

This is an extraordinary autobiographical account of what happens in the mind and body when Kundalini gets spontaneously aroused. Pandit Gopi Krishna's graphic account of his experiences stands out as one of the clearest journals documenting spiritual transformation and mental evolution into a higher plane of consciousness. He is honest in describing the difficulties and dangers of the spiritual path and the intense pressure it can exert on the physical body.

Pandit **Gopi Krishna** (1907-1984) was not a guru in the classical sense. He was more a seeker who documented his experiences with Kundalini energy in the hope of understanding this unimaginably powerful force.



KUNDALINI REPRESENTS the cosmic vital energy lying dormant in the human body, coiled round the base of the spine, a little below the sexual organ, like a serpent, asleep...

When roused, Kundalini rises through the *sushumna*, the hairlike duct rising through the spinal cord, like a streak of lightning carrying with her the vital energy of the body, to join her divine spouse Shiva in the last or the seventh centre in the brain.'

From the book

'THE AWAKENING of Kundalini is a perfectly natural biological phenomenon in any healthy human body' writes the author, 'leading towards a state of evolutionary perfection.'

Kundalini

Path to higher consciousness

Pandit Gopi Krishna

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I
The Awakening

One morning during the Christmas of 1937 I sat in a small room in a house on the outskirts of Jammu, the winter capital of the Jammu and Kashmir State in northern India. I was meditating with my face towards the east, where the first grey streaks of dawn fell into the room. Practice had accustomed me to sit in the same posture for hours without discomfort, and as I sat breathing slowly and rhythmically, my attention was drawn towards the crown of my head, contemplating an imaginary lotus in full bloom, radiating light.

I sat unmoving and erect, my thoughts uninterruptedly centered on the shining lotus, intent on keeping my attention from wandering and bringing it back again whenever it moved away. The intensity of concentration interrupted my breathing to such an extent that at times it was barely perceptible. My whole being, was so engrossed in the contemplation of the lotus that for several minutes I lost touch with my body and surroundings. During such intervals I felt as if I were poised in the mid-air, without feeling my body

at all. The only object of which I was aware was a lotus of brilliant colour, emitting rays of light. This experience has happened to many people who practise meditation regularly for a length of time, but what happened to me that morning, changed the whole course of my life and outlook.

During a spell of intense concentration I suddenly felt a strange sensation below the base of the spine, at the place touching the seat, while I sat cross-legged on a folded blanket spread on the floor. The sensation was so extraordinary and pleasing that my attention was forcibly drawn towards it. The moment my attention was withdrawn from the point on which it was focused, the sensation ceased.

Thinking it to be a trick of the imagination, I dismissed the matter from my mind. Again I fixed my mind on the lotus, and as the image grew clear and distinct at the top of my head, again the sensation occurred. This time I tried to maintain the fixity of my attention and succeeded for a few seconds, but the sensation, extending upwards, grew intense and was so extraordinary, as compared to anything I had experienced before, that in spite of myself my mind went towards it, and at that very moment it again disappeared. I was now convinced that something unusual had happened for which my daily practice of concentration was probably responsible.

I had read glowing accounts, written by learned men, of great benefits resulting from concentration and of the miraculous powers acquired by yogis through such exercises. My heart beat wildly, and I found it difficult to bring my attention to the required degree of fixity. After a while I grew composed and was soon deep in meditation.

When completely immersed I again experienced the sensation, but this time, instead of allowing my mind to leave the point where I had fixed it, I maintained a rigidity of attention throughout. The sensation extended upwards, growing in intensity, and I felt myself wavering, but with great effort I kept my attention centered round the lotus. Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord.

Entirely unprepared for such a development, I was completely taken by surprise; but regaining self-control, I remained sitting, keeping my mind on the point of concentration. The illumination grew brighter, the roaring louder — I experienced a rocking sensation and felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light. It is impossible to describe the experience accurately. I felt the point of consciousness that was myself, growing wider, surrounded by waves of light. It grew wider and wider, spreading outward while the body, normally the immediate object of its perception, appeared to have receded into the distance, until I became entirely unconscious of it. I was now all consciousness, without any outline, without any idea of a corporeal appendage, without any feeling or sensation coming from the senses, immersed in a sea of light simultaneously conscious and aware of every point, spread out, as it were, in all directions without any barrier or material obstruction. I was no longer as I knew myself, to be a small point of awareness confined in a body, but instead was a vast circle of consciousness in which the body was but a point, bathed in light and in a state of exaltation and happiness, impossible to describe.

After some time, the circle began *to* narrow down. I felt myself contracting, becoming smaller, until I again became dimly conscious of the outline of my body and as I slipped back to my old condition, I became suddenly aware of the noises in the street, felt again my arms and legs and head, and once more became my narrow self in touch with my body and its surroundings.

When I opened my eyes and looked about, I felt a little dazed and bewildered, as if coming back from a strange land. The sun had risen and was shining warm and soothing. I tried to lift my hands, which always rested in my lap, one upon the other, during meditation. My arms felt limp and lifeless. With an effort I raised them up and stretched them to enable the blood to flow freely. Then I tried to free my legs from the posture in which I was sitting, into in a more comfortable position, but could not. They were heavy and stiff. With the help of my hands I freed my legs and stretched them out, then put my back against the wall, reclining in a position *of* ease and comfort.

What had happened to me? Was I the victim of a hallucination? Or had I by some strange vagary of fate succeeded in experiencing the Transcendental? Had I really succeeded where millions of others had failed? Was there, after all, really some truth in the oft repeated claim of the sages and ascetics of India, made for thousands of years and verified and repeated for generations that it was possible to apprehend reality in this life if one practised meditation in a certain way? I could hardly believe that I had a vision of divinity. There had been an expansion of my own self, my own consciousness, and the transformation had been brought about by the vital current that had started from below

the spine and found access to my brain through the backbone.

I recalled that I had read long ago in books on Yoga, of a certain vital mechanism called Kundalini, connected with the lower end of the spine, which once roused, carries the limited human consciousness to transcendental heights, endowing the individuals with incredible psychic and mental powers. Had I been lucky enough to find the key to this wonderful mechanism, which was wrapped up in the legendary mist of ages, about which people talked and whispered without having once seen it in action? I tried once again to repeat the experience, but was so weak that I could not collect my thoughts enough to induce a state of concentration. I looked at the sun. Could it be that in my condition of extreme concentration I had mistaken it for the effulgent halo that had surrounded me in the superconscious state? I closed my eyes again, allowing the rays of the sun to play upon my face. No, the glow that I could perceive across my closed eyelids was quite different. The light I had experienced was internal, an integral part of enlarged consciousness, a part of myself.

I slowly walked downstairs. Saying nothing to my wife, I took my meal in silence and left for work. My appetite was not as keen as usual, my mouth appeared dry, and I could not put my thoughts into my work in the office. I was in a state of lassitude, disinclined to talk. After a while, feeling ill at ease, I left for a short walk in the street, with the idea of finding diversion for my thoughts.

My mind reverted again to the experience of the morning, trying to recreate in imagination the marvellous phenomenon I had witnessed, but without

success. My body, felt weak, and I could not walk for long. I took no interest in the people whom I met, and walked with a sense of detachment to my surroundings. I returned to my desk sooner than I had intended, and passed the remaining hours unable to compose my thoughts sufficiently to work.

When I returned home in the afternoon I felt no better, I could not bring myself to sit down and read, my usual habit in the evening. I ate supper in silence, and retired to bed. Usually I was asleep within minutes of putting my head to the pillow, but this night I felt strangely restless and disturbed, and could not reconcile the exaltation of the morning with the depression that sat heavily on me now. I slept fitfully, dreaming strange dreams, and woke up after short intervals in sharp contrast to my usual deep, uninterrupted sleep. After about 3 am, sleep refused to come. I sat up in bed, fatigued, and my thoughts lacked clarity. The time for my meditation was approaching. I decided to begin earlier than usual so that I would not have the sun on me, and so, without disturbing my wife, went upstairs to my study. I spread the blanket and sitting cross-legged as usual, began to meditate.

I could not concentrate with the same intensity as on the previous day, though I tried my best. My thoughts wandered and I felt strangely nervous and uneasy. After repeated efforts, I held my attention at the usual point for some time, waiting for results. Nothing happened and I began to feel doubts about the validity of my previous experience. I tried again, this time with better success. Pulling myself together, I steadied my wandering thoughts, and fixing my attention on the crown, tried to visualize a lotus in full bloom, as was my custom.

As soon as I arrived at the usual pitch of mental fixity, I again felt the current moving upward. I did not allow my attention to waver, and again with a rush and a roaring noise in my ears the stream of effulgent light entered my brain, filling me with power and vitality. I felt myself expanding in all directions, spreading beyond the boundaries of flesh, entirely absorbed in the contemplation of a brilliant conscious glow, one with it and yet not entirely merged in it. The condition lasted for a shorter duration than it had done yesterday and the feeling of exaltation was not so strong. When I came back to normal, I felt my heart thumping wildly and there was a bitter taste in my mouth. It seemed as if a scorching blast of hot air had passed through my body. The feeling *of* exhaustion and weariness was more pronounced than it had been yesterday.

I rested for some time to recover my strength and poise. It was still dark so I had no doubts that the experience was real and that the sun had nothing to do with the internal lustre that I saw. But, why did I feel uneasy and depressed? Instead of feeling exceedingly happy at my luck, why had despondency overtaken me? I felt as if I were in imminent danger of something beyond my understanding and power, something which I could neither grasp nor analyse.

A heavy cloud of depression and gloom seemed to hang over me. I did not feel I was the same man I had been a few days before. A condition of horror, on account of the inexplicable change, began to settle on me, from which I could not make myself free by any effort of my will.

Little did I realize that from that day onwards I was never to be my old normal self again. I had

unwittingly and without preparation or adequate knowledge, roused to activity the most wonderful power in man. I had stepped unknowingly upon the key to the most guarded secret of the ancients, and thenceforth for a long time, I had to live suspended by a thread, swinging between life on the one hand and death on the other, between sanity and insanity, between lights and darkness, between heaven and earth.

My Early Years

I began practicing meditation at the age of seventeen. Failure in a house examination at College, prevented me from appearing in the University that year, creating a revolution in my young mind. I was not so much worried by the failure and loss of one year as by the thought of the extreme pain it would cause my mother, whom I loved dearly.

I racked my brain for a plausible excuse to mitigate the effect of the painful news to her. She was so confident of my success that I simply could not disillusion her. I was a merit scholarship holder, occupying a distinguished position in College, but instead of devoting time to study, I busied myself in reading irrelevant books borrowed from the library.

Too late I realized that I knew nothing about some of the subjects, and had no chance of passing the test. Having never suffered the ignominy of a failure in my school life, and always highly spoken of by the teachers, I felt crestfallen by the thought that my mother would be deeply hurt at my negligence.

Born in a village, to a family of hard working and God fearing peasants, fate had destined my mother as a partner to a man considerably senior to her in age, who hailed from Amritsar, a place at that time no less than six days journey by rail and cart from the place of her birth. Insecurity and lawlessness in the country had forced one of my forefathers to bid adieu to his cool native soil in Kashmir and to seek his fortune in the torrid plains of distant Punjab.

There, changed in dress and speaking a different tongue, my grandfather and great grandfather lived and prospered like other exiles of their kind. Altered in all save their religious rites and customs and the unmistakable physiognomy of Kashmiri Brahmins, my father, with a deep mystical vein in him, returned to the land of his ancestors when almost past his prime, to marry and settle there. Even during his youth he was always on the look-out for Yogis and ascetics reputed to possess occult powers. He never tired of serving them and sitting in their company to learn the secrets of their marvellous gifts.

Father was a firm believer in the traditional schools of religious discipline and yoga, extant in India from the earliest times. The renunciatory conduct set by the inspired authors of the Vedic hymns and the celebrated seers of the *Upanishads*, inspired my father. Conforming to an established practice prevailing in the ancient society of Indo-Aryans, these sages retired from the busy life of householders at a ripe age, sometimes accompanied by their consorts, to spend the rest of their lives in forest hermitages in uninterrupted meditation.

This unusual mode of passing the eve of life has exercised a deep fascination over countless spiritually

inclined men and women in India. Even now hundreds of accomplished and happily circumstanced family men of advanced age, bid farewell to their otherwise comfortable homes and dutiful progeny and *go* to distant retreats to pass their remaining days peacefully, in spiritual pursuits, away from the fret and fever of the world.

