universal Consciousness.

As Arthur Avalon states in *The Serpent Power*:

"Kundalini is the individual bodily representation of the great Cosmic Power (Shakti) which creates and sustains the universe. When this individual Shakti manifesting as the individual consciousness (Jivatma) is merged in the consciousness of the Supreme Shiva, the world is for such Jiva dissolved, and Liberation (Mukti) is obtained."
(Page 246)

Prana, then, may be thought of as the medium through which the Cosmic Creative Energy, or *Shakti*, manifests life on the physical plane and allows a limited form of the Universal Consciousness to be expressed in the bodies of living organisms. The most striking example of this creative activity would be the amazingly skillful and complex process by which a single fertilized ovum is developed into a fully formed human being in just nine short months—a process which is nothing short of miraculous when studied in detail.

The idea of an all-pervasive vital energy in the body would also seem to be supported by the general theory of acupuncture, which posits a set of energy meridians passing through the body which are associated with and affect the functioning of the various internal organs. The blockage of these meridians and the resulting interruption of the flow of vital energy is what is said to result in ill health.

Both the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (VII:2) and the *Prasna Upanishad* (III:3-10) refer to five different forms of *prana* in the body—*prana*, *apana*, *udana*, *samana* and *vyana*, which would seem to be different aspects which the energy takes in order to carry out respiration, digestion, assimilation, circulation, elimination and other such functions which maintain the life and health of the body.

One of the eight limbs of Yoga—*pranayama*—is directly concerned with the intake and control of this vital principle. It accomplishes this primarily through the control of the breath, which would indicate that *prana* is a constituent of the surrounding atmosphere. Since oxygen is the active principle which is absorbed and carried to every part of the body by the bloodstream, vivifying all the tissues and cells, it may be, as Gopi Krishna has remarked, that this element is intimately connected with the operation of *prana* on the physical plane.

In his book, *Living with Kundalini*, Gopi Krishna says of this vital substance:

"Prana . . . has two forms. One is the prana of the individual. The second is the universal prana which fills the entire creation from the energy fields of matter to galaxies. It is an integral part of every atom and molecule, occupying the vast areas of empty space between the subnuclear particles as also between the billions upon billions of stars and planets which constitute our universe."

"The vehicle through which universal prana operates in a living body is the individual prana or, to be more precise, the undifferentiated universal prana with an extremely subtle biochemical sheath, through which it acts on all the cells and tissues of the organism. It is not correct to say that what is known in India as prana-kosha or the pranic body is entirely ethereal or unsubstantial. The actual position is that it is so subtle and fine that it has not been possible to detect it experimentally nor fully determine its nature so far."

". . . This vital essence . . . circulates in the organism as motor impulse and sensation, conducting all the organic functions of the body, permeated and worked by the superintelligent cosmic life energy, or (universal) prana, by which it is continuously affected, just as the sensitive chemical layer on a photographic plate is affected by light."

"At the very moment the body dies, the rare organic essence immediately undergoes chemical changes, ceasing to serve as a channel for the former (universal prana) in the previous capacity."

He has further postulated that the gross form of this essence is extracted from the cells and tissues of the body and, through a process of transmutation, is converted into the bioenergy which powers the brain and the nervous system. In individuals who are not undergoing Kundalini activity, this extraction occurs on a very lim-

ited basis by a restricted set of nerves. In those who are, and in people displaying traits of high creativity and genius, he theorized that this extraction is enhanced so that both the quality and quantity of energy sent to the brain is augmented. With reference to this latter class, he outlines the process as follows:

“As far as I have been able to determine, there are special nerves connecting the reproductive system with the different organs in the body. After extraction by vast networks of nerves, the essence travels to the erotic zone to commingle with that arriving from other organs and parts of the body, ultimately to form an ingredient of the human seed. The essence from the brain in some mysterious way comes down through the spinal cord to reach the same place of confluence as the other nerve channels serving the same purpose.”

Although the idea that something descends from the head to the reproductive system seems on the surface to be somewhat far-fetched, some of the latest genetic research is tending to indicate that such a connection does exist. Recent studies have determined that the brain can produce, via the pituitary gland, hormones which can modify the genetic code through protein triggers, thus pointing towards a direct link between the brain and the reproductive system.

