

KUNḌALINĪ

The Goddess as the Power of
Self-Recognition in Tantric Śaivism

IGOR KUFAYEV

SONG

First edition, January 5th 2026

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© SONG Publishing, 2026
www.igorkufayev.org
www.songpublishing.org

ISBN: 9789464752724
Printed and bound in Germany

Publisher: SONG Publishing
Cover design: Jake Pomper
Layout and typesetting: Cordula Lebeck

To Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with love and profound gratitude

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*O Bhairavī, terrifying in beauty, beatific in wrath;
You who fashion worlds from silence and dismantle pretence with a glance—
we bow in recognition, in awe, in reverence and love.*

*Mother of time, and the one who devours it,
She whose breath gives rise to stars and absorbs their light:
illumine the path not with comfort, but with clarity that spares nothing untrue.
Guide this work to serve those whose longing burns too deep for consolation.*

*You who pierce the mask of becoming to bare the incandescent ground of Being—
let these words ripen from silence, tempered in the marrow of surrender,
resonant with what cannot be taught yet eager to be known.*

*Hidden as the shiver before breath, revealed as the flame where identity shatters—
grant us the courage to speak from that interval where form melts into fire,
and fire sinks back into stillness.*

*By the grace of Your descent, may these words carry the quiet fragrance of Truth:
o soothe where heat is fierce, to ignite where slumber runs deep,
to accompany those who walk the narrow threshold, between dissolution and emergence.*

*We prostrate at Your feet, O Kuṇḍalinī Mā,
serpent power curled at the root of creation—
she who burns impurity to ash and distils wholeness from the embers.
Reveal only what You choose; conceal what must remain unseen.*

*Let nothing here arise for display, nor lean toward vanity or persuasion.
Let each line be an offering—breath returned to breath, flame returned to flame—
cast back into Your boundless embrace.*

*O Bhairavī, may this work emerge, unfold and dissolve
as Your own gesture of love, and of annihilation.*

PART ONE
THE SYMBOL

Chapter I

The Great Pervasion

The Nature of Experience

What would be a befitting point of departure to gain access to those traditions known to be at once courteous, elusive, yet unapologetic when addressing the Goddess and speaking to her power? Tantra, though direct in its approaches, leans towards the inexplicable when it comes to attempts at defining the power, for that in itself is considered to be in the domain of the Goddess who herself is the guardian of all languages. She is the one who illumines it all, forever remaining beyond the grasp of the dichotomised nature of mind. It is perhaps for that reason the only legitimate way to gain access to the knowledge (gnosis) to approach the Goddess is through an act of invocation, initiation and oblation (offering), which in turn opens up the subtle dimension for meditation, as the methodology, to be fruitful. This is not exclusive to Tantra—all Hermetic traditions are known to share this emphasis born of the necessity for creating the *point of entrance* most succinctly encapsulated in the three parts of *Gāyatrī mantra(s)* consisting of *invocation* (*vidmāhe*), *meditation* (*dhīmahi*) and *appeal* (*pracoḍayāt*); which means, in order to gain access to the divine, we praise the Divine, we meditate upon it and finally we appeal to the divine to dispel the ignorance and establish our intellect in the light of true knowledge.

Having this cleared, while hopefully humbled and elevated (by this understanding), and most importantly having gained access on the subtle plane, we are now ready to look into it from the perspective common to us all, *experience*. We are experiencing, all the time—always. Life, this embodied perspective, is based on experience. We could go even further and say experience is all there is: from what is immediately available through the senses as we go about our day; to what we experience when the senses withdraw into the mind when the dreaming state of consciousness takes over; to that of deep sleep. It is in deep sleep when everything is withdrawn into the causal, in the void of the heart, where all *prāṇic* activity has subsided, when we fall into the velvet nothingness of deep rest. Even so, that *nothingness* is still an experience; otherwise how could we be so certain of what deep sleep is known for?

The analogy can be taken further: that same subtlety of continuously experiencing something is ever present, even throughout some of the most formidable spiritual experiences—we certainly experience *something* in meditation. Maybe at first we're experiencing the realisation that the mind cannot yet settle down—that there is this mental chatter. In fact, as soon as we sit down to meditate, there is more awareness of that chatter because prior to sitting down we did not have the chance to allow enough space to become aware of it. But in meditation, there is suddenly this thought, that thought, a train of thoughts. Experiencing these thoughts—and yes, even witnessing these thoughts—is an experience. Then as the thought process begins to slow down, and as the mind gradually quietens, we begin to experience a more settled state. So settled in fact that, at some point, we no longer have any thoughts. Thoughts become more and more abstract; they begin to dissolve in the firmament of the subtler dimensions of the mind, until the mind subsides to such a degree that we do not experience anything, no mental activity at all. It may be accompanied by a certain opening, a vast area of spaciousness being experienced as the skies suddenly dawn and take over—this is still an experience. Even in these moments of transcendence, there is still something going on that allows us, upon coming out from these subtler states, to declare: 'What a profound meditation I've had, what a profound state I was in.' Maybe it was deeply peaceful, deeply settled and quiet. Perhaps it was exhilarating in the sense that it was accompanied by this bubbling sense of joy, this bliss. Or it was the indescribable experience of vastness, of being completely beyond anything that confines us to this otherwise mundane experience of being so-and-so. In all of these, experience precedes what we then can relate and convey, or leave to ourselves, never to be expressed.

Now, for an experience to take place, there has to be an experiencer, the process of experiencing and that what is being experienced. In other words, *subject, means of knowledge* and *object*. This great triad is all there is when it comes to the nature of experience. *Everything* is made of that. From gross experience, to the most profound internal experience, from any contemplation, to experiences in altered states of consciousness that take our breath away, all contain these modalities of *subject, means of knowledge* and *object*. This triad will form the thread that runs throughout this study as an access point into the working of *Kuṇḍalinī* in terms of this manifestation and in terms of the dynamics of what is commonly referred to as 'human experience'. It is these three modalities that together are called the *triadic heart of Awareness*. And although we will tap into various traditions, we will draw primarily from the perspective of Trika Śaivism.

In Trika Śaivism, the term '*Trika*', as the name implies, means 'made of three' and deals with the three aspects comprising the entire creation. These are *Śiva*, *Śakti* and *Nara*. *Śiva* stands for the Absolute—one without a second, Awareness. *Śakti* stands for that power (of *Śiva*), forever one with *Śiva* to contemplate its own essence. *Śakti* is Self-awareness, the reflective power of Awareness—that which allows contemplation of its own essence through reflective

power of its own. And Nara stands for this individual experience in and as the world. The union of these three is the core teaching of Trika Śaivism expanded through its main doctrines, and this is what makes it into a body of knowledge.

This triadic nature of experience is made of the knower, knowing and known, referred to in the Trika Śaiva philosophy as *pramātr*, *pramāṇa* and *prameya*. *Pramātr* is the eternal subject; *pramāṇa*, the power of knowing; and *prameya*, the known. Those who come from the Vedic tradition know it as the union of the observer, observing and observed, in Sanskrit, *Samhitā* of *Ṛṣi*, *Devatā*, *Chhandas*; where *Samhitā* stands for the union, togetherness, of *Ṛṣi*, the knower, *Devatā*, the knowing and *Chhandas*, the known.