My father, an ardent admirer of this ancient ideal, chose for himself a recluse life, about twelve years after marriage, his gradually formed decision hastened by the tragic death of his first-born son at the age of five. Retiring voluntarily from a lucrative Government post, before he was even fifty, he gave up all the pleasures of life and shut himself with his books, leaving the entire responsibility of managing the household on the inexperienced shoulders of his young wife.

She had suffered terribly. My father renounced the world when she was in her twenty-eighth year, the mother of two daughters and a son. How she had brought us up and with what devotion she attended to the simple needs of our austere father, who cut himself off completely from the world!

The Turmoil Within

I felt guilty and mortified. How could I face her with an admission of my weakness? Realizing that by my lack of self-control I had betrayed the trust reposed in me, I determined to make up in other ways. At no other time in my life should I be guilty of the same offence again. In order to curb the vagrant element in my nature and to regulate my conduct it was necessary that I should make a conquest of my mind.

Having made the resolve, I looked around for a means to carry it into effect. In order to succeed, it was necessary to have at least some knowledge of the methods to bring one's rebellious self into subjugation. Accordingly, I read a few books of the usual kind on the development of personality and mind control.

Out of the huge mass of material contained in these writings, I devoted my attention to only two things: concentration of mind and cultivation of will. I took up the practice of both with youthful enthusiasm, directing all my energies and subordinating all my desires to the acquisition of this one object. I was sick with mortification at my lack *of* self-restraint, which made me yield passively to the desire to substitute absorbing story books and other light literature for the dry and difficult college texts.

I made it a point to assert my will in all things, beginning with smaller ones and gradually extending its application to bigger and more difficult issues, forcing myself, as a penance, to do irksome and rigorous tasks, against which my ease-loving nature recoiled in dismay. I began to feel a sense of mastery over myself, a growing conviction that I would not again fall an easy prey to ordinary temptations.

From mind control it was but a step to yoga and occultism. I passed almost imperceptibly from a study of books on the former to a scrutiny of spiritualistic literature, combined with a cursory reading of some of the scriptures. Smarting under the disgrace of my first failure in life, I felt a growing aversion to the world and its hopelessly tangled affairs which had exposed me *to* this humiliation. Gradually the fire of renunciation began to burn fiercely in me, seeking knowledge of an

honorable way of escape from the tension and turmoil of life to the peace and quietude of a consecrated existence.

At this time of acute mental conflict, the sublime message of the *Bhagavad Gita* had a most profound and salutary effect on me. From the original idea to achieve success in education by eliminating the possibility of failure owing to flaccid determination, I imperceptibly went to the other extreme; I was soon exercising my will and practising meditation with the sole object of gaining success in yoga even if that necessitated the sacrifice of all my earthly prospects.

My worldly ambition died down. At that young age, when one is more influenced by ideals and dreams than by practical considerations. The effect of yoga on me was twofold: it made me more realistic, and at the same time it steeled my determination to find a happiness that would endure. Often in the solitude of a secluded place or alone in my room I debated within myself on the merits and demerits of the different courses open to me.

Earlier my ambition had been to prepare myself for a successful career in order to enjoy a life of plenty and comfort, surrounded by all the luxuries available to the affluent. Now I wanted to lead a life of peace, immune from worldly fervour and free of contentious strife. Why set my heart on things, I told myself, which I must ultimately relinquish, often most reluctantly at the point of the sword wielded by death, with great pain and torture of the mind? Why should I not live in contentment with just enough to fulfil! Reasonably the few needs imposed by nature, devoting the time I could save thereby to the acquirement of assets of a permanent nature.

The more I thought about the matter, the more strongly I was drawn towards a simple, unostentatious life. The only obstacle to the otherwise easy achievement of my purpose, which I felt was rather hard to overcome, lay in winning the consent of my mother, whose hopes were shattered by the resolve of my father to relinquish the world, and now her hopes were centred on me. She wished to see me a man of position and substance, able to lift her economically ruined family out of the poverty and drudgery into which it had fallen by the renunciation of my father, I knew that the knowledge of my plans would cause her pain, and this I wanted to avoid at any cost. At the same time the urge to devote myself to the search for reality was too strong to be suppressed. I was on the horns of a dilemma, torn between my filial duty and my own natural desire to retrieve the decayed fortune of the family on the one hand, and my distaste for the world on the other.

But the thought of giving up my home and family never occurred to me. I would have surrendered everything, not accepting even the path I had selected for myself, rather than be parted from my parents or deviate in any way from the duty I owed to them. Apart from this consideration, my whole being revolted at the idea of becoming a homeless ascetic, depending on the labour of others for my sustenance.

If God is the embodiment of all that is good, noble, and pure, I argued with myself, how can He decree that those who have a burning desire, to find Him, surrendering themselves to His will, should leave their families, to whom they owe various obligations.

The mere thought of such an existence was repugnant to me. I could never reconcile myself to a life

which, in any way, cast a reflection on my manhood, on my ability to make use of my talents to maintain myself and those dependent on me.

I was determined to live a family life, simple and clean, devoid of luxury, permitting me to fulfil my obligations and to live peacefully on the fruit of my labour. I wanted ample time and the serenity of mind to pursue calmly the path I had chosen for myself. At that young age it was not my intellect but something deeper and more far-seeing, which, chalked out the course of life I was to follow ever after. I was ignorant at the time of the awful maelstrom of superphysical forces into which I was to plunge blindly. Many years later I was to find an answer to the riddle which has confronted mankind for many thousands of years. I can assign no other reason for the apparent anachronism I displayed at an unripe age, when I was not shrewd enough to weigh correctly all the implications of the step I proposed to take, in adopting an abstemious mode of existence, to strive for self-realization while leading a family life.

The Beginning of My Journey

We lived in Lahore in those days, occupying the top part of a small three-storied house in a narrow lane, on the fringe of the city. The area was terribly congested, but fortunately the surrounding buildings were lower than ours, allowing us enough sun and air and a fine unobstructed view of the distant fields. I selected a corner in one of the two small rooms at our disposal, for my yoga practice and went to it every day, with the first glimmer of dawn, for meditation. Beginning with a small duration, I extended the period gradually until I was

able to sit in the same posture, for hours without any sign of fatigue or restlessness. I tried to follow all the rules of conduct prescribed for the students of yoga. It was not an easy task for a college youth of my age, without the personal guidance of a revered teacher, to live up to the standard of sobriety, rectitude, and self-restraint necessary for success in yoga. But I persisted, adhering, tenaciously to my decision, each failure spurring me on to a more powerful effort, resolved to tame the unruly mind instead of allowing it to dominate me. How far I succeeded, considering my natural disposition and circumstances, I cannot say.

My mother understood, from my altered demeanour and subdued manner, that a far reaching change, had taken place in me. I never felt the need of explaining my point of view to prepare her for the resolution I had taken. Reluctant to cause her the least pain, I kept my counsel to myself, avoiding any mention of my choice when we discussed our future plans.

But circumstances so transpired that I was spared the unpleasant task of making my determination known to my mother. I stood second in a competitive test held for the selection of candidates for a superior Government service, but due to a change in the procedure I was finally not accepted. Similarly the disapproval of my brother-in-law had the effect of annulling a proposal for my joining the medical profession.

Meanwhile a sudden breakdown in my health due to heat, created such an anxiety in the heart of my mother that she insisted on my immediate departure to Kashmir. Receiving at this juncture an offer of appointment to a low salaried clerical post in the Public Works Department of the state, I accepted it readily

with her consent and left for the beautiful valley, with no regrets, to take part for the first time in the mechanical drudgery of a small office.

Within a year my parents followed me to Srinagar and soon after my mother busied herself in finding a matrimonial alliance for me. Next summer, in the twenty-third year of my life, I was joined in wedlock in the traditional manner to my wife, seven years my junior, belonging to a Pandit family of Baramulla.

I startled her on our very first meeting by leaving the nuptial chamber at three o'clock in the morning, for a bath in the nearby riverside temple, returning after an hour to sit in meditation until it was time to leave for work. She admirably adjusted herself to what must have seemed to her unsophisticated mind an eccentric streak in her husband, ready with a warm *kangri* * when I returned from the temple, numb with winter cold.

About a year after I was transferred to Jammu to serve my term in that Province, she followed me after a few months with my parents, to both of whom she endeared herself by her sense of duty and unremitting attention to their comfort. Years passed, not without lapses on my part and interruptions due to circumstances beyond my control; but I never lost sight of the goal I had set before myself.

At the time of the extraordinary episode in 1937, I was serving as a clerk under the Director of Education in our State. Prior to that I had been working in the

* A kangri is a small earthenware bowl encased in wicker in which burning charcoal is kept for heating the body. It is usually kept close to the skin under the long robe used by Kashmiris.

same capacity in the office of the Chief Engineer, from which I had been transferred for questioning an unjust directive from the Minister in charge, who often took morbid pleasure in bullying subordinates. I had no liking for the work in higher office, although I held enviable positions.

I was required to maintain the classified lists and service records of senior grade employees, to formulate proposals for their promotion and transfer, to dispose off their petitions and appeals, and to attend to their requests. In this way I had to deal with a large section of the personnel in both departments, many of whom, frequented the offices regularly, hunting for easy grains, obliging colleagues to do likewise to save themselves from a possible loss.

By the very nature of my duties it was utterly impossible for me to escape comment and criticism of my acts, which influenced the life and career of someone or other. But some of these acts had also the reverse effect of confronting me with my own conscience on behalf of a poor and supportless, but deserving candidate. Because of a desire to deal equal justice in all cases, I was frequently brought in conflict with hidden influences surreptitiously at work behind the apparently spotless facade of Government offices. I had a strange partiality for the underdog, and this trait in my character worked equally against my own interests, and on at least two occasions impelled me to refuse chances of promotion, out of turn, in preference to senior colleagues.

Temperamentally I was not suited for a profession of this kind, but possessing neither the qualifications for another, nor means, nor inclination to equip myself for a better one, I continued *to* move in the rut in which

I had been placed. Although I worked hard and to the best of my ability, I was more interested in the study and practice of yoga than in my official career. The latter I treated merely as a means to earn a livelihood, just sufficient to meet our simplest needs. Beyond that it had no value or significance for me.

I had a positive dislike for being drawn into controversies, with crowds of disputing contestants on every side. I strove to keep myself unruffled and calm, indispensable to my yoga practices.

Only a few years after my joining the Public Works Department, clouds of intrigue began to gather round the then Chief Engineer. His attempt to put a curb on the shady acts of corrupt officers landed him in difficulties. The conspiracy ended in his compulsory retirement from service much before his time, amid expressions of amazement at such an act of injustice from those who were in the know of the affair.

With his retirement I was left defenseless against a host of powerful and vindictive enemies who poisoned the Ministry against me and resorted to devious ways to cause me harassment and harm. The last straw was furnished by my own criticism, under the new Chief Engineer, of a defective order received from the Ministry which, to my great relief, culminated in my transfer from a place whose atmosphere had become much too vitiated for my liking.

In the Education Directorate the conditions were more reassuring for me. There were no chances of corruption on the scale that had existed in the Public Works Department. Consequently the distracting play of plot and counter-plot, which had been a regular

feature of the former office, was also absent. Here my path ran more or less smoothly until 1947. It was in no small measure due to the sense of security and the congenial atmosphere in the new office, that I was able to retain my link with yoga and meditation in spite of the ordeals I had to face and the suspense I had to bear for a long period, while attending to the day-to-day work at my table.

The First Irresistible Call

I was born in 1903 in the small village of Gairoo, about 20 miles from Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, which was the parental home of my mother. In the same big compound in which my mother's house was located, my father had constructed a small, two-storeyed humble structure, built of sun-dried bricks with a thatched roof, which served as our residence for a long time.

My first recollections of childhood circle round a medium sized house in a quiet sector of the city of Srinagar. As I was the only son, my mother never dressed me in fine clothes, nor allowed me long out of her sight for fear of mishaps. An indelible childhood memory is of a moonlit night, with my mother and one of my maternal uncles, sleeping in the open yard in the house of a farmer. We had travelled all day on horseback to the distant abode of a reputed hermit, but failing to reach our destination by nightfall had sought shelter in the house of a farmer, who accommodated us thus for the night.

I cannot recall the appearance of the hermit, except that his long, matted hair fell on his shoulders as he sat cross legged on the floor. I remember him taking me in his lap and stroking my hair, which my mother had allowed to grow long, in conformity with a solemn vow she had taken not to apply scissors or razor to it except at the time of the sacred thread ceremony.