Arthur Avalon, in *The Serpent Power*, (p 199) has made similar statements about the nature of the sexual energy. He says, “According to Hindu ideas semen (Sukra) exists in a subtle form throughout the whole body. Under the influence of the sexual will it is withdrawn and elaborated into a gross form in the sexual organs. . . .If the substance, which under the influence of sexual desire develops into gross seed, is made to flow upward (Urdhva-retas), control is had over Manas and Prana.”

At another place (page 224) he says, “This Shakti is the supreme Shakti, in the human body, employing all powers and assuming all forms. Thus the sexual force is one of such powers and is utilized. Instead, however, of descending into gross seminal fluid, it is conserved as a form of subtle energy, and rises to Shiva along with Prana.” According to Gopi Krishna, during the process of Kundalini arousal this collected substance is sublimated or converted at the base of the spine into a more refined form which is sent up the spinal canal to the brain. As he described the process in his own awakening:

“Two distinct entities moved up the spine side by side with the intensely pleasurable sensation which I experienced. One was a kind of radiation, orange in color in the beginning, which later on changed to silver with a slightly golden color in it. The second was an organic essence which entered the brain at the same time as the radiation.”

This intimate connection of the brain and the reproductive organs via the spinal axis would seem to be corroborated by the fact that some people who have substantial Kundalini activity experience orgasmic sensations, even orgasms, at various points in the spinal cord and/or a sucking sensation drawing secretions upward from the sexual organs.

This process ultimately seems to be aimed at sending a very potent form of vital energy to the brain where its eventual destination is the *sahasrara* or, in other words, the evolving conscious center or *Brahmarandhra*. The importance of the *sahasrara* in the process of Kundalini awakening is made clear by Avalon (p 243) in the following passage:

“Kundalini does not at first stay long in Sahasrara. The length of stay depends on the strength of the Yogi’s practice. There is then a natural tendency (Samskara) on the part of Kundalini to return. The Yogi will use all effort at his disposal to retain Her above, for the longer this is done the nearer approach is made to the time when She can be in a permanent manner retained there. For it is to be observed that liberation is not gained by merely leading Kundalini to the Sahasrara, and of course still less is it gained by stirring it up in the Muladhara, or fixing it in any of the lower centers. Liberation is gained only when Kundalini takes up Her permanent abode in the Sahasrara, so that She only returns by the will of the sadhaka.”

The idea that the Kundalini process is not complete until this union happens is further emphasized by Avalon when he states, “This force is raised from its latent potential state to one of activity, and there reunited with itself in its other aspect as the Static Light which shines in the cerebral center.”

From these statements, it is quite clear that the ultimate aim of the Kundalini process is the enhancement of the mental faculties via the stimulation to activity of certain areas of the brain by a more enhanced form of the vital energy. Kundalini is, therefore, a bipolar phenomenon, having the energy center at the base of the spine and the conscious center in the brain at the top of the spinal cord as the two poles.

Regarding the relationship between these two centers, Gopi Krishna remarks in *Living with Kundalini*, “There is a direct and immediate connection between the basic mechanism close to the genitals, and *Brahma-randhra*

in the brain. The excitation of one also arouses the other.”

By making the final aim of Kundalini arousal the enhancement of the mental faculties through the stimulation of certain areas of the cerebral cortex, we can see that the Indian esoteric systems in actuality are not inconsistent with the modern Western concepts about the brain.

From the Western perspective, it is the brain which is the primary center of consciousness and the evidence is overwhelming that the brain is intimately connected with the control of all physiological processes occurring in the body. It exercises this control both by the operation of the various nervous systems, such as the central, sympathetic and parasympathetic, and by the endocrine or glandular systems.

Although the primary energy used by the brain and nervous system in their functioning is currently believed to be electricity, the introduction of the concept of a new form of life energy in the body into this picture would bring the modern ideas much more into accord with the ancient ones. Hopefully it will not be too long before science develops instrumentation of the required degree of subtlety by which this new factor may be measured quantitatively.

Correspondingly, some of the current theories about Kundalini will have to be modified to take both the part played by the brain and the biological aspect of the vital energy more into account in order to bring them into accord with the modern scientific models. Perhaps the reason that the importance of the brain has not been realized so far is that there are so few recent cases of Kundalini awakening in which the energy goes up in an unending or continuous stream and the center in the brain has become fully or perennially active.