These are all expressions of the powers of Self-awareness (just prior to the process of manifestation) projected as indispensable aspects, which together make the power of Will, power of Knowledge and power of Action. The power of will is the expression of Pure Subjectivity of any subject. The power of knowledge is that which makes anything into a possibility of knowing—that which connects the subject with the object. In other words, the relationship between subject and object is seized and made steadfast by that universal power of knowledge. And knowledge in turn is naturally expressed in and through the power of action. In Sanskrit, this is expressed as *icchā*, *jñāna*, *kriyā*. *Ichchā* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *kriyā* (action) here form and complete that equilateral, that triangle, that trinity, that triad of Awareness, without which there is no experience. This is how Kuṇḍalinī (as Consciousness) creates the world and hides itself in every experience by continually expressing her unlimited power throughout manifestation.

Again, that triadic relationship, the relationship between subject and object, is made steadfast through the modality of knowing which is empowered by a specific quality of Awareness. In Sanskrit, these modalities altogether are known as *Ichchā-Śakti* (Power of Will), *Jñāna-Śakti* (Power of Knowledge) and *Kriyā-Śakti* (Power of Action). These modalities are universal and can be spoken of in terms of the impulses of creative intelligence, with the *will* as an expression of the *knower*; the *knowledge* as an expressive potentiality of the process of *knowing*; and the *action* as the expressive potentiality of the *object* or the *known*. This relationship is dynamic, supremely subtle, elusive and is what paves the way for diversity, if we are to speak of it in terms of manifestation as the process.

Just as an example: I'm experiencing this room right now where I write, and through the open window I'm hearing the sounds outside, the chirping of birds, barking of a dog and the sound of cars in the distance. There is this sense of an all-pervading daylight filling the room I'm in, playfully bouncing off an arrangement of wildflowers on the bench, or whatever else may come in view through the retina or any other aperture of my sensory perception it belongs to—all this is a constant expression of that which these three modalities are made

of as consciousness in motion. At this very moment, as you are reading these words, you are the *subject* experiencing this; and my voice through the pages, so to speak, presents itself as an *object* of your experience.

The very nature of experience is this triadic relationship of the knower, the process of knowing and the known. That triad is illumined by the one and only absolute reality, and within the Śaiva tradition is named *Anuttara*. Forever beyond all its aspects, Anuttara transcends all planes of manifestation, and yet Anuttara is what illumines it all. We will speak about it in greater detail how all this is set in motion, and how manifestation cascades down, as it were, through the myriad of successive phases; but before it does, this triad, referred to as ‘the triadic heart’, becomes a possibility because these are the powers inherent in Awareness as expressions of a supremely creative act which requires the dynamic relationship of subject and object. Irrespective of whom we consider ourselves to be, irrespective of where we are in terms of our understanding—in terms of our spiritual orientation or total lack thereof, in terms of our achievements or failures, in terms of how intelligent or not we are about these matters—that triadic dynamic is always intact in absolutely every one of us because the nature of being alive is *experience*. And to experience is to be subjected to the interplay of these triadic modalities.

Experience is everything, for every thing is made out of experience; as far as these impulses of creative intelligence are concerned, they are the agencies at the highest level of universal administration. When you look at something, how that (in you) which looks, that subject, recognises anything, is because of that *knowledge* of *how*, which connects the subject with an object of your experience. We could add that the subject (re)cognises itself in the object, which is what is taking place if we are to speak of it in terms of the ultimate state of affairs; yet at the level of human experience these modalities should also work without any glitch, even if at the expense of concealing the light that illumines it all. Obviously this extends to *all* five sensory perceptions—hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling. Everything that is in the realm of sensory experience follows that same triad of experience. Moreover, take any mental activity: there is the thinker and there is the thought. That relationship of thinker and the thought is also steadfast here and is an expression of those very same *powers* of *icchā*, *jñāna*, *kriyā śaktis* respectively coming together to make comprehension possible. From the mundane thought of, ‘I am thirsty’, to the sublime, ‘I am the Absolute!’ To acknowledge any sensation, such as the atmospheric sensations of heat or cold or breeze or the lack thereof, to the emotional state of any experience, there are these dynamics at play. All this is made of the aforementioned powers of Awareness expressing themselves as *will*, *knowledge* and *action*; with the subject representing that eternal ‘I’; the knowledge as that which connects the subject and object representing the ‘you’, the ‘you’ in every language; and that which stands as an object of experience representing *that* (other), be it with reference to a sentient or insentient being. And of course, this is, as we have said, a supremely dynamic affair. That

‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘that’ is what completes the triangle of experience or the seer, the seeing and the seen, and creation is said to be set in motion with all its ensuing repercussions, some of which are blindly accepted as misperceived reality, which in turn goes on to make up the bound soul trapped in the interplay of its own energies.

The importance of the triad will become more apparent in the unfolding pages affording us insights into the process of Kuṇḍalinī’s ‘descent as this world’ of forms and phenomena, and possibly as a consequence of that descent assuming this individual experience we all refer to as ‘human existence’. Conversely, the transfiguration of those energies heralds a greater intimacy of the subject–object dynamics, in some cases leading to the *direct* recognition of our essence, which is impossible without transcending the very modalities which constitute experience itself. When the constituents of experience are equipoised to a state of universal balance, then the dynamic subject–object tension is said to be restored to its equilibrium; which otherwise is in perpetual oscillation as eternal subject, the experiencer, and object as that which is being experienced.

May the above serve as an entrance into the basic tenets of what Tantric Śaivism operates with in terms of its modalities aimed at expressing the formidable relationship of Śiva, Śakti, Nara, which in turn could be spoken of in terms of Awareness interacting within itself through the reflective power of Self-awareness, along with what gives rise to individual experience.

Etymology of Kuṇḍalinī

Whenever we say ‘Kuṇḍalinī’, it almost asks for a certain pause. For when it comes to this term we often run the risk of trivialisation whenever a topic is given to casual discourse unless it comes from someone with initiatory insight into the tradition where the term itself originates. Especially nowadays, when so much has been said and written about that power, one wonders what else can be added—whether adding anything would contribute to further bias as to what this power truly represents. In light of this, let us tread attentively lest we be prompted to jump into hasty conclusions or lean on readily available labels. To us modern people, this may seem an overstatement, but to approach this topic is nothing short of approaching the Goddess. It requires reverence and understanding, particularly when viewed through the eyes of the respective traditions encapsulated in the many Tantric scriptures known as the Śaiva and Śākta Āgamas.

The Sanskrit term *Kuṇḍalinī* is most commonly translated as ‘the coiled one’. The root *kuṇḍalī*, as an adjective, denotes something circular, spiral-like in form. As a noun, it conveys the sense of something curled or coiled. The most immediate interpretation is of Kuṇḍalinī

PART TWO

THE PROCESS

Chapter III

An Alchemy of Vigilance,
Animation and Locus

the diaphragm lifts and the lungs expand like a balloon; in the other, the abdomen protrudes slightly as the breath remains absent. These are spontaneous and safe, provided they are not forced. They allow prāṇa to penetrate regions of the subtle body that were previously dormant or blocked.

It's worth noting that even seasoned meditators, some of whom guide others, may find these experiences disorienting if unaware of their significance. But they are part and parcel of the internal transformation initiated by heightened prāṇic activity, let alone active Kuṇḍalinī. These spontaneous bandhas and kumbhakas are signs of a deepening process and support the expansion of consciousness through the subtle field.