Years later, when I had grown up my mother revealed to me the purpose of her visit to the hermit. Years before, the hermit had appeared to her in a dream at a most anxious time. She had passed the preceding day in an extremely perturbed frame of mind caused by my inability to swallow anything owing to a swollen throat. In the dream the holy personage had opened my mouth gently with his hand and touched its interior down to the throat softly with his finger, then making a sign to her to feed me vanished from sight. Awakened with a start, my mother pressed me close to her and to her immense relief felt me sucking and swallowing the milk without difficulty. Overjoyed at the sudden cure, which she attributed to the miraculous power of the saint, she made a vow that she would go on a pilgrimage to his place of residence to thank him personally for the favour.

Owing to household worries she could not make the pilgrimage for some years and undertook it at a time when I was grown up enough to remember the journey and the visit. The most surprising part of the story is that at the very moment of our approach, the hermit casually inquired whether I had been able to suck and swallow my milk after his visit to her in the dream. Wonder-struck, my mother had fallen prostrate at his feet.

I cannot vouch for the miraculous part of the episode. All I can say is that my mother was veracious

and critically observant in other things. I have related the episode merely as a faintly remembered incident of early childhood. Since then I have come across innumerable accounts of similar and even more incredible feats, narrated by trustworthy, highly intelligent eyewitnesses; but on closer investigation the bulk of the material was found to be too weakly supported to stand the force of rigid scientific inquiry.

* * *

Another remarkable event of my childhood which I remember more vividly occurred at the age of eight. One day as I walked along a road in Srinagar on my way to the house of our religious preceptor, all at once, like lightning, a sudden question, never thought of before, shot across my mind. I stood still in the middle of the road confronted with the insistent inquiry, 'What am I?' coupled with the pressing interrogation from every object without, 'What does all this mean?' My whole being as well as the world around appeared to have assumed the aspect of an everlasting inquiry, an insistent, unanswerable interrogation, which struck me dumb and helpless, groping for a reply. The surrounding objects began to whirl and dance around me. I felt giddy and confused, hardly able to restrain myself from fainting. Steadying myself, I proceeded on my way, my childish mind in a ferment over the incident of which, at that age, I could not in the least understand the significance. A few days later I had a remarkable dream in which I was given a glimpse of another existence, not as a child or as an adult but with a dream personality utterly unlike my usual one. I saw a heavenly spot, peopled by god-like, celestial beings, and myself bodiless, something

quite different — ethereal — a stranger belonging to a different order and yet distinctly resembling and intimately close to me, my own self transfigured, in a gloriously bright and peaceful environment, the very opposite of the shabby, noisy surroundings in which I lived. Because of its unique and extraordinarily vivid nature, the dream was so indelibly imprinted upon my memory that I can recall it distinctly even today.

The dream was probably the answer to the overwhelming, unavoidable question that had arisen from my depths a few days before. It was the first irresistible call from the invisible other world which, as I came to know later, awaits us, always intimately near, yet, for those with their backs to it, farther away than the farthest star in the firmament.

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In the year 1914 we journeyed to Lahore where my father was required to present himself personally at the Treasury to receive his pension. From that day to the time of my appointment in 1923 we lived there both summer and winter. It was there that I received my high school and two years of college education. We lived poorly and I had not the advantage of a private coach or guide; it was with great difficulty that my mother could find enough money to purchase even my essential books and clothes. Denied the possibility of purchasing extra books, my study was confined to school classics, but I soon had the chance to read a slightly abridged translation in Urdu of the Arabian Nights at the age of about twelve. The book, for the first time created a burning thirst for fairy tales, stories of adventure and travel, and other romantic literature. At the age of fourteen, starting with easy stories,

I turned from Urdu to English, devouring every story book that came into my hands. From novels and other light material I gradually passed on to elementary books on science and philosophy, available in our small school library. I read avidly, eager for satisfactory replies to the questions which cropped up as the result of my survey of the narrow world in which I lived, and the stray glimpses *of* the broader one of which I came to know from the graphic accounts contained in the books.

I was brought up in a strictly religious atmosphere by my mother. She went to the temple long before the first faint glimmer of dawn streaked the horizon, returning at daybreak to attend to the needs of the household. In early childhood I followed implicitly the direction of her simple faith, sometimes to the extent of forgoing the sweet last hours of sleep towards dawn in order to go with her to the temple. With rapt attention I listened to the superhuman exploits of Krishna, which my maternal uncle read aloud every evening from his favourite translation of *Bhagavad Parana*, a famous book of Hindu mythology, containing the story of the incarnations of the god Vishnu in human form. According to popular belief, Krishna imparted the lofty teaching of *Bhagavad Gita* to the warrior, Arjuna, on the battlefield before the commencement *of* action in the epic war, Mahabhartha.

Wondering at the prodigious, supernatural feats of valour and strength recounted in the narrative, my childish imagination ran into fantastic realms. I unquestioningly accepted every impossible and unbelievable incident as truth, filled with a desire to grow into a superman of identical power myself.

MY Thirst *for* Knowledge

The information I accumulated from my high school texts and from the study of other literature, acted as a cathartic and had the effects *of* purging *my* mind gradually, of irrational and fantastic notions I had gathered in childhood, replacing them with a rational and realistic picture of the world.

Occasionally, noticing an exact identity of thought between what I felt but could not articulate and the clearly expressed idea of a writer, I was so carried away by emotion that, dropping the book, I would stand up and pace the room for a while. My mind was moulded by degrees in the healthy atmosphere of literature, and by the influence of the great thinkers whose ideas I imbibed from their works.

By the time I had completed my first year at college, the impact of treatises on astronomy and natural science had become powerful enough to start me on a path contrary to the one I had followed in childhood. It did not take me long to emerge a full fledged agnostic, full of doubts about the extravagant notions and irrational beliefs of my own religions, to which I had lent complete credence earlier.

Dislodged from the safe harbour which my mother's simple faith had provided for me, my still unanchored mind was tossed here and there. Without reading my standard book on religion or any spiritual literature, to counterbalance the effect of the admittedly materialistic tendency of the scientific works I had gone through, I began to question religion. Although until that time I had not studied religion, the questions and problems

which agitated my mind at that young age never found a satisfactory solution in any book on science, philosophy or religion. I was brought to an abrupt halt in my quest for scientific answers to my questions, by my failure in the college examination towards the end of 1920. The shock demolished with one blow, the seemingly invincible fortification of intellectual scepticism my immature judgement had created around myself.

Instead of yielding or collapsing, I turned determinedly towards a path of seeking answers. I could not have visualized at that time what transpired afterwards. I turned finally to the practice of yoga, as a practicable method available to thirsty minds to verify individually the undemonstrable central truths of religion. When nothing tangible happened for nearly seventeen years, from the age of seventeen to thirty four, I began to despair.

Science as an Alternative

Even after the change from the chaotic to the more spiritual trend of mind, the critical element in my nature never left me completely. I was not one to be satisfied with shadowy appearances and cloudy manifestations, with cryptic symbols and mystic signs.

Study of the scriptures and also the literature of other religions did not suffice to quiet the restless element in my nature. Stray passages from the teachings of prophets and the expressions of sages found an echo in the depths of my being, without carrying conviction to my uncompromising intellect. The very fact that the existing world religions, differ radically in their basic tenets, was enough to raise serious doubts in my mind

about the authenticity of the claim that the revealed material was a direct communication from God. Science itself, though extremely useful in many ways and serviceable as a battering ram to smash religion, was not, in my view, fit to rule the domain where faith holds sway. It had no satisfactory explanation to offer for my individual existence or for the infinitely complex creation around me.

The Search for *Truth*

I thirsted for rationality in religion, for the worship of truth, whatever and wherever that might be. There was no spectacle more painful for me than the sight of a conscientious and intelligent man defending an absurdity simply because it formed an article of his faith. Conversely, the irrationality of those who attempted to squeeze the universe within the narrow compass of reason was no less deplorable. The unknown entry that inhabits human bodies is still enveloped in mystery, and the rational faculty, one of its inseparable possessions, is no less an enigma than the owner itself. As such, the attempt to explain the cosmos purely in terms of human experience, as interpreted by reason, is an irrational endeavour to solve the riddle of the universe.

I wondered whether it would ever be possible to have a religion that possessed an appeal for all mankind, that would be acceptable to one and all. In order to persuade reason to rise above itself, it is essential to arrange its ascent in a manner not repugnant to it by violating any of its own jealously guarded principles. But as none of the existing religions are prepared to allow this kind of approach, there appears no possibility

of a compromise between the two, and consequently no likelihood of the efflorescence of a universal faith.

In spite of the phenomenal increase in human knowledge during the last two centuries in all other fields, the basic facts of religion are still subjects of dispute and controversy. Viewed in the context of a rigidly lawbound universe, religion appeared to me to be but isolated and not correctly interpreted phenomena of a cosmic law, still shrouded in mystery.

I could not bring myself to believe that law-abiding nature, at the peak of her glory could be so inconsistent in the case of a few specially constituted men and women, (themselves as ignorant about the nature of the power manifesting itself through them, as the spectators of their extraordinary feats) as to take a sudden plunge from perfect order in the material universe to freakish sport in the spiritual realm.

That some of the manifestations were genuine, there could be no doubt. But how were they to be accounted for? It was only after many years that I was able to locate the source of the bewildering phenomena and trace it to a marvellous super-intelligent power in man, which is both illuminating and mystifying.

My interest in the study and practice *of yoga* was not the outcome of any deep desire to possess psychic gifts. The tricks and deception sometimes practised by men of this class, and the utter futility of an effort to secure lasting benefits either for one's own self or for other men, were all sufficient reason for me to rise above the temptation for acquiring the powers to flout the laws of matter, without possessing at the same time the necessary strength of will to obey the laws of the spirit.

The emphasis laid in some of the books on yoga, both of the east and the west, on the development of psychic powers merely for the sake of gaining success in worldly enterprises, invariably made me wonder at the incongruity in human nature, which, even in the case of a system designed to develop the spiritual side of man, focusses the attention more on the acquisition of visible, wonder-exciting properties of the body or mind, than on the invisible but tranquil possessions of the soul.

The target I had in mind was far higher and nobler than what in the most attractive form I could expect, from the acquirement of the much coveted supernormal gifts. I longed to attain the condition of consciousness, said to be the ultimate goal of *yogz*, which carries the embodied spirit to regions of unspeakable glory and bliss, beyond the sphere of opposites, free from the desire for life and fear of death.

This extraordinary state of consciousness, internally aware of its own surprising nature, was the supreme prize for which the true aspirants of yoga had to strive. The possession of supernormal powers of the usual kind, whether of the body or mind, which kept a man still floundering in the stormy sea of existence, seemed to me to be of no greater consequence than the possession of other earthly treasures, all bound to vanish with life. The achievements of science had brought possibilities within the reach of man. Possibilities no less amazing than what is related to even the most wonderful performances of the supernatural type with but one supreme exception - the miracle of transcendental experience and revelation. It was towards this surpassing state of pure cognition, free from the limitations of time and space, that I desired with all my heart, to soar.



The Serpent Rises

The sudden awakening of Kundalini in one who has reached the ripe stage of development as a result *of* favourable heredity, correct mode of living, and proper mental application, is liable to create a bewildering effect on the mind. The reason for it, though extremely simple, may not be easily acceptable to the present-day intellect.

Without entering into any controversy it is sufficient for our purpose to say that according to the authorities on yoga, the activity of the brain and the nervous system, irrespective of whether it proceeds from an eternal self-existing spiritual source or from an embodied soul, depends on the existence in the body of a subtle life element known as prana, which pervades each cell of every tissue and fluid in the organism, much in the same way that electricity pervades each atom of a battery.

This vital element has a biological counterpart as thought has a biological complement in the brain, in the shape of an extremely fine biochemical essence of a

highly delicate and volatile nature, extracted by the nerves from the surrounding organic mass. After extraction, this vital essence resides in the brain and the nervous system, and is capable of generating a subtle radiation, impossible to isolate by laboratory analysis. It circulates in the organism as motor impulse and sensation, conducting all the organic functions of the body, permeated and worked by the super-intelligent cosmic life energy, or prana, by which it is continuously affected, just as the sensitive chemical layer on a photographic plate is affected by light.

The term *prana*, as used by authorities on yoga, signifies both the cosmic life energy and its subtle biological conductor in the body, the two being inseparable. At the very moment the body dies, the rare organs essence immediately undergoes chemical changes, ceasing to serve as a channel for the former in the previous capacity. Normally, the work of extraction of prana, to feed the brain, is done by a limited group of nerves, operating in a circumscribed area of the organism. The result is that the consciousness of an individual displays no variation in its nature or extent during the span of his life, exhibiting a constancy which is in sharp contrast to the continuously changing appearance of *his* body. With the awakening of Kundalini, the arrangement suffers a radical alteration affecting the entire nervous system and consequently, other and more extensive groups of nerves are stirred into activity, leading to the transmission of an enormously enhanced supply of a more concentrated form of pranic radiation into the brain, drawn from a vastly increased area of the body.