BRAHMA-RANDHRA and the KUNDALINI PROCESS

So where, then, is the Brahmarandhra actually located in a physical sense? In this area, Gopi Krishna has made a number of statements worth considering. He has described its location as “directly above the palate and below the crown of the head.” Referring to it in his book *The Secret of Yoga* (page 162) he has said that, “It is the place of conjunction of the canal coming from the spinal cord and the ventricles of the brain. This cavity and those adjoining it are filled with the cerebrospinal fluid, said to be a derivative of the blood and fairly akin to plasma.”

In *The Serpent Power* (p 258), Arthur Avalon locates it “above the foramen of Monro and the middle commissure.”

As further corroboration, in a number of recent case histories of Kundalini awakening, subjects have referred to a particular sensation occurring in the brain, above the palate and below the crown of the head.

It has been postulated by some that this seventh center is actually the pineal body. Rene Descartes, writing in *The Passions of the Soul*, said, “. . . the soul has its principal seat in the little gland which exists in the middle of the brain, from whence it radiates forth through all the remainder of the body by means of the animal spirits, nerves, and even the blood.” The function of this mysterious body is still not understood completely, but it is known to produce the hormone melatonin and is thought to be connected with sexual maturation and possibly sleep. From the way in which the *Brahma-randhra* seems to operate, it would appear that although the pineal is probably connected with its functioning, it may not be adequate as a complete explanation for the wide range of mental faculties affected by a full awakening.

Similar is the case with the pituitary gland, often associated with the sixth chakra, which is also in close proximity to the general location of the new conscious center and regulates the hormone balances in the body. It is quite likely that both the pineal and the pituitary are intimately involved with the functioning of the new center.

Another aspect of Kundalini awakening which seems to be related to the center in the brain is the experience of a flowing nectar-like substance connected with the area above the roof of the mouth. Various sensations of this type have been reported by a number of subjects in recent case histories of Kundalini awakening.

Research done by Dr. M. A. Persinger and K. Makarec at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, where subjects who were exposed to various strobe lights sometimes experience very mild symptoms of mental expansion akin to mystical experience, also points towards an area of the brain which would resemble the *Brahma-randhra*. It is possible that the visual stimulus he applied had the effect of slightly stimulating this center. However, without the requisite vital energy to properly power the center, such processes are unlikely to have

any substantial or lasting effect.

The fact that the practice of meditation, which is in effect an intense form of concentration, is so important in virtually all spiritual disciplines is almost certainly due to the stimulating effect that it has on this center in the brain. The cornerstone of Yoga is concentration and the final three steps—dhyana, dharana and samadhi—are three increasingly intense forms of it. In the final stage—samadhi, the practitioner concentrates so intently that he or she become oblivious to all external stimuli.

The connection between concentration and the brain is even further substantiated by the fact that many people who have difficulty during times of intense Kundalini activity report a direct correlation between the level of mental distress that they experience and the amount of concentration that they do.

The idea of the opening of a new conscious center in the brain is useful in explaining some particular aspects of Kundalini awakening. For instance, such phenomena as 'psychic openings,' which have hitherto been classed as separate from Kundalini awakening, are now included as they are actually a consequence of the newly functioning center in the brain. Kundalini must be conceptualized as both an 'energy' and a 'process' in order to grasp its full significance.

Further, what would be the effect of either the center in the brain or the one at the base of the spine operating out of sync with the other. Arthur Avalon has stated quite clearly that the operation of the center at the base of the spine without the vital energy going continuously to the center in the head will not result in a permanent state of liberation of the conscious principle. And, in fact, the vast majority of people who experience Kundalini activity, although definitely changed in many ways, are obviously not elevated to the stature of cosmic conscious sages.

On the other hand, the activation of the center in the head without the requisite quantity or quality of vital energy to power it, may well be one factor to explain why some of those who experience intense Kundalini activity develop temporary or even permanent mental disorders which range from mild neurosis to full-blown psychosis.

The difficulties that some people who experience Kundalini awakening have with hyperactivity of the sexual organs, resulting in distracting or even tormenting levels of desire, may possibly be a direct result of some protective mechanism in the body attempting to prevent impure prana from going to the brain. On the one hand, the sexual organs are stimulated to increased levels of activity to provide the brain with the extra vital energy which it now requires. But certain aspects of lifestyle which taint or pollute the vital organic essence present in the cells and tissues of the body, such as smoking, drinking, street drugs, unhealthy diet, excess of negative emotions, lack of sufficient sleep, overwork, etc., may result in the bodies rejection of the impure seed so that the now more sensitive tissues of the brain are not damaged irreparably.