Recognising the different ways breath can become suspended—either through equipoise or spontaneous internal locks—enables the practitioner to discern what is unfolding within. In both cases, the breath is no longer a mechanical function but a luminous bridge between body and Awareness. Let your breath become your guide, through attunement and the release of control. Let these subtle pauses open the door to the silent source from which all emerges and into which all dissolves.

The Meaning of 'Coiled Within'—*Kuṇḍalinī* at 'The Base of the Spine'

Further, let us consider the role language plays here and the limitations it imposes—especially in terms of how certain culturally accepted depictions of the phenomenon have been translated into other tongues, particularly English. Consider the commonly used phrase, 'coiled within, at the base of the spine'. What does this even mean? How can Consciousness—what we have established *Kuṇḍalinī* ultimately represents, even in Her aspect as *Prāṇa Kuṇḍalinī*, giving rise to and sustaining this individuality, this physiology—how can That be 'coiled'? And why, specifically, at the base of the spine?

This is where language begins to reveal its inadequacy. How can one speak about these matters if the terms are handed over to a language with an entirely different epistemic root, worldview and level of comprehension? It is helpful to recall our earlier discussion on the mapping of esoteric processes—how their graphic representations, symbology and iconography have been adapted and reinterpreted. Consider the familiar diagram found in countless books and online images: a human figure, cakras rendered in vivid colour, each given a psychological profile. What appears 'clear' or codified to the contemporary mind becomes, in fact, a flattening of a highly nuanced symbolic system.

From the esoteric perspective, where cosmology and anthropology are inseparable—where the human being is understood as a microcosm of the whole—these contemporary diagrams can be misleading. The very act of interpreting such iconography through the lens of a modern, body-bound identity reinforces a false sense of individual selfhood. And so, in order to foster a more coherent and unifying view, we must clear out these persistent but now outlived assumptions. Chief among them is the notion of Kuṇḍalinī being literally ‘coiled within’ the body.

At the outset of this book, we quoted Ramana Maharshi, who said that we speak of Kuṇḍalinī in terms of ‘within’ only because of our identification with the body. In truth, She is neither within nor without—or, perhaps more accurately, we are *within* Kuṇḍalinī. This experience of being human is the very result of Consciousness curled in upon Itself. Thus, the metaphor of ‘coiled’—especially the esoteric detail of three-and-a-half coils—must be understood as symbolic. Each coil corresponds to a *guṇa* of nature—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—and the three relative states of consciousness of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The half coil denotes that which transcends the three—*turiya* (the fourth), the ineffable beyond.

These reflections serve to reconcile such perspectives and help dissolve the constrictive view that Kuṇḍalinī is coiled at ‘the base of my spine’. That is not only an unhelpful view, but a misleading one. Even if clinical or experiential phenomena may occur in that region, we should not confuse those with the reality being described. The phrase ‘coiled at the base’, in *mūlādhāra*, speaks not to an anatomical location, but to a cosmic condition.

Yet it must be said that the very question of *where* Kuṇḍalinī ‘abides’ has never been uniform across Tantric sources. The fixation of Her seat at *mūlādhāra*, so pervasive in later *Haṭha* Yogic manuals such as the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* and *Ṣaṭ Cakra Nirūpaṇa*, represents a relatively late consolidation in the long arc of Tantric development. Earlier Śaiva and Śākta traditions reveal a more fluid understanding of Her locus. Thus, Junglan Bang, a scholar of 11th-century Śaiva Tantra at the University of Hamburg whose meticulous study of the *Tantrasadbhāva* illuminates early Śaiva cosmology and subtle physiology, observes that in the early Saiddhāntika works such as the *Sārdhatriśatikākālottara*, Kuṇḍalinī is described as abiding in the *hṛdaya*—the heart-lotus (*hṛtpradeśe tu sā jñeyā*), where She resides as the subtle essence of *ātman* and *prāṇa*, identified with the bindu or *manobindu*, the luminous seed of Consciousness itself. Only in later strata of the tradition does Her locus descend to the *nābhi* (navel), the *kaṇḍa* (the bulb from which the ten principle *nāḍīs* radiate) and finally to the *mūlādhāra*, the most materialised stratum of embodiment.

This gradual descent is not a mere shift in doctrinal emphasis, but a progressive concretisation of what was originally conceived as an interior, symbolic process. The heart, as the first *ādhāra* (support), represents the central pulsation of awareness, the axis where Śakti reposes

as the power of cognition itself. To locate Her there was to affirm that Consciousness itself breathes as life. The later descent toward the navel and base mirrors a collective movement of the sacred into the tangible—a translation of inner metaphysics into a physiology of practice. Yet, as Junglan Bang notes, even in the *Tantrasadbhāva* and related texts, archaic traces remain: Kuṇḍalinī is still said to envelop the bindu within Her coils, enclosing the point of light as if the heart itself were Her hidden sanctuary. Abhinavagupta, commenting on the *Svacchanda Tantra*, in *Tantraloka* (VI), and his commentator Jayaratha, recognised this dual inheritance. The hṛdaya remained for them the source of prāṇa and spanda, even while the kaṇḍa—situated between the navel and the genitals—was acknowledged as the nodal bulb of the nāḍīs, where the ascending and descending currents of life meet and are redistributed.

In this light, *mūla*, the ‘base’, should not be read anatomically but as the root of manifestation itself, wherever that root is inwardly experienced. For some, it appears as a fiery stirring at the pelvic floor; for others, as a pulse in the navel or a subtle vibration in the heart. These are not contradictory but complementary expressions of Śakti’s own reflexivity—different nodal points where the universal current localises within embodiment. The ancient texts merely mirrored these varying degrees of Her self-contraction and expansion, each tradition naming the point where the infinite had, for its own purposes, chosen to turn inward upon Itself.

This is not to say that these descriptions are merely symbolic; they are embodied cartographies of awareness. The heart, the kaṇḍa and the base are not rival claimants to a single location but facets of one living continuum. *Kuṇḍalinī* unfolds through them as the axis of descent and return.

This nuanced picture also finds confirmation in lived experience. For those in whom Kuṇḍalinī awakens in fulness, the movement is rarely confined to a single point. It manifests as a living rhythm—ascending, descending, spiralling, converging—reflecting Her innate intelligence rather than a fixed anatomical map. Direct, first hand experience(s) may serve as a testament to this dynamic reality.

In my own process, the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī unfolded through distinct phases that could not be reduced to any single ‘seat’. For a prolonged period, the activity was concentrated in the heart—an unmistakable stirring of consciousness itself. This led to what I have elsewhere described as the *descent of grace*, which viscerally felt as a huge ball of dazzling light above my head, after which the energy began to move downward from the heart into a bulbous centre perceptible in the lower abdomen. There it was felt as tangible, psycho-spiritual currents—refined yet unmistakably physical—before descending further still, all the way to the mūlādhāra. Along the way, this movement was accompanied by sensory phenomena: subtle electrical discharges rising from the left big toe, through the leg, into the coccyx, until the ascent began in full.

From this, I am inclined to affirm the placement of Kuṇḍalinī both in the heart—as the seat of *prāṇa* and the soul—and in the kaṇḍa, the bulb from which the *nāḍīs* arise, as expounded by Somānanda in his *Śākta-vijñāna* (to which we will return in greater depth later in the book). This corresponds with both classical sources and my clinical observation.