The awakening may be gradual or sudden, varying in intensity and effect according to the development,

constitution, and temperament of different individuals. However, in most cases it results in instability of the emotional nature. Leaving out the extreme cases, which end in madness, this generalization applies to all the categories of men in whom Kundalini is congenitally more or less active, comprising mystics, mediums and men of genius.

I had absolutely no knowledge of the technicalities of the science or the mode of operation of the great energy, as vast and as varied as humanity itself. I did not know that I had dug down to the very roots of my being and that my whole life was at stake. Like the vast majority of men interested in yoga I had no idea that a system designed to develop the latent possibilities and nobler qualities in man could be fraught with such danger.

On the third day of the Awakening I did not feel in a mood for meditation and passed the time in bed, not a little uneasy about the abnormal state of my mind and the exhausted condition of my body. The next day when I sat for mediation, after a practically sleepless night, I found to my consternation that I completely lacked the power to concentrate my attention on any point for even a brief interval. Instead of uplifting me, this experience had a most depressing influence on me.

The days that followed had all the appearance of a prolonged nightmare. It seemed as if I had abruptly precipitated myself from the steady rock of normality into a madly racing whirlpool of abnormal existence. The keen desire to sit and meditate, which had always been present, disappeared suddenly and was replaced by a feeling of horror of the supernatural. At the same time I felt a sudden distaste for work and conversation, with the inevitable result that being left with nothing to

keep myself engaged, time hung heavily on me, adding to the already distraught condition of my mind.

The nights were even more terrible. I could not bear to have a light on in my room after I had retired to bed. The moment my head touched the pillow, a large tongue of flame sped across the spine, into the interior of my head. It appeared as if the stream of living light, continuously rushing through the spinal cord into the cranium, gathered greater speed and volume during the hours of darkness. Whenever I closed my eyes, I found myself looking into a weird circle of light, in which luminous currents swirled and eddied moving rapidly from side to side. The spectacle was fascinating but awful, invested with a supernatural awe which sometimes chilled the very marrow in my bones.

Elation, Confusion... Fear

Only a few days earlier it had been my habit, when in bed at night, to invite sleep by pursuing a pleasant chain of thoughts. Now everything was altered. I tossed restlessly from side to side without being able for hours to bring my agitated mind to the degree of composure needed to bring sleep.

After extinguishing the lights, I found myself staring fearfully into a vast internal glow, disquieting and threatening at times, always in rapid motion.

Sometimes it seemed as if a jet of molten copper, mounting up through the spine, dashed against my crown and fell in a scintillating shower of vast dimensions all around me. I gazed at it fascinated, with fear gripping my heart. Occasionally it resembled a

fireworks display of great magnitude. As far as I could look inwardly with my mental eye, I saw only a brilliant shower or a glowing pool of light. I seemed to shrink in size when compared to the gigantic halo that surrounded me, stretching out on every side in undulating waves of copper colour distinctly perceptible in the surrounding darkness.

I seemed to have accidentally touched the lever of an unknown mechanism, hidden in the extremely intricate and yet unexplored nervous structure in the body. For a few days I thought I was suffering from hallucinations, hoping that my condition would become normal again after some time. But instead of disappearing, as the days went by, the abnormality became more and more pronounced, assuming gradually the state of an obsession. It grew in intensity as the luminous appearances became wilder and more fantastic, and the noises louder and more uncanny. The dreadful thought began to take hold of my mind that I was irretrievably heading towards a disaster, from which I was powerless to save myself.

To one uninitiated in the esoteric science of Kundalini, as I was at that time, all that transpired afterwards presented such an abnormal and unnatural appearance that I became extremely nervous about the outcome. I passed every minute of the time in a state of acute anxiety, at a loss to know why my system was functioning in such an entirely abnormal manner. I felt exhausted and spent. The day after the experience, I suffered loss of appetite and food tasted like ash in my mouth. My face wore a haggard and anxious expression, and there were acute disturbances in the digestive and excretory organs.

There was no remission in the current rising from the seat of Kundalini. I could feel it leaping across the nerves in my back and even across those lining the front part of my body from the loins upward. But most alarming was the way in which my mind acted and behaved after the incident. I felt as if I were looking at the world from a higher elevation than that from which I saw it before. It is very difficult to express my mental condition accurately. It seemed as if my cognitive faculty had undergone a transformation and that I had mentally expanded. What was more startling and terrifying was the fact that the point of consciousness in me was not as invariable, nor its conditions as stable, as it had been before. It expanded and contracted, regulated in a mysterious way by the radiant current that was flowing up from the lowest plexus. This widening and narrowing were accompanied by a host of terrors for me.

At times I felt slightly elated with a transient morbid sense of well-being and achievement, forgetting for the time being the abnormal state I was in, but soon after acutely conscious of my critical condition, oppressed by a tormenting cloud of fear. The few brief intervals of mental elation were followed by fits of depression much more prolonged and acute.

For weeks I had no respite. Each morning heralded for me a new kind of terror, a fresh complication in the already disordered system. I completely lost confidence in my own mind and body and lived like a haunted, terror-stricken stranger.. My consciousness was in a state of unceasing flux as it rose and fell like a wave. It seemed as if the stream of vitality rising into my brain through the backbone was connected mysteriously with the region near the base of the spine, and was playing

strange tricks with my imagination. Was I losing my mind? Were these the first indications of mental disorder? This thought constantly drove me to desperation. It was not so much the extremely weird nature of my mental condition as the fear of incipient madness, which filled me with growing dismay.

I lost all feeling of love for my wife and children. I had loved them fondly from the depths of my being. The fountain of love in me seemed to have dried up completely. I looked at my children again and again, trying to evoke the deep feeling with which I had regarded them previously, but in vain. They appeared to me no better than strangers. To reawaken the emotion of love in my heart I fondled and caressed them, talked to them in endearing terms, but never succeeded in experiencing that spontaneity and warmth which are characteristic of true attachment. I knew they were my flesh and blood and was conscious of the duty I owed to them. My critical judgement was unimpaired, but love was dead.

The memories of my departed mother, whom I always remembered with deep affection, brought with it no wave of deep emotion which I had invariably felt earlier. I viewed this indifference with despondency, finding myself a different man altogether and my unhappiness increased at seeing myself robbed of that which gives life its greatest charm.

The Change

I studied my mental condition constantly, with fear in my heart. When I compared my new conscious

personality with what it was before, I could definitely see a radical change. There was an unmistakable extension. The vital energy which lighted the flame of being was pouring visibly inside my brain; this light too, was impure and variable. The flame was not burning with a pure, imperceptible and steady lustre as in normal consciousness. It grew brighter and fainter by turns. No doubt the illumination spread over a wider circle, but it was not as clear and transparent as before. It seemed as if I were looking at the world through a haze.

When I glanced at the sky, I failed to notice the lovely azure I saw before. My eyesight had always been good and even now there was nothing obviously wrong with it. I could easily read the smallest type and clearly distinguish objects at a distance. Obviously my vision was unimpaired, but there was something wrong with the cognitive faculty. The recording instrument was still in good order, but something was amiss with the observer.

In the normal man, the flow of the stream of consciousness is so well regulated that he can notice no variation in it from boyhood to death. He knows himself as a conscious entity, a non-dimensional point of awareness located more particularly in the head with a faint extension covering the trunk and limbs. When he closes his eyes to study it attentively, he ends up observing a conscious presence, 'himself in fact, round the region of the head.

As I could easily discern even in that condition of mental disquietude, this field of consciousness in me had vastly increased. It was akin to that which I had experienced in the vision, but divested of every trace of happiness which had characterized my first experience.

It seemed as if prolonged concentration had opened a yet partially developed centre in the brain, which depended for its fuel on the stem 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 how to adjust myself to the new development.

For weeks I wrestled with the mental gloom caused by my abnormal condition, growing more despondent each day. I felt a distaste for food and found fear clutching my heart the moment I swallowed anything. Often I left the plate untouched. Very soon my whole intake of food amounted to a cup or two of milk and a few oranges. Beyond that I could eat nothing. I knew I could not help it. I was burning inside but had no means to assuage the fire. While my intake of food was drastically reduced, the daily expenditure of energy increased tremendously. My restlessness had assumed such a state that I could not sit quietly for even half an hour. When I did so, my attention was drawn irresistibly towards the strange behaviour of my mind. Immediately the ever-present sense of fear was intensified, and my heart thumped violently. I had to divert my attention somehow to free myself from the horror of my condition.

In order to prevent my mind from dwelling again and again on itself, I took recourse to walking. On rising in the morning, as long as I possessed the strength to do so, I left immediately for a slow walk to counteract the effect of an oppressive sleepless night. When forced to lie quiet in the darkness, I had no alternative but to be an awed spectator of the weird and fearsome display

visible inside. On the way, during my walks, I met scores of my acquaintances taking their morning constitutional, laughing and talking as they went. I could not share their enjoyment, and passed them in silence with merely a nod or gesture of salutation.

Resisting the Change

I had no interest in any person or in any subject in the world. My own abnormality blotted out everything else from my mind. During the day I walked in my room or in the compound, diverting my attention and not allowing it to rest on one particular thing for any length of time. I counted my steps or looked at the ceiling or at the floor, or at the surrounding objects one by one, at each for but a fleeting instant, thus with all the will power at my command, preventing my brain from attaining a state of fixity at any time. I was fighting desperately against my own unruly mind.

But how long could my resistance last? How long could I save myself from madness creeping upon me? My starving body was becoming weaker and weaker; my legs tottered under me while I walked. My memory became weaker and I faltered in my talk, while the anxious expression on my face deepened. My eyebrows drew together into an anxious frown, the thickly wrinkled forehead and the wild look in my gleaming eyes gave my countenance a maniacal expression.

Several times during the day I glanced at myself in the mirror Or felt my pulse, and to my horror found myself detonating more and more. I do not know what sustained my will so that even in a state of extreme

terror I could maintain control over my actions and gestures. No one could even suspect what was happening to me inside. I knew that a thin line now separated me from lunacy, and *yet* I gave no indication *of* my condition to anyone. I suffered unbearable torture in silence, blaming myself bitterly for having delved into the supernatural without first acquiring a fuller knowledge of the subject.

Even when almost at breaking point, something inside prevented me from consulting a physician. There was no psychiatrist at Jammu in those days, and even if there had been, I am sure I would not have gone *to* see him. It was well that I did not do so. The little knowledge of diseases that I possessed was enough to tell me that my abnormality was unique, that it was neither purely psychic nor purely physical. It was the outcome of an alteration in the nervous activity of my body, which no therapist on earth could correctly diagnose or cure.

A skilled physician bases his observations on the symptoms present in an ailment. In my case, since the basic element responsible for the rhythm and the uniformity was at the moment itself in a state of turmoil, the anarchy prevailing not only in the system but also in the sphere of thought, nay in the innermost recesses of my being, can be better imagined than described. I did not know then what I came to grasp later on, that an automatic mechanism, forced by the practice of meditation, had suddenly started to function to make my mind fit for the expression of a more heightened and extended consciousness. To my great misfortune I did not know this at the time. To the best *of* my knowledge, this mighty secret of nature is not known on

earth even today. There is ample evidence to show that certain methods to deal with the condition, when brought about suddenly by the practice of Hatha Yoga, were fully known to the ancient adepts.

I studied my condition thoroughly from day to day to assure myself that what I experienced was real and not imaginary.

It would be a fallacy to assume that I was the victim of a hallucination. Subsequent events absolutely ruled out that possibility. No, the crisis I was passing through was not a creation of my own imagination. It had a real physiological basis and was interwoven with the whole organic structure of my body. The entire machinery from the brain to the smallest organ was deeply involved, and there was no escape for me from the storm of nervous forces which blew through my system day and night, released unexpectedly by my own effort.



During recent times there have hardly been any instances of individuals in whom the serpent fire burnt ceaselessly from the day of awakening of Kundalini to the last, bringing about mental transformations. There have been many cases of a sporadic type in which the shakti was active intermittently. The psychics and mediums and all those possessing the power of clairvoyance, mind reading, prediction, and similar supernormal faculties owe their surprising gifts to the action of an awakened Kundalini, operating in a limited way in the head, without reaching the highest centre, when it only overshadows the whole consciousness.

The same is true of the men of genius in whom the energy feeds certain specific regions of the brain, stimulating them to extraordinary phases of intellectual, literary, or artistic activity.