Gopi Krishna has attributed the difficulties that he had after his initial awakening largely to this condition. As he recounts in *Living with Kundalini*:

"I suffered from loss of sleep and appetite and fell a prey to depression, disquietude and fear, lost the power of concentration and the feeling of love for my near and dear ones, because Brahmastrandha had been activated but lacked the fuel to operate in the right way. My area of awareness had expanded but the energy that could maintain this expanded state of awareness at an efficient level was lacking. It is for this reason that I was in poor health for months and even years after the first experience.

"It seemed as if prolonged concentration had opened a yet partially developed center in the brain which depended for its fuel on the stream of energy constantly rushing upward from the reproductive region. The enlarged conscious field was the creation of this hitherto closed chamber, which was now functioning imperfectly, first because it had been forced open prematurely, and secondly because I was utterly ignorant of the way to adjust myself to the new development."

Concerning the extraction of the psychic energy, he states:

"The nerves lining the (sexual) parts and the surrounding region were all in a state of intense ferment, as if forced by an invisible mechanism to produce the vital seed in abnormal abundance to be sucked up by the network of nerves at the base of the spine for transmission into the brain through the spinal cord. The sublimated seed formed an integral part of the radiant energy which was causing me such bewilderment and about which I was as yet unable to speculate with any degree of assurance."

If it is the case that the energy going to the brain during Kundalini activity is to a large degree derived from the sexual organs, then it is obvious that any expenditure of this energy for physical purposes will also have the effect of depleting the store that is available for the powering of the conscious center. Interestingly, in a many cases of Kundalini awakening, subjects have reported a partial or even total loss of sexual desire.

Perhaps the energy itself is taking steps to ensure that the vital element is conserved solely for internal use. No doubt the emphasis on celibacy in many spiritual traditions is a consequence of this.

The faulty operation of this new conscious center may also help to explain the severe mental problems that are often suffered by women who have had their ovaries removed after Kundalini activity has begun. The inability of their reproductive systems to produce the required vital energy can have dire consequences in terms of their mental health.

Cases such as Gopi Krishna, who meditated for three hours a day, for seventeen years before the awakening occurred, also graphically demonstrate that the premature, forced arousal of Kundalini is a very dangerous course to take and that the slow or gradual methods, which allow the body to become accustomed to providing an increased amount of vital energy, are much safer.

If the quantity of energy that the body can supply to the brain is a factor in how well the new conscious center functions, then the quality of the essence would also seem to be very important. The fact that most Yoga systems, particularly Hatha Yoga, place a heavy emphasis on the cleansing of the body and the living of a pure lifestyle is an indication of how much the ancient adepts valued this principle. If we look at the average modern lifestyle in this light, it is immediately apparent that we have a long way to go to reach the level of purity which was taken as a prerequisite for aspirants in the past. As an explanation for why so many people currently have difficulty with Kundalini arousal, Gopi Krishna remarks:

"But ages of incorrect living in obedience to the dictates of civilization have played havoc with this most intricate machine, marring the growth of the organs and the efficiency of the nerves, and loading the system with nervous poisons too subtle to be eliminated by the administration of drugs or other therapeutic agents. This is the main reason why the present-day human organism, instead of expediting the process, offers a strong resistance to its investiture with a more potent form of vitality, an essential preliminary to the installation of a higher personality."

"By no means known to science can this cleaning and remodeling of the body be done to make it fit for the transfer of power. All systems of Yoga aim at achieving this by overcoming these deficiencies. Kundalini is the mechanism as well as the motive force by which this biological trimming and remodeling is accomplished in the most effective manner, provided the system is not too much deteriorated either by its own defective mode of life or because of a retrogressive heredity."

If this latent center in the brain does exist, and is stimulated to activity by the process of meditation or concentration, then it is interesting to consider what the effect is of the high levels of concentration done by many people in the advanced societies of the world today. From the theories outlined above, it seems likely that this high level of concentration on mundane or worldly objects, coupled with the generally unhealthy lifestyles that are so common today, are major factors behind the alarming increase in mental disorders, drug abuse, alcoholism, teenage suicide, sexual perversion and other societal ills that have increased alarmingly in the last few decades.

Therefore research in this area is important not only to help those who are experiencing difficulties with Kundalini arousal but also for a better understanding of the factors behind the ills in our society. It is absolutely imperative that this deterioration is halted and reversed if the human race is to continue to exist and evolve in the ages to come.

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