A further, speculative reflection—though not without its allure—is that Kuṇḍalinī’s ‘descent’ from the heart toward the base may symbolise not only the individual’s process of embodiment but also a collective, historical one. It may be that in earlier ages, when the sense of the sacred still pervaded life, *Śakti* was experienced closer to the heart, while in denser, more material periods of civilisation, She is encountered at the base, as if Consciousness Itself had settled more deeply into matter. I do not assert this as doctrine, yet it remains a contemplation worthy of consideration: that the evolution of human awareness mirrors the gradual condensation of *Śakti* into the world, and Her awakening in us retraces that path of return.

In either case, what is clear is that mūlādhāra symbolises not a point in the body but a stage in the great arc of descent—the furthest reach of Kuṇḍalinī’s manifestation into form. It marks the completion of Her journey into matter, the solidification of spirit as Earth, the densest of the elements. In this sense, mūlādhāra is both a foundation and a veil: the place where the Goddess has reposed, completing Her journey into form.

It is also here, at this nadir of descent, that Kuṇḍalinī, as *Bhairavī*, lies dormant. *Bhairavī*, the *Śakti* of *Bhairava*, is the Fiery Force at rest. Intoxicated by Her own power, as if drugged by poison—as the scriptures poetically suggest—She abides in a state of utter inertness. This dormant state is mirrored in the horizontal plane of life: our collective consensus reality, taken for granted, where we live in habitual reactivity and sensory absorption.

This world, dominated by rationalism and an agnostic consensus, is deeply confused when it tries to assimilate these metaphors—like the coiled serpent—into its own idiom. When translated into English, such images are taken too literally, reinforcing the very identification they were meant to help dissolve. We then begin to regard Kuṇḍalinī as something merely physiological, a happening in ‘my’ body, rather than the unfolding of a profound cosmic dynamic.

This is the cost of translation without transformation. Symbolic terms become flattened into technical jargon. And in so doing, we narrow the scope of our understanding to an individual, body-identified narrative. We interpret the coiling as a property of flesh and bone, missing entirely the deeper dynamics: that Consciousness has withdrawn into this apparent slumber, into this mūlādhāra, into this Earth—not because She is bound, but because She chooses to sleep in order to awaken through us.

And it is here that we may introduce a piercing insight from the sage Abhinavagupta, which illuminates this slumber past the view of inertness, as the power of temporality itself:

According to the *Parātriṃśikā Vivaraṇa*, time reveals itself in two modes—*krama* and *akrama*, succession and non-succession. These are not external dimensions but inherent pulsations of Consciousness Itself. *Kāli*, the supreme Power (*Śakti*) of *Bhairava*, manifests both within Herself, time as movement and time as stillness—the unfolding of events and their simultaneous apprehension—thus presenting Herself as the very pulse of life.

Here, *Kāli*, synonymous with *Bhairavī*, is not merely a fearsome goddess or mythic being. She is Time itself, unfolding from the stillness of the Self. This reframes our view of the dormant *Śakti*: She is far beyond passive. She is the coiled spring of time and transformation, holding within Herself the latent power of becoming.



Moreover, speaking of *Kuṇḍalinī* as ‘coiled at the base of the spine’ is an esoteric way of addressing the reality of what the earth element represents—namely, the furthest point of expansion, in terms of its outward movement, which we could argue corresponds to the furthest point of contraction of Awareness. This is where *Kuṇḍalinī* enters a state of homeostasis, and we begin to experience what we then speak of as so-and-so: ‘This is my experience, this is me, this is you, this is the world, this is how it goes.’

This progressive cementing of prevailing language into identification with corporeality is precisely what many spiritual traditions refer to when they say that the human experience is not what it seems. It gives rise to a distorted perspective—distorted because our own awareness has not opened to itself enough to behold the greater picture. If we then reinforce that distortion with the direct translation, *Kuṇḍalinī* is ‘coiled at the base of my spine, my *mūlādhāra*’, and proceed from there, that understanding remains locked within the framework of identification with the body. The only shift, in such a case, is that now, ‘I am identifying with my subtle body. I am identifying with the process.’ The bigger picture has not even entered the conversation.

This stands in sharp contrast to cultures where a more integrated linguistic harmony—rooted in the sonic architecture of the native language—preserves the deeper significance. Those who speak the native tongue, who were born into it, whose bodies and minds were shaped by it, come into this knowledge through cultural osmosis. Often, it is absorbed with the mother’s milk. They do not need to intellectually bridge a gap between self and symbol, as

the ground for understanding is already in place. Do you see the difference? This is how language itself can become a limitation—concealing rather than revealing the multidimensional picture of reality.

I would even suggest that the attempts made by some key figures in modern Western thought—Carl Jung being a prime example—were, in certain ways, unhelpful. His profound interest in alchemy and his deep dive into Eastern esotericism, particularly Tantra, certainly enriched the emerging field of depth psychology. These efforts opened doors to more symbolic, mythopoetic understandings of the psyche, yet they were still filtered through a framework that could not easily transcend the Western emphasis on the autonomous individual. Jung's popularisation of cakra psychology in particular stands out as a moment where esoteric knowledge became psychologised, restructured around the self-image of the person rather than its dissolution. The subtle mapping of the psyche onto the cakra system, while innovative, inadvertently overlaid the inward-directed cosmology of Vedic thought with a new scaffolding of ego-identity. What in the original context was meant to dissolve the individuated self into the oceanic Being of Awareness was now reinterpreted to strengthen and develop that very self—as if individuation, rather than Self-realisation, were the goal.

This is not to discount the profound value of individuation—particularly when understood not as an end in itself, but as a stage within the greater arc of Self-recognition. Unless we view individuation as an inseparable phase in the maturation of the soul—exemplified by the Kuṇḍalinī process itself—we risk missing a vital nuance. For the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī may indeed be seen as a journey through successive refinements of individuation: the soul becoming increasingly prepared for its merging. And here, merging does not translate into annihilation but revelation. It is a return to one's original condition, not through negation of the self but through its illumination.

In this sense, individuation can be thought of as the necessary development of a stable locus through which Consciousness may fully recognise Itself. That is, Self-recognition is not an impersonal eclipse of the person, but a graceful maturation wherein the fully formed individual is ripened to the point of surrender. Only that which has been coherently formed can be fruitfully unformed. The immature ego cannot dissolve because it has not yet cohered; its dissolution would only result in fragmentation, not transcendence. But the individuated self—clear, resilient and inwardly integrated—can enter into the phases of true recognition. In this view, individuation and Self-realisation are not contradictory aims, but sequential unfoldings. The former provides the groundwork for the latter; the latter transfigures the former from within.

The Kuṇḍalinī process, in its deepest expression, honours this subtle dialectic. It invites us to become more fully ourselves—not in the psychological sense alone, but in the fundamen-

tal sense: as microcosmic expressions of the Absolute. And when that maturation ripens, the separate self does not vanish like a shadow chased from the room, it emerges revealed as the very play of Light itself.

