



Kundalini Awareness



Why Study Kundalini ?

Paul Pond, Ph.D.

“One of the first results of research on Kundalini, in my view, would be to show that the human brain is already evolving towards a higher predetermined state of consciousness, a state that has been the crowning vision of the mystics and the prophets.”
- Gopi Krishna

Principles to Follow in Our Study

In the current method of scientific study we examine a problem by the collection of empirical data. We then attempt to understand the data by model making—mathematical or otherwise. In this context ‘empirical’ is taken to mean capable of being validated by observation or experiment and ‘observation’ is meant in the objective sense. Also implicitly contained in this description of the scientific method is the assumption that whatever we are observing is enough under our control that under the same conditions, an experiment can be repeated and, in this way, validated. Understanding the consequences of this implicit assumption will be of great importance in the empirical study of consciousness within science.

Empirical ‘objectivity’ is a standard requirement for good science. Yet this idea of objectivity is something that we may have to amend in the course of research into consciousness. Even in physical experiments Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle tells us that we cannot totally isolate the observer from the experiment. Thus we cannot really claim strict objectivity even at the level of the physical sciences. Work is now being done to measure consciousness related anomalies on experimental results¹. This has important implications for the study of consciousness for this field of endeavor carries with it the study of subjective mental states and thus has an intrinsically subjective component. Because of this our definition of a scientific method for studying consciousness will have to allow for validating this ‘subjectivity’.

Since the study of consciousness is also the study of self, an earnest researcher should engage in some form of structured self-study. The choice of the particular discipline should be left to the individual. Just like the physicist learns mathematics to express their theories, the psychiatrist undergoes different therapies to understand themselves and what their patients may go through, the scientist studying consciousness must learn as much as possible about their principle tool (their own minds) before proceeding in earnest. Of course the self-study process can take years and may be carried out simultaneously with scientific research into consciousness. It is a safe guess that most scientists now interested in ‘consciousness research’ have undergone some self-study of their own. The principles that should guide us in our investigation are outlined below.

Good research can be done in a responsible way by following a few basic principles². The scientific study of consciousness should be no exception.

Our investigation should:

- * Build upon old ideas (theories) where possible
- * Be extremely critical
- * Use the rule of Occam's razor (parsimony) that the simplest of competing theories is preferred
- * Adhere to the highest standards (we are dealing with ourselves)

In addition the results of our study should stand the standard tests of good science:

- * Is it logical?
- * Is it testable?
- * Does it have explanatory power?
- * Does it have predictive power?

Using these principles we will make a model with which to study consciousness.

Kundalini Provides us With a “Model” to Study Consciousness

Kundalini is held to be responsible for mystical or transcendental experience and is thus the root of all esoteric and religious traditions. The study of these traditions including the lives and writings of mystics and “saints” should provide us with broad basic information on the Kundalini experience and give us direction for our research. It is important to keep in mind that—as Gopi Krishna has pointed out—Yoga was developed as the science of its day, a way of verifying supernal truths.

In this way two processes unfold. First, the scientist becomes an active participant in the research. Second we begin building our theory and experiment on an established framework—our first point for good consciousness research.

The religious/esoteric traditions and classical yoga theory provide us with a testable way to study consciousness through the Kundalini process.

This model implies a relationship between the mystic, genius, psychic and to some degree the psychotic.

Understanding the Kundalini Mechanism

Yoga theory is based upon the existence of prana as a subtle, intelligent life energy. Prana is unlike any energy being investigated by present day science. The concept of bioenergy is the closest Western science has come to it. Kundalini is held to be the mechanism by which an enhanced flow of prana reaches the brain. According to the traditional Yoga philosophies, the term Kundalini refers to both a ‘mechanism’ and an ‘energy’ in the human body. The energy, termed prana, is held to be the medium by which thought activity is carried on in the brain and is involved with the transference of impulses and sensations in the nervous system. It is thought that the activation of the mechanism causes an increased amount of pranic energy to be produced in the cells and tissues of the body and to be transmitted to the brain via the nerves in and around the spinal column, leading to alterations in the state of consciousness of the individual. Under the right conditions this enhanced prana operating in the brain can lead to higher states of consciousness such as genius, psychic abilities and mystical experience.

According to Gopi Krishna³ with the activation of the Kundalini mechanism, the driving force of the evolution of consciousness, two different activities start in the body.