In the case of mystics the impact of the current on the brain is very powerful at times. The condition begins at birth, so that the nervous system usually becomes

accustomed to it from infancy, when one is not aware of the variations in consciousness. Even so, they have often to face many a crisis before they acquire a stable and peaceful condition of the mind. It takes time for them to study and express comprehensively, the experience which marks them as a class apart from the normal run of mortals. The individuals belonging to these categories, excepting mystics, do not perceive the luminosity and the movement of nervous currents, as the flow of the vital energy is too restricted to create weird effects. Moreover, having been an integral part of the organism from birth, it becomes an inherent trait of their personalities.

The Seventh Centre in the Brain

The popular books on yoga that I had read years before, contained no hints of such an abnormal development and nerve-shattering experience. In some of the books there was a passing reference to Kundalini Yoga. A couple of pages or a small chapter was all that the authors thought sufficient for describing this most difficult and least known form of yoga. It was stated that Kundalini represents the cosmic vital energy lying dormant in the human body which is coiled round the base of the spine, a little below the sexual organ, like a serpent, fast asleep and closing with her mouth the aperture of the *sushumna*, the hair-like duct rising through the spinal cord to the conscious centre at the top of the head.

When roused, Kundalini, they said, rises through the *sushumna* like a streak of lightning carrying with her the vital energy of the body, which for the time being

becomes cold and lifeless, with complete or partial cessation of vital functions, to join her divine spouse Shiva in the last or seventh centre in the brain. In the course of this process, the embodied self, freed from the bondage of flesh, passes into a condition of ecstasy known as samadhi, realizing itself as deathless, full of bliss, and one with the all-pervading supreme consciousness.

From the vague ideas I had picked up in the course of discussions about yoga, it was only natural for me to infer that my abnormal condition was the direct outcome of my meditation. The experience I was having corresponded in every respect with the descriptions given of the ecstatic state by those who had attained this condition themselves. There was therefore no reason for me to doubt the validity or the possibility of my vision. There could be no mistake about the sounds I had heard and the effulgence I had perceived. Above all, there certainly could be no mistake about the transformation of my own consciousness, the nearest and the most intimate part of me, experienced more than once, and the memory of which was so strong that it could never be effaced or mistaken for any other condition. It could not be a mere figment of my fancy because during the vision I still possessed the capacity to make a comparison between the extended state of consciousness and the normal one, and when it began to fade, I could perceive the contraction that was taking place. It was undoubtedly a real experience, and has been described with all the power of expression at their command, by mystics and saints all over the world.

In my case the most extraordinary sensation at the base of the spine followed by the flow of a radiant

current through the spinal column into the head, was part of the strange experience. This tallied with the phenomena associated with the awakening of Kundalini. I could not be mistaken in supposing that I had unknowingly aroused the coiled serpent and the serious disturbance in my nervous system, the extraordinary but most awful state I was in, was in some way occasioned by it.

I made mention of my condition to my brother-in-law, who came to Jammu during those days on a short business visit. He was many years older than me and loved me like a son. He had himself practised meditation for many years under the guidance of a preceptor who claimed knowledge of Kundalini Yoga. Frank and noble by nature, he often narrated to me his own experiences in the simple manner of a child, seeking corroboration from me for the results he had achieved by his labours. Without the least pretension to knowledge, he gave me every bit of information he possessed, and thus in a way was instrumental in saving my life.

My wife knew nothing of the life and death struggle in which I was engaged, but alarmed by my strange behaviour, lack of appetite, bodily disturbances, constant walks, and above all by the anxiety and gloom on my face, she advised me again and again to consult a physician and constantly watched over me day and night, frantic with anxiety.

My brother-in-law could not grasp the significance of what I related to him, but said that his guru had once remarked that if by mistake Kundalini were aroused through any other *nadi* (nerve) except *sushumna*, there was every danger of serious psychic and physical

disturbances, ending in permanent disability, insanity, or death. This was particularly the case, the teacher had said, if the awakening occurred through *pingala* on the right side of the spine. When the unfortunate man is literally burned *to* death due to excessive internal heat, which cannot be controlled by any external means.

I was horrified by this statement and in desperation went to consult a learned ascetic from Kashmir who had come to spend the winter at Jammu. He heard me with patience and said that the experience I had undergone could not at all be due to the awakening of the serpent power, as that was always blissful and could not be associated with any agency liable to cause disease or disturbance. He made another gruesome suggestion, to the effect that my malady was probably due to the venom of malignant spirits that beset the path of yogis, and prescribed a decoction, which I never took.

On the suggestion of someone, I glanced through a couple of books on Kundalini Yoga, translations in English of ancient Sanskrit texts. I could not read even a page attentively, the attempt involving fixity of attention which I was incapable of maintaining for long. The least effort instantly aggravated my condition by increasing the flow of the new born energy into the brain, which added to my terror and misery. I just glanced through the books, reading a line here and a paragraph there.

The description of the symptoms that followed the awakening corroborated my own experience and firmly strengthened my conviction that I had roused the vital force dormant in me. But whether the agony of mind and body that I was passing through was an inevitable result of the awakening I could not be sure. There was, however,

one very briefly stated injunction - call it accident or divine guidance - I picked up from the huge mass of material in that very cursory glance. It was to the effect that during the course of the practice the student is not permitted to keep his stomach empty, but should take a light meal every three hours. This brief advice flashed across my brain at a most critical moment.

At the time I paid no attention to this significant hint which was based on, the experience of countless men, many of whom had probably lost their lives in the attempt to arouse the serpent. I could not have acted upon the advice at that time, as food was so repulsive to me, that my stomach revolted at the mere thought of it. I was burning in every part of my body while my mind, swayed erratically, unable to keep itself steady even for a moment.

Whenever my mind turned upon itself, I always found myself staring with growing panic into the unearthly radiance that filled my head, swirling like a fearsome whirlpool in the night. This happened night after night for months, weakening my will and sapping my resistance until I felt unable to endure the fearful ordeal any longer, certain that at any moment I might succumb to the relentlessly pursuing horror and, bidding farewell to my life and sanity, rush out of the room, a raving maniac. But I persisted, determined to hold on, resolved at the first sign of breaking up to surrender my life rather than lose myself in the ghastly wildness of insanity.

When it was day I longed for the night and during the night I fervently prayed for the day. As the time wore on, my hopes dwindled and desperation seized me. There was no relaxation in the tension, in the

ceaselessly haunting fear from the fiery stream that darted through my nerves and poured into my agonized brain. As my vitality ebbed and my resistance weakened, the malady was aggravated to such a pitch that every moment I expected to die.

Shivaratri: The Night of Shiva

It was in such a frame of mind that the holy festival of *Shivratri* or the night of Shiva, came to pass towards the end of February. As usual my wife had prepared some dainty dishes on the day and gently insisted that I, too should partake of the food. Not to disappoint her and cast a cloud of gloom on her already anxious mind, I forcibly swallowed a few morsels, then gave up. Immediately I felt a sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach, a fiery stream of energy shot into my head. I felt myself being lifted up, expanding and an unbearable terror was clutching at me from every side. I felt a reeling sensation while my hands and feet grew cold as ice, as if all the heat had escaped from them to feed the fiery vapour in the head which had risen through the spinal cord and struck me numb. I was overpowered by giddiness.

I staggered to my feet and dragged myself towards my bed in the adjacent room. With trembling hands I lifted up the cover and slipped in, trying to stretch myself into a position of ease. I was in a terrible condition, burning internally from head to toes, outwardly cold as ice, and shivering as if stricken with ague. My pulse was racing madly and my heart was thumping wildly below my ribs, its pounding distinctly audible to me.

What horrified me was the intensity of the fiery currents that now darted through my body, penetrating into every organ. My brain worked desperately, unable to give coherence to my frenzied thoughts. To call in a doctor for consultation in such an state would be absurd. On hearing of my symptoms he would send me to a lunatic asylum. It would be futile on my part to seek help any where for such an affliction. What could I do then to save myself from this torture? Could it be that in my previous semi-starved condition, the fiery current could not attain such awful intensity as it had done *now* with the entry of solid food in my stomach? How could I save myself? Where could I go to escape from the furnace raging in my interior?

The heat caused such unbearable pain that I writhed and twisted from side to side, while streams of perspiration poured down my face and limbs. But still the heat increased and coursing through my body, seemed to be scorching and blistering the organs and tissues like flying sparks. Suffering the most excruciating torture, I clenched my hands and bit my lips to stop myself from leaping out of bed and crying at the top of my voice. The throbbing of my heart grew more terrific, acquiring such a spasmodic violence that I thought it must either stop beating or be burnt out.

Flesh and blood could not stand such strain without giving way any moment. It was easy to see that the body was valiantly trying to fight the virulent poison speeding across the nerves and pouring into the brain. But the fight was so unequal, and the fury let loose in my system so lethal, that there could be doubt about the outcome. There were dreadful disturbances in all the organs, each so alarming and painful that I wonder how

I managed to retain my self possession under the onslaught. The whole delicate organism was burning, withering away completely under the fiery blast racing through its interior.

I knew I was dying and that my heart could not stand the tremendous strain for long. My throat was parched and every part of my body burning, but I could do nothing to alleviate the dreadful suffering. If a well or river had been near, I would have jumped into its cold depths, preferring death to what I was undergoing. But there was no well and the river was half a mile away. With great effort I got up, trembling, with the idea of pouring a few buckets of cold water over my head to abate the dreadful heat. At that moment my eyes fell on my small daughter, Ragina, lying in the next bed awake, watching my feverish movements with wide-open anxious eyes. With the remnant of sense still left in me, I could understand that the least unusual movement on my part at that time, would make her cry. If I started to pour water over my body at such an unearthly hour, both she and her mother, who was busy in the kitchen, would almost die with fright. The thought restrained me and I decided to bear the internal agony until the end, which could not be far off.

What had happened to me all of a sudden? What devilish power of the underworld held me in its relentless grasp? Was I doomed to die in this dreadful way, leaving people to wonder what unheard-of-horror had overtaken me as a punishment for crimes committed in a previous birth? I racked my distracted brain for a way of escape, only to meet blank despair on every side. The effort exhausted me and I felt myself sinking, dully conscious of the scalding sea of pain in which I was drowning. I

tried desperately to rouse myself, only to sink back again, deadened by the torment. After a while, with a sudden, inexplicable revival of strength, marking the onset of delirium, I came back to life with a shred of sanity left, Almighty alone knows how, just enough to prevent me from giving way completely to acts of madness.

Pulling the cover over my face, I stretched myself to my full length on the bed, burning in every fibre. At this moment a fearful idea struck me. Could it be that I had aroused Kundalini through *pingala* or the solar nerve, which regulates the flow of heat in the body and is located on the right side of *sushumna*? If so, I was doomed. The idea flashed across my brain to make a last-minute attempt to rouse *ida*, or the lunar nerve on the left side, to activity, thus neutralizing the dreadful burning effect of the devouring fire within.

With my mind reeling and senses deadened with pain, but with all the will-power left at my command, I brought my attention to bear on the left side of the seat of Kundalini, and tried to force an imaginary cold current upward through the middle of the spinal cord. In that extraordinarily extended, agonized and exhausted state of consciousness, I distinctly felt the location of the nerve and strained hard mentally to divert its flow into the central channel. Then, as if waiting for the destined moment, a miracle happened.

The White Serpent

There was a sound like a nerve thread snapping and instantaneously a silvery streak passed zigzag through the spinal cord, exactly like the sinuous movement of a white serpent in rapid flight, pouring an effulgent,

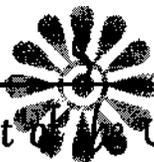
cascading shower of brilliant vital energy into my brain, filling my head with a blissful lustre in place of the flame that had been tormenting me for the last three hours. Completely surprised at this sudden transformation of the fiery current, darting across the entire network of my nerves only a moment before, and overjoyed at the cessation of pain, I remained absolutely quiet and motionless for some time, tasting the bliss of relief. I soon fell asleep, bathed in light and for the first time after weeks of anguish felt the sweet embrace of restful sleep.

As if rudely shaken out of my slumber, I awoke after about an hour. The stream of lustre was still pouring in my head, my brain was clear, heart and pulse had stopped racing, the burning sensations and the fear had almost vanished, but my throat was still dry, my mouth parched and I found myself in a state of extreme exhaustion as if every ounce of energy had been drained out of me. Exactly at that moment another idea occurred to me that I should eat something immediately. I motioned to my wife, who as usual was lying awake in her bed anxiously watching my every movement, to fetch me a cup of milk and a little bread. Taken aback by this unusual and untimely request, she hesitated a moment, and then complied without a word. I ate the bread, swallowing it with difficulty with the help of the milk and immediately fell asleep again.