This reinforcement of the individual locus can be softened, loosened, if one approaches Jung's later writings with a nuanced sensitivity—particularly those reflections that transcend the clinical and gesture toward the domain of soul. Here, the nascent field of transpersonal psychology becomes a more fitting vessel. In this light, Jung can be seen as attempting to bridge an enormous cultural chasm: the gulf between the hyper-developed Western notion of personhood and the transcendence-oriented ontologies of the East. This gulf is not merely philosophical; it is woven into the historical and theological frameworks of the respective traditions. In the Abrahamic worldview, for instance, the human being is cast irrevocably in a relational mode with the Divine—be it as servant, creature, child or seeker. The transcendence of God is absolute, and while intimacy with the Divine may be deeply felt, it never dissolves the essential twoness at the heart of the theological duality. There is God, and there is the soul; there is the Creator, and there is the created. Perhaps the most telling example is to be found in Gnosticism, which posits the world as flawed or even evil in relation to a supreme God. Even in the mystical doctrines of these traditions—whether 'pure prayer' of Christian *Hesychasm*, Kabbalistic *devekut*, or Islamic *Sufism*—the merging is devotional, asymptotic. One draws near, even intoxicatedly so, but rarely, if ever, is one permitted to say, *I am Śiva (Śivo'ham)* or *I am Brahman (Aham Brahmasmi)*.

In contrast, the spiritual vision of the East, particularly in the Śaiva and Vedāntic traditions, presents a radically different topology of being. Here, the emphasis is never on the preservation of the individual, but on the recognition of its illusory status. The Self is not a thing to be improved—it is the substratum of all things. One does not approach Śiva; one awakens *as Śiva*. The path is not relational but revelatory. It is not about becoming acceptable to a Divine Other, but about shedding the mistaken notion that there is ever an 'other' to begin with. The entirety of the culture—its metaphysics, language, ritual, even its art and music—is oriented toward this fundamental reversal: to see through the veil of *māyā* and recognise that all multiplicity is a play of Consciousness alone.

This divergence of views—between a God who is always 'other' and a Self that is always already That—makes the Western psyche particularly prone to reifying the individual locus, even when engaging with teachings intended to dissolve it. And this is precisely what happens when esoteric principles like the cakra system are translated without the necessary ontological shift. The map remains, but the terrain is subtly altered. Instead of dissolution into *śūnya*, into *pūrṇatā*, into fulness beyond form, the path becomes one of gradual personal development, of evolving the individuality rather than seeing through its inherent unreality.

Chapter V

The Fact of Appearing

heart, the sun illumines the path and the moon reflects the infinite sky of Self. And at the still point where all three converge—there, Kuṇḍalinī reveals herself not as energy alone, but as the very nature of awareness, awakening to itself.

Yogic Versus Tantric Approach to Kuṇḍalinī Awakening

Yogic disciplines have long carried the mark of distinct historical orientations, not least for their methodological emphasis on the attainment of specific results. While the highest aim of such practice is undeniably exalted, nothing short of Self-realisation, the journey toward that end is often intertwined with the emergence of extraordinary phenomena. Among these, the rise of psychic powers, or *siddhis*, has formed a notable part of the broader conversation around the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī.

In Indian spiritual culture, *siddhis* have received an ambivalent treatment. On the one hand, they are revered as signs of spiritual attainment; on the other, they are frequently treated with caution, even suspicion. Teachers across centuries have offered both warning and counsel—advising how to relate to these emergent powers if they arise unbidden, and warning of the spiritual peril of seeking them as ends in themselves. The very allure of these abilities can, for some, obscure the path altogether. Yet, to deny their seductive appeal, especially to the modern psyche, would be intellectually dishonest. If contemporary seekers are tempted by the promises of expanded perception and superhuman capacities, then surely the ancients were no less susceptible. Such longing for mastery over one's inner faculties, born from the rigorous dedication of *sādhana*, is neither new nor categorically inappropriate.

That said, the fundamental premise of the yogic path is grounded in the deliberate and forceful activation of Kuṇḍalinī. This forcefulness is not to be mistaken for recklessness, but rather points to a conscious and often austere commitment to ignite the latent power within. Here, we are distinguishing the yogic orientation from the Tantric approach, not as mutually exclusive philosophies, but as differing modes of engagement with the same living reality. The Tantric way, classically associated with the descent of grace through *śaktipāta*, emphasises a receptive attunement to the divine, rather than a heroic summoning of power. These modalities—yogic and Tantric—are often described through the archetypes of masculine and feminine: one assertive, the other yielding; one a disciplined fire, the other an open vessel. Yet, both share overlapping territories. Even within Tantra, elements of control, internal heat and ascetic purification find their place. Similarly, yoga—when divested of its more rigid exoteric trappings—recognises the value of surrender.

What distinguishes the yogic way is the drive to awaken Kuṇḍalinī swiftly and with precision. The ideal scenario, from the yogic standpoint, is that the process unfolds rapidly, with minimal drag across time. Why? Because the genuine release of Kuṇḍalinī is a formidable event—a blazing passage that impacts every system of the body. Anticipating this, yogis dedicate themselves to arduous preparation, shaping the body into an instrument capable of bearing the combustion. The physiological and subtle systems must be fortified to withstand the surge. Once prepared, the body becomes a crucible—able to absorb, transmit and ultimately be transformed by the purifying flame of Kuṇḍalinī.

This process, as we have explored elsewhere, unfolds in stages. In its dormant state, Kuṇḍalinī—though seated in the mūlādhāra cakra, associated with the earth element—is essentially fiery in nature. One might think here of the Earth itself: though it appears solid and grounded, it conceals beneath its crust an ocean of molten magma. Likewise, dormant Kuṇḍalinī is the latent fire of Consciousness. When awakened, it moves progressively through stages that resemble the alchemical states of matter: first fire, then liquid, then gas and finally sound. The initial phase is intensely fiery—burning through impurities, kindling latent capacities and disrupting the homeostasis of the familiar. Then comes the liquefied phase, still volatile, but with more fluidity and cohesion. The gaseous stage is associated with the heart, where the process of *samatā* (equilibration) begins. From there, Kuṇḍalinī becomes increasingly refined, entering the domain of pure vibration, culminating in the phase of unstruck sound (*anāhata nāda*). Only in this subtlest phase is Kuṇḍalinī capable of merging back with her Source. Fire alone cannot merge—it consumes. Sound, on the other hand, can return, dissolve and be reabsorbed.

The yogis knew this. They understood that while the fire is necessary, it is also perilous. The shorter its duration, the less wear on the nervous system. And so the entire preparatory phase—rooted in diet, breath control, āsana, pratyāhāra and inner restraint—was geared toward making the system resilient enough to endure the conflagration. If the fire phase could be passed quickly and skilfully, the likelihood of both survival and success (spiritually and physiologically) was greatly increased. The aspirant could then emerge not only with deepened awareness but with access to enhanced capacities, siddhis, as natural extensions of the awakened state.

Much has been said, from antiquity to our present day, about the phenomenon of psychic powers. Known in Sanskrit as *siddhis*, these capacities are often interpreted as signs of spiritual advancement, though they are not always viewed unequivocally as such. In the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali, the third chapter, *Vibhūti Pāda*, is entirely devoted to the cultivation of these powers. Through *saṁnyama*—togetherness of concentration, meditation and absorption—various capacities are said to arise: from *garimā*, the ability to become heavy

as a mountain, to *mahima*, the capacity to expand vast as space. These powers are not imagined. They are known to manifest spontaneously during profound inner processes, or, in some cases, cultivated through precise methods.