First, the nervous system begins to manufacture a more potent form of prana and deliver it into the brain through the spinal duct. This “more potent” prana is distinguished by its appearance as a luminous cloud in the brain. The energy does not have this property when dormant in average men and women. This is the reason why the visionary experience of mystics is almost always bathed in light. This inner light is a point of utmost importance for any investigation of Kundalini and is why Kundalini is likened to sun, moon, lightning or fire. This offers an explanation for the flashes of light or other forms of luminosity experienced by many people during the course of meditation. They are often due to a brief upsurge of the more potent prana into the brain.

The second activity starts in the genital region where upon the awakening of Kundalini a “radiant” form of the reproductive essence is drawn together and poured into the spinal canal. Exactly how this process takes place is currently unknown and will need to be determined by future research. This stream (rising through the spine) represents the “nectar” or “ambrosia” repeatedly referred to in the treatises on Kundalini. The entry of this stream into the spinal cord and then into the brain is marked by sensations so exquisitely pleasurable that they exceed those of orgasm. As this stream ascends into the brain, it is rarified into smaller streams which irrigate the visceral organs through the nerve plexuses or the “Chakras”. These streams can be distinctly felt moving into the various organs such as the intestines, stomach, liver, heart and lungs. In this way, the body and the brain are prepared for a higher manifestation of consciousness. The flow of a more potent prana and this stream of fluidic secretions into nerve centers and the brain is what is implied by the phrase ‘penetration of Kundalini’.

The attainment of psychic gifts or “siddhis” is a well-known sign of impending success in yoga. In fact mystics and saints from a variety of religious traditions warn against focusing on these gifts lest the real goal — mystical experience — be lost.⁴ This implies that the same energy or process is responsible for both— why have two different energies when one will do. Here we are invoking our principle of parsimony — Occam’s razor! The development of psychic gifts can be considered a test of the spiritual progress being made — a way for seekers to validate their own experience.

Further, according to Yoga theory the genius mind owes its success to the Kundalini process. As an example we cite the following verses from Arthur Avalon’s Translation of Sat Chakra Nirupana (“Description of the Six Centers”) ⁵

3) She [Kundalini] is beautiful like a chain of lightning and fine like a (lotus) fibre, and shines in the minds of the sages. She is extremely subtle: the awakener of pure knowledge...

10-11) . . . Her [Kundalini] lustre is as that of a strong flash of young strong lightning. Her sweet murmur is like the indistinct hum of swarms of love-mad bees. She produces melodious poetry and Bandha [literary composition in which the verse is arranged in the manner of a diagram or picture] and all other compositions in prose or verse . . .

13) By meditating thus on Her [Kundalini] . . . a man becomes Lord of Speech . . . , and an Adept in all kinds of learning.

We have referred to the above to illustrate the fact that the concept of Kundalini links the mystic, the genius and the psychic and is the driving (i.e. evolutionary) force responsible for their development. This model suggests there should be a set of common “characteristics” among the mystic, the genius, and the psychic. These are mostly subjective such as inner light and sound, religious impulse/belief in God, but also include quantifiable characteristics such as mental disturbances, significant sexual experiences, highly developed moral nature, humanitarianism and the spontaneous development of creative gifts.

Yoga theory and other esoteric religious traditions also warn of the dangers involved in a spiritual or Kundalini process (Kundalini as the creator and destroyer). It is well known that incorrectly applied practices of self-study and self-discipline can lead to mental disorders in certain individuals. For example, many of the adepts who compiled the Talmud warned that very real mental (and physical) dangers await those who rush unprepared into spiritual practice⁶. Today, many members of the medical community recognize that under certain conditions spiritual (Kundalini) awakening can stimulate psychiatric disorders.

Recently modern science has studied the link between creativity and mental illness⁷. In fact, in the past, attempts were made to describe genius as a form of insanity⁸.

To make this model more complete we need to add some additional information. Some of this can be obtained from a look at Bucke's work in which he⁹ postulated that the human consciousness was evolving towards a state of Cosmic Consciousness. One lack in Bucke's work is that he did not provide any physiological basis for this evolution. Gopi Krishna, however, did. In his hypothesis Kundalini is seen as a manifestation of a cosmic evolutionary energy that is biologically based in the human body and is capable of transforming the nervous system and brain so that they can support expanded levels of consciousness.

The evolutionary component suggested by Gopi Krishna¹⁰ is extremely important. It explains why people are having spontaneous Kundalini experiences and may offer an explanation for why some forms of mental illness or what appears to be mental illness is on the increase.

***Our model = traditional Yoga theory
+ Kundalini the evolutionary energy***

This model contains the important principles to follow for the study of consciousness within science. As mentioned above, our model is built upon established ideas, is parsimonious and has been documented and developed for centuries. Its testability and its explanatory and predictive power have also been pointed out to some degree. These points are expanded upon in the Memorandum for Kundalini Research.

References

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