I woke up after about two hours, refreshed by the sleep. My head was still filled with the glowing radiance. To my surprise, in this heightened and lustrous state of consciousness, I could distinctly perceive a tongue of the golden flame searching my stomach for food, and moving round along the nerves lining it. I took a few bites of bread and another cup of milk and as soon as

I had done so, I found the halo in the head contracting and a larger tongue of flame licking my stomach, as if a part of the streaming energy pouring into my brain was being diverted to the gastric region, to expedite the process of digestion.

I lay awake, dumb with wonder watching this living radiance moving from place to place through the whole digestive tract, caressing the intestines and the liver, while another stream poured into the kidneys and the heart. I pinched myself to make sure whether I was dreaming or asleep, absolutely dumbfounded by what I was witnessing in my own body. Unlike the horror I had experienced before, I felt no discomfort now. All that I could feel was a soothing warmth moving through my body as the current travelled from point to point. I watched this wonderful play silently, my whole being filled with boundless gratitude to the Unseen for this timely deliverance from a dreadful fate, and a new assurance began to shape itself in my mind, that the serpent fire was in reality now at work in my exhausted and agonized body and that I was safe.



In Quest of the Unknown

I hesitated for nearly twenty years in making my miraculous experience public. I wished to be completely sure about my own condition, and also, I was entirely averse to exposing myself to criticism. The story I had to relate was so out of the ordinary, and so full of strange episodes, that I was doubtful about its being accepted as a truthful account of an experience. Being extremely rare, Kundalini has always remained wrapped in mystery from times immemorial. I thought there might be but few who would straight away believe what I had to narrate about the bizarre phenomenon, but the urge *to* make the hidden truth known prevailed at last.

I know that with this work I am exposing myself to criticism especially from those who treat it as an encroachment upon the preserves of their idolized views. They forget that truth is an entity that grows richer in adversity and stronger in opposition.

An irrepressible urge took shape in my mind for organized research in all manifestations of the

superconscious and, as a first step, it demanded wide publicity of my experience. By recapitulating the incidents in my life relevant to the subject, I am giving coherence to the subsequent surprising development, which though existing in a certain class of men as natural endowment, has so far eluded every effort directed to its investigation. I have, at the same time, tried to draw attention to the mental and physiological conditions that precede the manifestation of such abnormal developments in man, the manifestations attending the awakening of Kundalini are at present a sealed book to the world. There is in actual fact nothing uncommon in my experience, as may be established by other similar occurrences in the future, for which this work may create the necessary conditions.

The abnormal physiological reactions and the existence and extraordinary behaviour of the luminous vital current in the body are sure to bring, to the uninitiated and the unprepared subjects like me, a host of terrors in their wake. There is nothing, in my experience which even remotely approaches the uncanny and entirely abnormal phenomena witnessed by professional mediums and other psychic subjects.

What made me hesitate in according publicity to it is the unique nature of the phenomenon; it neither falls in line with the known manifestations observed in mediums, nor does it seem similar in kind to the recorded experience of any known mystic or saint, eastern or western. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that in its entire character the phenomenon represents the attempt or a hitherto unrecognized vital force in the human body capable of being by voluntary efforts. This release moulds the available psycho-physiological apparatus of a

man to such a condition that makes it responsive to states of consciousness not normally perceptible to that individual before. It is this particular aspect of my extraordinary experience which makes it remarkable, and demands attention from quarters interested in the supernormal, or in ascertaining the physiological basis of super-organic psychic phenomena.

It is an undeniable fact that the quest of the unknown was as unmistakable a feature of ancient civilizations, as it is now. There was as persistent search for the spiritual and the supernatural and a strong thirst in countless people for the acquirement of supernormal powers and for tearing aside the veil that hides the beyond. But either because of the fact that time was not ripe for complete unravelling of the mystery, or because the human mind revels in keeping the subject dealing exclusively with its own nature enshrouded in uncertainty, fear, and superstition the discoveries made in this domain were kept a closely guarded secret. There is not a shadow of doubt that to the ancient adepts of India, China, or Egypt, the cult of Kundalini was better known than it is to the foremost thinkers of today.

On the basis of my own experience I can assert unhesitatingly that the phenomenon of the effulgent current, its circulation through the nerves, the methods of awakening the Power, the regimen to be followed, and the part played by the reproductive organs were, to some extent known to the experts, who, because of the risky nature of the experiment, the hereditary factors involved, and the required mental and physical qualifications, could be but few.

It must be said at once that the cult of Kundalini was not **the** only path by which **the** ancients approached

the difficult-to-reach domain of the supernatural. There existed contemporaneously other creeds, schools, and systems dealing with the mysterious and the supernatural. As happens even now, the followers of the various sects must have tried to tear each other down, belittling the methods of their rivals and extolling their own. The existence of this unceasing warfare, was detrimental to the general acceptance of the system relating to Kundalini, which in consequence was relegated to the background. It can also be said that the rise of all great religions of the world, in spite of the fact that each is rooted inextricably in the soil prepared and watered by this prehistoric cult, contributed in eclipsing Kundalini as an honoured and established system of mental and physical discipline, for gaining approach to the transcendental. It, however continues to exist in India in form only, divested of its former importance and influence.

It is obvious that all religions, all creeds and all sects, owe their origin to the existence of an urge, rooted deep in human nature, for resolving the riddle of existence, for establishing contact with the hidden forces of nature or for gaining supernormal power.

All religious observances, all acts of worship, all methods of spiritual development, and all esoteric systems aim to provide a channel of communication with the divine, or offer an avenue for exploring the mystery of being. The form taken may be any, of a heinous bloody sacrifice, a gaping self-inflicted wound, constant torture of the body on a bed of nails, melodious chanting of hymns, recitation of prayers, or any other spiritual exercise; the objective invariably is to understand the occult, the mysterious, or the supersensible in divine, demoniac, spiritual or any other form.

This urge has expressed itself in an infinite variety of religious beliefs and creeds, superstitions and taboos traceable to the remotest epochs of man's existence. The impulse to invert the inanimate forces of nature with intelligence, and to postulate an almighty Creator and to offer worship to Him, arose from the same source and owe their existence to the presence in the human organism of an extremely complicated and difficult to locate mechanism, which the ancient Indian savants called Kundalini.

Whether the aim be religious experience, communication with disincarnate spirits, the vision of reality, liberation of the soul, or to acquire the gift of clairvoyance and prediction, the power to influence people or to gain success in worldly undertakings by supernatural or any other means connected with the occult or divine, the desire springs from the same psychosomatic source and is a branch of the same deeply rooted tree. Kundalini is as natural and effective a device for the attainment of a higher state of consciousness and for transcendental experience, as the reproductive system is an effective natural contrivance for the perpetuation of the race. The contiguity of the two is a purposely designed arrangement, as the evolutionary tendency and the stage of progress reached by the parent organism, can only be transmitted and perpetuated through the seed.

Men have never been able *to* understand the surprising efficiency which a man of genius brings to bear on his intellectual or manual creations, and still less are able to comprehend the mental condition of an ecstatic. The completely isolated nature of Individual consciousness, makes it impossible for any man to look

into the locked compartment of another mind, even of one nearest and dearest to him. This utter lack of access of one mind to another has given rise to certain common misconceptions which it will take a long time to remove from human thought.

The average man, when studying a genius, a mystic, or a medium, is apt to presume, because of his inability *to* look into their minds as he does into his own, that they are conscious entities like himself, with the difference that one has more intelligence and more skill. The other, he supposes has more love and devotion for the deity, a stronger control over passions and appetites, and a greater power of sacrifice, or an incomprehensible link with other minds or hidden forces of nature, with the power to create a condition of the brain that allows disembodied intelligences to act through it at times.

The gifted endowed by nature from birth, unable to peep into the minds of others and often entirely in the dark about the real source of the remarkable variation in themselves, reciprocate the feelings of the common man about them. There exists a general ignorance about the demonstrable fact that the evolving human frame is tending to develop a higher personality endowed with the attributes which characterise men of genius.

The urge for knowing the unknown, exists deep in the human mind, and is the expression of the embodied human consciousness to win nearer to its innate majestic form, overcoming in this process the disabilities imposed on it by the carnal frame. The evolution of man in actual fact signifies the evolution of his consciousness, of the vital principle inhabiting his body, by which alone the embodied self can become cognizant of its true immortal state. It does not signify merely the

development of the intellect or reason, but of the whole personality, of both its conscious and subconscious parts, which involves an overhauling and reshaping of the organic machine to make it a fit abode for a higher intelligence, essentially superior in nature to that which resides in the normal human body.



Understanding Kundalini

Before that fateful morning in December, when I had my first glimpse into the superconscious state and saw the fabulous Kundalini in action, if even the most truthful man on earth had narrated to me a similar episode, I would have disbelieved. I remained in uncertainty about my strange condition for a long time, utterly at a loss to put a meaning on the occurrence. It was only when after years of suspense the adventure culminated in the development of clearly marked psychic attributes, not in evidence before, that I decided to put the extraordinary episode on paper. This resolve was further fortified by the consideration that Kundalini is active in millions of intelligent men all over the world.

Considering the colossal nature of the physical and mental metamorphosis that has to be effected as a prelude to spiritual unfoldment, I do not wonder at the accompanying trials and tribulations. The mystic state represents the last and most arduous lap of the journey which began with man's ascent from dust. It terminates with his tasting, after suffering and travail, the

incomparable bliss *of* unembodied existence, not after death, but within his span of life on earth. The path ahead is so difficult that it will need all his will-power and all the resources of his intellect to negotiate it safely, step by step, until the goal comes clearly in sight.

* * *

When I awoke the following morning, I found myself too weak to rise and I remained lying down, revolving in my mind the fearful incidents of the night before. Tears of thankfulness streamed down *my* face at what I thought was divine intervention at a most critical time to save me from a dreadful fate. The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that a super human agency, acting through my mind, had conveyed the hint, by which I was able to extricate myself from an entirely hopeless situation. No power on earth could have saved me from death or insanity, nor could any medicine have alleviated my suffering. I had felt, from the first day of my affliction a deeply rooted aversion to take medical men into confidence about this extraordinary ailment. I had a feeling that my malady was beyond the grasp and power of the highest medical authority.

At last I rose weakly from bed like a man in whom an invisible but intense internal fire has burnt for hours. A man who finds that the fire has been extinguished and even the excruciating pain *of* the burns has disappeared miraculously overnight. I looked at myself in a mirror and found my face pale and haggard, but the maniacal expression had nearly vanished and the gleam of madness was almost gone from my eyes. I was looking at a sane but anguished face that had borne the torture of hell for days. My tongue was still coated, and *my*

pulse weak and irregular, but all other signs and symptoms regarding the condition of my organs were so reassuring that my heart leapt with joy and hope. There was no diminution in the vital radiation which, emanating from the seat of Kundalini, sped across my nerves to every part of the body, filling my ears with strange sounds and my head with strange lights. The current was now warm and pleasing instead of hot and burning, and it soothed and refreshed the tortured cells and tissues in a truly miraculous manner.

During the days following I paid scrupulous attention to my diet, taking only a few slices of bread *or* a little boiled rice with a cup of milk every three hours from morning until about ten o'clock at night. The amount of food taken each time was small, a few morsels and no more. After the last meal when I lay down to sleep, I found to my great joy a gentle drowsiness stealing upon me in spite of the shining halo surrounding my head. I fell asleep enveloped in a radiating and soothing mantle of light. I awoke next morning greatly refreshed in mind, but still extremely weak in body. But my head was clear and the fear that had pursued me had decreased considerably. I was able, for the first time after weeks *of* anguish, to collect my thoughts and to think clearly.

It took me some days to gain sufficient strength to walk from one room to another and to remain standing for any length of time. I do not know what reserve store of energy sustained me during the terrible ordeal before the last miraculous episode, as I had practically no food for more than two months!

Time passed, adding to my strength and to the assurance that I was in no imminent mental or physical

danger. But my condition was abnormal, and the more I studied it with growing clarity of mind, the more uncertain I became about the outcome. I was in an extraordinary state: a lustrous medium intensely alive and acutely sentient, shining day and night. I had no doubt that Kundalini was now fully awake in me, but there was absolutely no sign of the miraculous psychic and mental powers associated with it by the ancients. I could not detect any change in me for the better. Any sustained effort at concentration invariably resulted in intensifying the abnormal condition. The halo in my head increased enormously in size after every spell of prolonged concentration, creating a further heightening of my consciousness with a corresponding increase in the occasional sense of fear, which otherwise was present in a very mild form.