But with these capacities comes a toll. The yogic path is one of harnessing immense forces within a finite vehicle. The neurophysiology is called to its very limits. Every neurone, every junction in the subtle and gross nervous systems, is affected. The yogic process exacts its price, unless there is adequate preparation, unless *tapas* has built sufficient inner fire, unless *ojas* and *tejas*—those subtle essences of earth and fire—and *prāṇa*, the vital force of air, are abundant and balanced, the body cannot withstand the awakening. And it is the body that will bear the brunt of the process. When the ignition is premature or forced without proper fuel, the system overheats, the fire rages and what was meant to transform ends up consuming.

To borrow an allegory familiar in both yogic and Tantric lore, the practitioner is not simply lighting a sacred fire—they are, in effect, thrusting a stick into the very mouth of the *yoginī*, into the blazing mouth of Kuṇḍalinī herself. This is no gentle light—it is the tongue of flame that can, like a thousand dragons, scorch the entire universe into ash. It demands a certain temperament. It calls for the virile force known as *vīrya*—not merely physical strength, but a clarity of intent, a steadiness of purpose, a warrior’s resolve. And it must be walked like the razor’s edge. We know well how it backfires—how without that *viveka*, that inner discernment, or without the necessary balance of energies, the fire rages wild.

In contrast to this stands the Tantric orientation. Not opposed in spirit, but different in temperament. The same energy is at play here, the same Kuṇḍalinī, the same ultimate passage through the *suṣūmṇā*. Yet the way it is approached, invoked and honoured takes on a very different form. Tantra does not rely on forcible ascent. Instead, it reveres the descent (*śaktipāt*), the quiet and often unbidden touch of power from above. In Tantra, the process begins not with assertion but with receptivity. Grace descends; and that descent is feminine in essence.

This is the approach of surrender, and one cannot receive what one is not open to. Śaktipāta cannot be forced. It is received, and it is that very capacity for surrender which becomes the gauge of how deep and transformative the process of awakening will be. The Tantric current is *śākta* in spirit—it recognises Śakti as the primal mover and grants primacy to Her flow. Whether She comes through the hands of a living adept or arises mysteriously from within, Her descent brings about the reordering of the inner world.

There are cases—rare, but not unknown—where no guru was present, no formal teacher in sight, no overt spiritual practice undertaken. And yet the descent occurred. One might

say grace is blind in such instances, or that it responds to a mysterious karmic fragrance. It cannot be summoned, but when it comes, it is unmistakable. The awakening that follows is of a different nature altogether—cooler, more fluid, more lunar in essence. One does not ignite the fire from below, but receives the current from above, and in that receiving, a very different modulation of Kuṇḍalinī is set in motion.

And yet the phases are not bypassed. Even with śaktipāta, the process must pass through fire, through liquefaction, through gaseous expansion—until it becomes pure sound, the *nāda*, the vibration closest to the Self. The difference is in how the process is mediated. The Tantric current is less traumatic on the body, less disruptive to the neurochemistry. It moves with the inner currents, working through refinement and resonance rather than rupture and force. One becomes the vessel, not the spark. The lunar current offers the possibility of a graceful awakening.

This distinction, between the fiery ascent and the descending grace, is not merely philosophical. It shapes how the process is lived. The Tantric view regards the body not as an obstacle to be overcome, but as the very expression of the Goddess Herself. The entire physiology is pervaded by Her presence. What the yogin may seek to purify or transcend, the Tantrika seeks to reveal and revere. The body is not seen as a hindrance, but as a holographic vessel of divine intelligence, encoded with myriad śaktis, each expressing their own domain of power. What obscures this understanding is not the body itself but the conditioned mind, the culturally superimposed biases that disassociate the sacred from the physicality of the body. Tantric sādhanā is the reinstatement of this forgotten truth.

To stimulate this divine re-cognition, Tantric sādhanā often turns to the power of visualisation. It is not a mere act of imagination but a sacramental perception—a way of seeing through the eyes of Śakti, recognising the entire body as Her own radiant embodiment. Visualisation here becomes not only a method but a revelation. This emphasis on internal vision is a distinctive hallmark of Trika Śaivism, setting it apart from the yogic path that often relies on invoking force to awaken the dormant energy. Tantra, by contrast, does not strike Śakti into movement—it invites Her. It beckons Her descent through śaktipāta, the grace-born infusion of energy from above. Whether operating under the lens of Śākta Tantra or Śaiva Tantra, the principle remains the same: the life force is awakened not by kindling fire from below, but by receiving the touch of divinity from above.

In this, śaktipāta is not ancillary—it is central. It is not a secondary phenomenon but a definitive axis upon which the Tantric path revolves. This is because Tantra does not view awakening as the acquisition of something new, but knows it as the unveiling of what is always already present. What impedes this recognition is the veil of misidentification—cultural, historical and psychological overlays that obscure the body's inherent divine status. In the

Tantric view, liberation comes not through escaping embodiment, but through re-identifying with its divine actuality. The body is not a prison—it is the throne of the Goddess.

She sits in every aspect of this form. In the joints and sinews, in the organs and cells, in the eyelashes, the tongue, the breath. Each part of the body vibrates with a frequency, a resonance, a *bīja*—a seed-sound, a mantra. Together, these sounds form a field of shimmering awareness, which, through its own sovereign play, projects this cosmos of forms and phenomena. This world we inhabit is none other than that luminous body extended outward, refracted through the prism of names and appearances. The many are Her mirrors. And the awakened being, whose Kuṇḍalinī has begun to reconfigure perception from within, becomes what Maharishi Mahesh Yogi poetically called ‘a walking universe’. We return to this phrase often, for it captures the living mystery of what it means to be fully embodied as Awareness itself.

And here comes the cherry on the proverbial cake. From the standpoint of the Tantric vision, there is no such thing as an individual in peril. There is no isolated entity, no being cut off from the whole. The very term ‘individual’ is a conceptual placeholder, a convention of language, a kind of shared fiction—useful, yes, but ultimately misleading. From the perspective of awakened awareness, what exists is the one Consciousness, interacting with itself in the guise of apparent multiplicity. That interaction gives rise to differing degrees of self-concealment, a kind of divine play wherein rules are voluntarily imposed to make the game of life possible.

A metaphor may help clarify: consider a game like chess or tennis. What gives the game meaning is not random movement, but the constraints that structure it. One does not simply hit the ball for the sake of it; it is the rules that turn a casual pastime into the mastery of Wimbledon. In the same way, the experience of limitation is part of the design. One does not toss the board in frustration without dissolving the game itself. In this light, ignorance is not an aberration but a necessary aspect of the play—*līlā*. And thus, there is no blame. There is no mistake. Consciousness folds into itself, coalesces into form, becomes so convincingly itself-as-separate that the experience is undeniable—how could it not be? To break the rules would be to unravel the whole play. And so it continues... until there is a reintroduction of awareness. Then the game changes, and everything is reconfigured.

In that reconfiguration lies the essence of Tantric realisation: the divinisation of matter. The Kuṇḍalinī process is inseparable from this, an alchemical transmutation of the gross into the subtle, the hidden into the radiant. One becomes spiritual not by subscribing to doctrines, not by intellectual conversion, but because one’s essence begins to shine forth unobstructed. One becomes sacred *per se*, as the substratum of spirit reveals itself within the body.

Grace becomes palpable. Vibrations arise not as fantasy but as living confirmations. One is in the presence of something ungraspable, ineffable, yet undeniable. These are the signs of an awakened Consciousness—awakened to itself.