Perceiving no sign of spiritual florescence and always confronted by the erratic behaviour of an altered mind, I was assailed by grave misgivings about myself. Was this all that one could achieve after rousing the serpent fire? I asked myself this question over and over again. Was this all, for which countless men had risked their lives, discarded their homes and families, braved the terrors of trackless forests, suffered hunger and privations, and sat at the feet of teachers for years to know? Was this all that yogis, saints, and mystics experienced in ecstatic trances, this extension of consciousness accompanied by unearthly lights and sounds? If this were all one could achieve, then surely it was far better to pass an undisturbed, happy existence free from the uncertainty and fear which had now become an inseparable part of my life.

I continued to pay careful attention to my diet, as experience had now made me fully alive to the fact that my life and sanity depended on it. I did not eat in excess, fixing the amount according to the reaction of my digestive parts, nor did I allow any delicacy to tempt me away from my self-imposed regimen. There was reason enough to make me extremely cautious on this score, as the slightest indiscretion in respect to the quantity or quality of the food consumed, and any disregard of time, created distressing results. This happened repeatedly as if to impress upon my mind the fact that from now onwards I had not to eat for pleasure but to regulate the intake of food with such precision as not to cause the least strain on my oversensitive and overstimulated nervous system. There was no escape from this forced regimentation, and during the first few weeks, even the slightest error was instantaneously punished with an intensification of fear and a warning disturbance at the heart and digestive centres. In my anxiety to avoid those unpleasant visitations, I was meticulous not to commit the least error; but mistakes did occur now and then, almost always followed by suffering and penitence on my part.

The Living Flame

For the proper understanding of my condition after the memorable night of my release, it is necessary to say a few words about my mental state as well as about the radiating vital current, darting up and down my spine, which was now a part of my being. My mind did not function as before. There had occurred a definite and unmistakable change. At that time images in my

thought came and went against a sombre background, possessing vaguely the same combination of light, shade, and colour as characterized the original objects which they represented. Now the images were vivid as if carved out of living flame, and they floated against a luminous background, as if the process *of* thought was now done with another kind of lustrous mental stuff, not only bright itself but also capable of perceiving its own brilliance.

Whenever I turned my mental eye upon myself, I invariably perceived a luminous glow within and outside my head in a state of constant vibration. This shining halo never remained constant in dimension or in the intensity of its brightness. It waxed and waned, brightened and grew dim, or changed its colour from silver to gold and vice versa. When it increased in size or brilliance, the strange noise in my ears, now never absent, grew louder and more insistent, as if drawing my attention to something I could not understand. The halo was never stationary but in a state of perpetual motion.

The constant presence of the luminous glow in my head and its close association with my thought processes was not a matter for such bewilderment as its ceaseless interference with the normal working of my vital organs. I could distinctly feel its passage across the spine and other nerves organs in the body, whose activity it seemed to regulate in a mysterious manner. When it penetrated the heart, my pulse became fuller and stronger, showing unmistakably that some kind of tonic radiation was being poured into it through the connecting nerves. From this I concluded that its generation into the other organs had the same invigorating effect and that its purpose in darting thought the nerves to reach them

was to pour its tonic substance into their tissues and cells through the slender nerve filaments. The penetration was occasionally followed by pain, either in the organ itself or at the point where the linking nerve entered it. The point of contact with the spinal cord, or both, was often accompanied by feelings of fear. It appeared on such occasions, that the stream of radiant energy rising into the brain was sending offshoots into the other vital organs, to regulate and improve their functions in harmony with the new development in my head. I searched my brain for an explanation, and revolved every possibility in my mind, to account for the surprising development. At times I was amazed at the uncanny knowledge it displayed of the complicated nervous mechanism. The masterly way in which it darted here and there as if aware of every twist and turn in the body. Most probably it was because of its almost unlimited dominance over the whole vital mechanism, that the ancient writers named Kundalini as the queen of the nervous system, controlling all the thousands of *nadis* or nerves in the body. For the same reason they have designated her as '*Adhar Shakti**' on which depends the existence of the body and the universe, the microcosm and the macrocosm.

But I could detect no change in my mental capacity. I thought the same thoughts and both inside and out was the same mediocre type of man like millions of others. There was no doubt an extraordinary change in my nervous equipment, and a new type of force was now racing through my system connected unmistakably with the sexual parts, which also seemed to have developed a new kind of activity not perceptible before.

* Basic Shakti

The nerves lining the 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. I could readily perceive the transmutation of the vital seed into radiation and the unusual activity of the reproductive organs for supplying the raw material for transformation in the mysterious laboratory at the lowest plexus, or *Muladhara Chakra*, as the yogis name it. That extremely subtle stuff we call nervous energy, on which the entire mechanism of the body depends, with the difference that the energy now generated, possessed luminosity and was of a quality allowing detection of its rapid passage through the nerves and tissues, not only by its radiance but also by the sensation it caused with its movement.

For a long time I could not understand what hidden purpose was being served by the unremitting flow of the new-born nervous radiation, and what changes were being wrought in the organs and nerves and in the structure of the brain, by this unceasing shower of the powerful vital essence drawn from the most precious and most potent secretion in the body. Immediately after the crisis, however, I noticed a marked change in my digestive and eliminatory functions, a change so remarkable that it could not be assigned to accident, or to any other factor save the serpent fire and its effect on the organism.

The Living Fire

It appeared as if I were undergoing a process of purgation, of internal purification of the organs and nerves, and that my digestive apparatus was being toned *to* a higher pitch of efficiency, to ensure a cleaner and healthier state of the nerves and, other tissues. I encountered no constipation or indigestion, provided I refrained from overloading the stomach and followed strictly the regimen of eating which experience was forcing on me. My most important and essential duty now was to feed the sacred flame with healthy food, at proper intervals, with due regard to the fact that the diet was nourishing, containing all the ingredients and vitamins needed for the maintenance of a robust and healthy body.

I was now a spectator of a weird drama enacted in my own body, in which an immensely active and powerful vital force, released all of a sudden by the power of meditation, was incessantly at work. I did not know at the time, that I was witnessing in my own body the immensely accelerated activity of an energy not yet known to science, which is carrying all mankind towards the heights of superconsciousness.

I little knew that the chaste sacrificial fire, to which so much sanctity and importance has been attached by all the ancient scriptures of India, fed after being lighted with the oblation of clarified butter, dry fruits of the choicest kinds, sugary substances, and cereals, all nourishing and purifying articles of food, is but a symbolic representation of the transforming fire, lit in the body by Kundalini, requiring when lit, the offering

of easily digestible and nutritive food and complete chastity of thought and deed, to enable it to perform its godly task, which normally takes epochs, within the span of a man's life.

After a few days I found that the luminous current was acting with full knowledge of the task it had to perform, functioning in complete harmony with the bodily organs, knowing their strengths and weaknesses, obeying its own laws and acting with a superior intelligence beyond my comprehension. The living fire, invisible to everyone else, darted here and there as if guided unerringly by a master-mind. With marvellous agility it raced from one spot to another, exciting this organ to greater activity, slowing down another, causing a greater or lesser flow of this secretion or that. Stimulating the heart and liver, bringing about countless functional and organic changes in the innumerable cells, blood vessels, nerve fibres, and other tissues, I watched the phenomenon in amazement.

With the aid of the luminous stuff now filling my nerves, I could discern clearly the outlines of the vital organs and the network of nerves spread all over my body, as if the centre of consciousness in the brain, had acquired a more penetrating inner sight. At times, turning my attention upon myself, I distinctly saw my body as a column of living fire from the tips of my toes to the head, in which innumerable currents circled and eddied. It was not a hallucination, as the experience was repeated innumerable times. The only explanation to account for it that occurred to me, was that on such occasions my undeniably extended consciousness was in contact with the world of prana, or cosmic vital energy. This is not normally perceptible to the common man,

but is the first subtle, immaterial substance to come within the range of superconscious vision.

Like a man suddenly transported to a distant planet, where he finds himself utterly confused by the nature of the surroundings, which he could not even conceive of on earth, I was completely bewildered and unnerved by this sudden plunge into the occult. From the very first day, I felt myself walking on a ground that was unfamiliar. I trod hesitatingly with utmost caution, fearing a pitfall at every step. I looked around desperately for guidance, only to face disappointment on all sides.

Without mentioning my condition, I talked to several scholars and sadhus well versed in *tantric* lore, with the object of gleaning some useful hints for myself, but found to my sorrow, that beyond a parrot-like repetition of information gathered from books, they could not give me any advice or authoritative guidance based on experience. On the other hand, not infrequently, they admitted frankly that it was not easy to grasp the meaning of the texts dealing with Kundalini yoga, and that they themselves had encountered difficulties at many a place. What was I to do then, to set my doubts at rest and find some sort of an explanation for and, if possible, some effective method, to deal with my abnormal condition?

I made a mental survey of all possible sources in India of which I had any knowledge, to decide which of them I could approach. There were the dignified heads of various orders with hundreds of devoted followers. There were the princely divines residing in cities, counting titled aristocrats, rajahs and there were the silent ascetics living by themselves in out-of-the-way spots whose fame brought large crowds from distant corners to pay homage

to them. Then there were the ordinary sadhus gathered in colonies or living alone or roaming about from place to place. I had seen and talked to many of them since my boyhood, and the impressions I had gathered provided for hope that there would be even one among them capable of advising me correctly about my condition. The only alternative open to me was to make a widespread search for one. But I had neither the means nor the physical capacity to travel from place to place looking for a yogi in the vast subcontinent of India, with its endless variety of monastic order and spiritual cults, its religious mendicants, sadhus and saints, who could correctly diagnose my trouble and heal it with his own spiritual powers.

At last, mustering my courage, I wrote to one of the best known modern saints of India the author of many widely read books in English on yoga, giving him full details of my extraordinary state and sought guidance. I waited for his reply in trepidation, and when it failed to come for some days, I sent a telegram also. I was passing through very anxious times when the answer came. It said that there was no doubt that I had aroused Kundalini in the tantric manner, and that the only way for me to seek guidance was to find a yogi who had himself conducted the shakti successfully to the Seventh Centre in the head. I was thankful for the reply which fully confirmed *my own* opinion, thereby raising my hopes and self-confidence. It was obvious that the symptoms mentioned by me had been recognized as those characterizing the Awakening, thereby giving my weird experience a certain appearance of normality.

If I were passing through an abnormal condition, it was not an isolated instance, nor was the abnormality

peculiar to me alone, but must be a necessary corollary to the awakening of Kundalini, and with modifications suited to different temperaments must have occurred in almost all those in whom awakening had taken place. But where was I to find a yogi who had raised the shakti to the Seventh Centre?

After some time I met another sadhu at Jammu, a native of Bengal, and described my condition to him. He studied my symptoms for a while, and then gave me the address of an ashram in East Bengal, the head of which was supposed to be a yogi of the highest order, who had himself practised Kundalini yoga. I wrote to the address given, receiving a reply that I had undoubtedly aroused the shakti but the man who could guide me had left on a pilgrimage. I consulted other holy men and sought for guidance from many reputed quarters without coming across a single individual who could boldly assert that he actually possessed intimate personal knowledge of the condition, and could confidently answer my questions. Those who talked with dignified reserve, looking very wise and deep, ultimately turned out to be as wanting in accurate information about the *mysterious* power as those of a more unassuming nature. And thus in the great country which had given birth to the lofty science of Kundalini thousands of years ago, and whose very soil is permeated with its fragrance, and whose rich religious lore is full of reference to it, I found no one able to help me.

The only thing I was sure of was that a new kind of activity had developed in my nervous system, but I could not determine which particular nerve or nerves were involved. I could clearly mark the location at the extremity of the spinal cord and around the lower orifice.

There undeniably was the abode of Kundalini, as described by yogis, the place where she lies asleep in the normal man, coiled three and a half times round the lowest triangular end of the spine, awakened to activity with proper exercises, of which concentration is the main adjunct.

Had I been under the guidance of a master, my doubts might have been resolved earlier but having neither the practical experience of a teacher to draw upon, nor enough theoretical knowledge of the subject to enable me to form a conclusive opinion independently, I remained vacillating in my ideas about the condition. This wavering state of mind was further enhanced by the variations in of my consciousness. Perhaps it was destined that it should be so and that I should be unguided and without adequate knowledge to allow me to form an independent judgement about the phenomenon. Perhaps it was destined also that I should suffer acutely for years due to lack of guidance and my ignorance, to enable me by my suffering to make smooth the path of those in whom the sacred fire will burn in the days to come.