What emerges through this exploration is not a contest between two paradigms, but a rich contrast of energetic ethos—one solar, the other lunar. The yogic approach, marked by austerity, virya and fierce resolve, seeks to catalyse transformation through fire, invoking will to ignite the evolutionary blaze. The Tantric orientation, by contrast, is rooted in receptive awareness—an inner alignment that opens the vessel to the descent of grace. Both pathways honour the majesty of the Kuṇḍalinī process but differ in temperament and metaphysical assumptions.

Tantra does not aim to conquer Śakti, but to unveil Her. It does not seek to breach heaven but to allow heaven to pour itself into embodied form. The yogic ascent strives for union through tapas; the Tantric descent unfolds that union as an inherent fact.

Yet both paths, at their deepest core, are concerned with nothing less than the complete divinisation of life. And here, their differences become complementary. For the one who ascends in fire may yet be softened by grace, and the one who yields in surrender may burn in the rapture of awakening. Thus, the inner marriage of power and surrender, of Śiva and Śakti, completes the circle—where every motion, whether rising or descending, is recognised as a pulse of Consciousness meeting itself.

Practices to Awaken Kuṇḍalinī and Unfold *Suṣumṇā*

It would now be fitting to acknowledge several methodologies particularly emphasised within the Śaiva Tantric tradition for facilitating the proper awakening of Kuṇḍalinī, and—equally vital—the unfolding of the central channel, *suṣumṇā*. In distinction from the practices commonly associated with Haṭha Yoga, the Śaiva approach venerates inner refinement, subtle attention and nondual insight. What follows from this are three principal modes of practice, each contributing to the realisation of the Self as embodied Awareness.

The first and perhaps most exalted method is the destruction of the dual nature of thought. Directly related to the recognition of mental constructs, or *vikalpas*, it functions as the root mechanism by which Consciousness conceals its own fulness. Though similar to the *ātma-vichāra* or self-enquiry of Advaita Vedānta, the focus in this practice is placed not so much on thoughts themselves but on disallowing the mind to oscillate between opposing

Chapter VI

The Sacrificial Pyre of Re-Animation

The Forgotten Current: *Kuṇḍalinī* as the Missing Thread in Human Evolution

If we are to distil the deeper incentive behind this work, it would be the rehabilitation of *Kuṇḍalinī* as the central agent in the transformation of human consciousness. This is not a peripheral notion. It is a radical reclamation of something long forgotten—this Divine Feminine Power which, though revered in its esoteric origins, has been increasingly obscured by the very traditions that once safeguarded her. In modern psychiatric and medical curricula, she is absent. In psychology, she appears only in vague, archetypal terms, if at all. In the cultural imagination, she has been either sensationalised or mythologised beyond recognition.

The result is a kind of collective amnesia. We are left with a caricature of *Kuṇḍalinī*—a mystical enigma, easily dismissed as superstition or New Age fantasy, devoid of any scientific or metaphysical grounding. And yet, if we are to speak in terms of the science of Consciousness, *Kuṇḍalinī* is nothing less than the power that creates, sustains and transforms everything. She is the dynamic pulse of awareness itself, coursing through the subtle architecture of existence, hidden in plain sight.

Before delving into the intricacies of the process, it feels necessary to pause and reflect—on where we stand as a species, and why this knowledge matters now more than ever. We are living at a perilous threshold in human history, armed with technologies capable of extinguishing life as we know it: nuclear arsenals in the hands of fallible elites, the spectre of biological warfare and the accelerating devastation of the planet's ecosystems. One way or another, it is evident that humanity stands in need of a radical shift—some redeeming force, some saving grace.

This work does not propose a utopian answer. Rather, it places emphasis on the esoteric dimension of transformation—the interior alchemy that begins with the body, with the

breath, with the subterranean stirrings of energy few are trained to recognise. It speaks to those undergoing this shift already, sometimes without understanding or support, who may themselves be the awakened fibres in the nervous system of collective consciousness. And it gestures toward a broader question: *Is a different kind of human life possible? Can this inner science, once hidden in temples and monasteries, be lived in the crucible of everyday life?*

We are no longer living in an age defined by clear civilisational boundaries. Whether one is in Tokyo, Lagos, London, Delhi or New York, the forces shaping human experience are transnational—economic, technological, ideological. The dominant value systems of our global society offer little room for spiritual unfolding. Even when it is acknowledged, it is often co-opted—stripped of its radical essence and repackaged as self-help, entertainment or commodified mysticism. In such a landscape, the power that Kuṇḍalinī represents has gone underground again—not by intention, but through neglect.

And yet, the word is out. The seal has been broken. Awakenings are no longer rare occurrences relegated to secluded forests or ascetic caves. Whether one calls it a true rising of Kuṇḍalinī or simply a surge of heightened prāṇa (*prāṇotthāna*) the signs are unmistakable. There is movement within Consciousness, a stirring that cannot be denied. The question is no longer *if* this power is real, but how we might relate to it—how we might prepare for it, support it and, most importantly, recognise its significance for our time.

This brings us to a sobering reflection: Can the wisdom of yoga be applied today without diluting its essence? Or are we merely engaged in academic curiosity, spiritual tourism or psychological speculation? In truth, the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī is not a concept—it is a rupture. A crack in the shell of our self-inflated identity. The size of that aperture, that rupture, determines how swiftly the illusion collapses. No outer scaffolding—no philosophy, no belief system, no societal norm—can contain what breaks through. This is why the experience is both exhilarating and terrifying. It signals the end of all games. And when the air has been let out of that old balloon of selfhood, one finds oneself standing alone—exposed, unguarded and deeply present.

In that moment, everything depends on attitude. Beyond humility and sovereignty, two inner postures become indispensable: surrender and acceptance. Surrender here is not to be equated with retreat, but takes form as luminous affirmation—not born of indecision or passivity, but of direct communion with the Divine. It is an act that arises from within, bypassing the mind's calculations. Sometimes, it is not even ours to make. There are those who have been touched by such overwhelming Grace that surrender happens without effort. For others, it must be cultivated slowly, nurtured with care, so that when the moment comes, it can be met in full.

This is not just a private journey. The consequences ripple outward. Kuṇḍalinī is not a personal possession alone, but the sacred pulse of evolution itself. That is why this work must enter public conversation—beyond the known circles of seekers and mystics—extending into psychology, psychiatry, education and other fields concerned with human flourishing. A reorientation is needed. A quantum leap, not merely in cognition but in the understanding of who and what the human being is—and what it is capable of becoming.

Therefore, rather than giving definitive answers, these reflections are offered as invitations: to those in the midst of the process who need reassurance, to those sensing its nearness through intuition and to those shaping the future of collective thought. For in this inner unfolding lies not only the key to individual awakening, but perhaps the very thread by which our shared human story can be rewoven.

An Overview of the Entire Process

The Inescapable Journey

Whether the culture we inhabit supports this conversation or not, those in whom this process truly unfolds are rarely left with a choice. This is not a path one picks up like a hobby or a temporary interest. Once the process is genuinely set in motion, once that inner axis begins to turn, it becomes unmistakably clear that there is no going back. That alone should be enough to compel us to meet it with awareness, rather than stumble through it blindly, hoping somehow to return to a previous state of ‘normalcy’. But the very idea of returning to normal is a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron. For if awakening is real—and not simply a fleeting anomaly, or a phase that can be arrested—then the process cannot be undone. This in itself is a powerful realisation: sobering, yes, but also liberating. It calls on us to cease resisting and instead give ourselves, wholly, to the unfolding.

Of course, many will try to resist. In a culture where this knowledge is neither understood nor shared in any meaningful way, it’s only natural that there would be attempts to reverse, suppress or bypass the process altogether. Some of these attempts are surely happening even now—as a response born of misinformation, fear, confusion or sheer unpreparedness. But unless the awakening is powerful enough to dissolve the unconscious tendencies at their root, these reactive efforts will continue. They are symptoms of a world where spiritual emergence is still treated as pathology or fantasy.

And yet, when the process does manage to override the unconscious, it places the individual in a vastly different space—one where choice no longer operates in familiar ways. What

remains is the call to adventure. The very spirit of spiritual exploration demands this: not a strategy or a map, but a certain courage of the soul. With that courage, something extraordinary becomes possible—not extraordinary in a mystical or grandiose sense, but in the simplest and most profound way: the possibility of witnessing the evolution of the Self from within.

This is not evolution in the Darwinian sense, nor even a refinement of the personality. It is a metamorphosis. A rebirth through fire. And as with any metamorphosis, there can be no compromise. It takes no prisoners. It burns through what was borrowed, bloated or believed, what no longer serves. That which resists persists—until it no longer has power.

Returning to the image of the balloon—puffed full with hopes, narratives and intentions—the puncture here represents a rupture in ignorance. And as the air slowly escapes, merging with the universal breath of Consciousness, all that was temporarily usurped is returned. It is offered back to That which plays all parts for the sheer delight of the unfolding drama.

And so the question returns: how applicable are these teachings to those of us living modern, householder lives? Perhaps it is an open question—but one with limited alternatives. If we acknowledge that we don't truly have the luxury of opting out, then we are left with the opportunity to meet this process as best we can, within the circumstances we find ourselves in.

The more we understand its intricacies, the better we are able to walk with it. The more we can cooperate with its intelligence, the more gracefully it may unfold. The more we can contribute consciously to the unfolding, the more coherent its revelations. And when that contribution is no longer needed—when the current takes over entirely—may we find ourselves already swimming, rather than struggling against the tide.

Realignment—The Initiating Current of Internalisation

With this in mind, let us now unfold the greater arc of the process—distilled into a series of accessible, interwoven phases. Though the pathways may vary from individual to individual, there is an essential structure to this journey, a movement that begins with *realignment* and culminates in *greater embodiment*.

What is realignment in this context? It is the progressive internalisation of awareness, initiated through the reorganisation of prāṇa. More precisely, it is the realignment of the prāṇic currents that govern every function of the body-mind, from gross physiological processes to the subtlest movements of thought. This preparatory phase precedes the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī and, in many cases, begins of its own accord—spontaneously, without overt intention.

Of course, there are other ways this realignment might be triggered. A sudden rupture—what we earlier referred to as a puncture in the balloon—can be induced through trauma, powerful psychospiritual experiences or the use (and misuse) of certain consciousness-altering substances. But to offer a more integrated perspective, let us first dwell on the harmonious unfolding of this phase, lest we become lost in the innumerable variations.

At its core, realignment marks a rebalancing of the vital energies. It is the beginning of a prāṇic convergence, a subtle merging of the life currents that typically run in opposition. The breath that descends and the breath that ascends begin to move toward one another, and in that convergence, a third breath is born: samāna. Samāna represents a state of equilibrium—neutral, centred and luminous. It governs heat, digestion and absorption on all levels, and its presence signals the ignition of the inner fire that prepares the vessel for transformation.

When this samāna becomes steady, a new trajectory opens: the upward movement of udāna, the breath that carries the awakened current through the central pathway. But before udāna can rise, the system must be drawn inward. It is here, in this internalisation, that the first real signs of the process may begin to appear—not as dramatic awakenings, but as a subtle turning away from the external world.

This can be confusing for those who experience it without context. Suddenly, one may feel inexplicably disinterested in the usual rhythms of social life—the parties, the banter, the compulsive engagement with distraction. Not to be mistaken with depression, nor with retreat from life—it is a quiet gravitational pull toward the centre of being. The world begins to fade, because another is beginning to rise from within—not because one has rejected it.

This phase can unfold over a year or two, or it may arrive gradually, almost imperceptibly, over longer stretches of time. In either case, it is a holy withdrawal into that which breathes through every fibre of our existence. These are the ways of God, as the sages say. The ways of Consciousness. Mysterious, unannounced, yet unmistakable once they arrive.

Arousal—The Uncoiling of the Current

Arousal is the state of actual awakening—when Kuṇḍalinī uncoils and prepares for ascent. It is at this point that the process becomes unmistakably alive. The force that once lay in potential now begins to move, to choose, to rise.

Tradition and direct accounts alike offer vivid portrayals of this stage. Scriptural references speak of Kuṇḍalinī rising through any one of several subtle pathways—not only the three canonical channels (suṣuṃṇā, vajrā, citrinī), but as many as six possible nāḍīs. Which route

the awakened power ends up taking is not random; it is shaped by the energetic conditions present at the moment of arousal, by the predispositions of the individual and by the deeper karmic *samskāras* carried into this incarnation. This is why no two awakenings are alike. The unique energetic texture of the being becomes the template through which Kuṇḍalinī expresses herself.

For instance, if the awakening occurs in a being steeped in existential anguish—perhaps facing a crisis of meaning—the ascent may be marked by intense enquiry, renunciation or a radical detachment from the world. If, on the other hand, the stirring is infused with compassion for suffering, the path may generate a Bodhisattva-like archetype—an embodiment of compassion that seeks to serve the liberation of others. This, perhaps, echoes the story of Gautama Buddha, whose path was ignited not by personal ambition, but by the raw encounter with suffering beyond the palace walls.

If the one in whom awakening occurs is moved by a desire to serve, to change the world, to midwife new structures of life—then Kuṇḍalinī will take on the qualities needed for that dharma. The ascent will shape a being who is visionary, catalytic, reformative.

And for those mystics in whom devotion to the Divine is the central flame—Saint Teresa of Ávila, Shams-e-Tabriz, Rūmī, Catherine of Siena, Ramakrisna Paramahansa, to mention a few—Kuṇḍalinī's ascent may culminate in ecstatic union, an overwhelming intimacy with the Absolute, expressed in luminous poetry, miracles or silent presence.

Each of these pathways begins at the moment of arousal. Each is shaped by what is present in the heart at the moment the coiled power awakens. What Kuṇḍalinī touches, She magnifies. What She encounters, She transforms. And so this phase—though often bypassed or glossed over in modern teachings—is among the most critical. It determines not only the direction of the ascent, but also the *quality* of what will unfold. It is the formative ground from which destiny is recast.

Ascent—The Vertical Unfolding of Awareness

We now arrive at the actual phase of *ascent*—the great expansion. Here, Kuṇḍalinī moves decisively toward the summit, rising through the central axis of the subtle body. This is the moment when Consciousness no longer stirs in preparation, or coils in potential—it surges upward with luminous force. This signifies the phase of vertical awakening, the full flowering of inner elevation.

Traditionally, this phase is described in esoteric terms as a vertical movement (*ūrdhva gamanam*) where the current ascends through the *suṣumṇā*, penetrating one energetic cen-