Kundalini as a Yoga

It is necessary here to say a few words about the long known but rarely found reservoir of life energy in man, known as Kundalini. Many informed students of yoga hear or read about it at one time or another, but the accounts given in modern writings are too meagre and vague to serve as authentic information. The ancient treatises dealing exclusively with the subject of Kundalini Yoga abound in cryptic passages and contain details of fantastic, and even dangerous mental and physical exercises, incantations and formulas technically known as mantras. Bodily postures called asanas, and detailed instructions for the control and regulation of breath, are all couched in language difficult to understand.

Truly speaking, no illustrative material is available to convey lucidly what the objective reality of the methods advocated is, and what mental and organic changes one may expect at the end.

The result is that instead of becoming illuminative and pragmatic, this strictly empirical science is falling

into abuse and disrepute. Some of its practices forming integral parts of a combined whole, and serving as means to a definite end are now being regarded as laudable ends in themselves to the neglect of the ultimate objective. The real object of this system of yoga is to develop a type of consciousness which crosses over the boundaries confining the sense-bound mind, carrying the embodied consciousness to supersensory regions. The present-day aspirants often content themselves with a few postures and breathing exercises in the fond belief that they are practising Yoga for spiritual uplift.

The descriptions of Chakras and Lotuses, of supernatural signs and omens of the miraculous powers attainable, the genesis of the system and the origin of the various methods, are so overdone and full of exaggeration, that to the uninitiated the whole embodiment in the ancient literature appears preposterous, if not incredible. From such material it is extremely difficult for the modern seeker to gain knowledge of the subject, divested of supernatural and mythological lore, or to find clarification for doubts and difficulties.

Judged from the fantastic accounts contained in the writings not only in the original ancient treatises but also in some of the modern books, Kundalini for an intelligent, can be no more than a myth. In India no other topic has such a mass of literature as Yoga and the supernatural, and yet no penetrating light is thrown on Kundalini, nor has any expert provided more information than is furnished in the ancient works. The result is that except for perhaps a few almost inaccessible masters, there is no one in India, the home of the science, to whom one can look for authoritative knowledge.

Prana: *The Life Energy*

The system of complicated mental and physical exercises, relating particularly to Kundalini, is technically known as Hatha Yoga. Hatha in Sanskrit is a compound of two words, *ha* and *tha*, meaning the sun and moon, and consequently the name Hatha Yoga is intended to indicate that form of yoga which results from the confluence of these two orbs.

Briefly the moon and the sun, as used here, are meant to designate the two nerve currents flowing on the left and right sides of the spinal cord through the two *nadis*, or nerves, named *ida* and *pingala*. The former, being cool, is said to resemble the pale lustre of the moon; the latter, being hot, is likened to the radiance of the sun. All systems of yoga are based on the supposition that living bodies owe their existence to an extremely subtle immaterial substance, pervading the universe and designated as prana. Prana, manifesting itself as vital energy, is the cause of all organic phenomena, controlling the organisms by means of the nervous system and the brain. Prana, in modern terminology 'vital energy' assumes different aspects to discharge different functions in the body. It circulates in the system in two separate streams, one with fervid and the other with frigid effect, clearly perceptible to yogis in the awakened condition.

From my own experience I can also unhesitatingly affirm that there are two main types of vital currents in the body, which have a cooling or heating effect on the system. Prana and *apana* exist side by side in the system in every tissue and every cell, the two flowing through the higher nerves and their tiny ramifications as two

distinct currents. Their passage is never felt in the normal state of consciousness, the nerves being accustomed to the flow from the very commencement of life.

Due to its extremely subtle nature, vital energy has been likened to breath by the ancient authorities on Yoga. It is maintained that the air we breathe is permeated with both prana and *apana*. These vital currents flow alternately through the two nostrils along with the air, at the time of inhalation and exhalation. The air we breathe is composed mainly of oxygen and nitrogen. In view of the fact that the old writers on Kundalini Yoga sometimes use the same term for *prana* or *apana*, viz. *vayu*, which is used for the air we breathe, there is a possibility of confusion being caused that breath and Prana are identical. This is absolutely not the case.

Life as we know it on earth is not possible without oxygen, and it is noteworthy that this element is an ingredient of both air and water, the two essential requirements of earthly life. This is a clear indication of the facts that on the terrestrial globe the cosmic vital energy, or prana-shakti, utilizes oxygen as the main vehicle for its activity. It is possible that biochemistry may have to accept, at a future date, the instrumentality of oxygen in all organic phenomena as the main channel for the play of the intelligent vital force prana.

The earth has its own supply of prana, pervading every atom and every molecule of all the elements and compounds. The sun, a vast reservoir of vital energy, is constantly pouring an enormous supply of pranic radiation on to the earth as a part of its effulgence. The superstitions connected with eclipses may thus have an element of truth, as on all such occasions the pranic

emanations **from** the sun or moon **are** partially or totally cut off.

The changes in the weather and in the vapour and dust *content of the atmosphere*, have a marked effect on certain sensitive temperaments and might also be found to cause alterations in the flow of pranic current. The moon is another big supply centre of prana for earth. The planets and stars, both near and far are all inexhaustible stores of prana, vitalizing the earth with streams of energy conveyed by their lustre. The pranic emanations from the sun and moon, planets and stars, are not all alike, but each has a peculiar characteristic of its own. The light of heavenly bodies, when analysed after traveling through enormous distances to earth, shows variations in the spectrum peculiar to each one. It is impossible for the imagination of man to visualize even dimly the interactions of numberless streams of light emitted by billions of stars, crossing and recrossing each other at countless points, filling the stupendous stretch of space at every spot. Similarly it is impossible to depict even hazily, the colossal world of prana, or life energy, in its unbounded extent and as described by seers.

To explain the phenomenon of terrestrial life, there is no alternative but to accept the existence of an intelligent vital medium which, using the elements and compounds of the material world, acts as the architect of organic structures. All show evidence of extraordinary intelligence and purpose, built with such amazing skill and produced in such profusion and in so many diverse forms as to falsify any idea of spontaneous generation or chance. The existence of this medium cannot be proved empirically; human ingenuity and skill have not yet

attained the perfection where one can experiment with media of such subtlety.

Immense significance has been attached to the pranic radiations coming from the sun and moon. In fact, some ancient authorities trace the origin of the human mind to the moon. The whole structure of yoga is based on the validity of prana as a cognizable super physical stuff. For thousands of years successive generations of yogis have verified the assertions of their precursors. The reality of prana as the chief agent leading to the superconscious condition known as samadhi has never been questioned by any school of yoga. Those who believe in yoga must first believe in prana.

Considering the fact that to attain success in yoga one must not only possess unusual mental and physical endowments, but must also have all the attributes of saintly character, honesty, chastity, and rectitude. It would be nothing short of obstinacy to discredit the testimony of numerous renowned seers, who, in unequivocal terms, have testified to their own experience of the superconscious through systematic manipulation of prana, as learnt by them from their own preceptors.

Shakti: The Cosmic Energy

According to the religious beliefs in India, dating back to prehistoric times, the existence of prana is a medium for the activity of thought, and transference of sensations and impulses in living organisms. It is a normally imperceptible cosmic substance, present in every formation of matter. This is an established fact, verifiable by the practice of Yoga by the right type of individual on

proper lines. According to these beliefs, prana is not matter, or mind or intelligence or consciousness, but rather an inseparable part of the cosmic energy or *shakti*. Prana resides in all of them and is the driving force behind all cosmic phenomena, as force in matter and vitality in living organism. In short, it is the medium by which the cosmic intelligence conducts the unimaginably vast activity of this stupendous world. It is the power by which it creates, maintains, and destroys the gigantic globular formations burning ceaselessly in space as well as the tiny microbes, both malignant and beneficent, filling every part of the earth. In other words, shakti, when applied to inorganic matter, is force, and when applied to the organic plane, life. The two are different aspects of the creative cosmic energy, operating in both the inorganic and organic planes.

For the sake of convenience and to avoid confusion, the term prana or prana-shakti is generally applied to that aspect of the cosmic energy which operates in the organic sphere, as nervous impulse and vitality, while the genetic name shakti is applied to every form of energy, animate and inanimate; to the creative and active aspect of the Reality.

In dealing with Kundalini we are concerned only with prana or prana-shakti, sometimes referred to as shakti for the sake of brevity, though, strictly speaking, the designation shakti is applied to cosmic energy, the creatrix of the universe. Present day science is being irresistibly led to the conclusion that energy is the basic substance of the physical world. The doubt about the existence of life as a deathless vital medium apart from the corporeal appendages, is as old as civilization. It is occasioned mainly by the inexorable nature of physical laws operating on the body, the inevitability of decay

and death, the extremely elusive nature of vital principle, the utter impossibility of perceiving it apart from the organic frame, and above all the utter absence of any proof of survival after bodily death.

According to the yogis, however, the existence of the life energy as a deathless entity becomes subjectively apparent in the superconscious state of samadhi. Its flow through the nerves can be experienced even before samadhi, that, as soon as certain measures of success are attained in meditation. When that happens, a greater demand for it is felt in the concentrated condition of the brain. To meet this, vital energy or prana, residing in other parts of the body, flows to the head, sometimes to such an extent that even vital organs like the heart, lungs and the digestive system almost cease to function. The pulse and the breathing become imperceptible, and the whole body appears cold and lifeless. With the additional fuel supplied by the enhanced flow of vital energy, the brain becomes more intensely alive; the surface consciousness rises above bodily sensations, and its perceptive faculty is vastly enlarged, rendering it cognizant of super physical existences. In this condition the first object of perception is prana, experienced as a lustrous, unmaterial stuff, sentient and in a state of rapid vibration both within and outside the body, extending boundlessly on every side.

In yoga prana is life and life is prana. Life and vitality, do not mean soul or the spark of the divine in man. Prana is merely the life energy by which divinity brings into existence the organic kingdom and acts on the organic structures, as it creates and acts on the universe by means of physical energy.

After creating the atoms, physical energy is transformed into countless kinds of molecules, resulting in the existence of innumerable compounds, which again by combination and mixture, differences in temperature and pressure, create the amazingly diversified appearance of the physical world. Starting with protoplasm and unicellular organisms, prana brings into existence the marvelous domain of life, endless in variety, exceedingly rich in shape and colour, creating classes, genera, species, subspecies, and groups. While remaining constant and unaltered fundamentally, it enters into countless combinations acting both as the architect and the object produced. It exists as a mighty Universal Force and is more wonderful than the cosmos perceived by our senses.

We do not realize what mysterious stuff animates the living bodies, causing marvelous physical and chemical reactions while the owners of the bodies know nothing of what is happening in them, know nothing of the intelligence which regulates the body machine, which builds it in the womb, preserves it in illness, sustains it in danger, and heals it when injured.

The founders of Kundalini Yoga, accepting the existence of prana as a concrete reality both in its individual and cosmic aspects, were led to the momentous discovery that it is possible to gain voluntary control over the nervous system to the extent of diverting a greater flow of *prana* into the brain. They succeeded admirably as the main exercise, concentration, which is the corner stone of every system of yoga, fits in with the methods prescribed by nature for expediting human evolution. They found that on acquiring a certain degree of proficiency in mind control and concentration, they could draw up through the hollow backbone a vividly

bright, fast-moving, powerful radiance into the brain for short periods of time, extending the duration with practice, which had a most amazing effect on the mind, enabling it to soar to regions of surpassing glory, beyond anything experienced in the crude material world.

They named the channel *sushumna*, and as the streaming radiance was distinctly felt mounting up from its base, they treated the spot as the seat of the Goddess, representing her as lying asleep there in the guise of a serpent, closing with her mouth the aperture leading to the spinal canal. The system of nerves on the left and right of the *sushumna*, which contributed to the formation of the flaming radiance by yielding a part of the vital energy moving through them, were named *ida* and *pingala*. Though lacking in the knowledge made available by modern science, it did not take them long in their heightened state of consciousness, to postulate the existence of the subtle world of life, interpenetrating and existing side by side with the material cosmos. Consequently the ancient writings on Hatha Yoga abound in cryptic references to prana-shakti or vital energy and its conducting network systems in the body which are not infrequently a source of confusion for beginners.



*Gradual Transformation:
From Mundane to the Sublime*

I quite realize that it is impossible for me to convey accurately what I mean by the expression 'widening and contraction of consciousness' which I use frequently to denote the fluctuation in *my* mental condition. However, it is only by using this phrase that I can describe even vaguely my subjective experience, which seldom falls to the lot of the average man. To the best of my knowledge, the weird phenomena following the awakening of Kundalini has so far never been revealed in detail nor been made the subject of analytical study. The subject has remained shrouded in mystery, not only because of the extreme rarity and astounding nature of the manifestation, but also because certain essential features of the development are closely bound with the intimate life and private parts of the individual who has the experience. The disclosures made in this work are likely to appear startling, even incredible, because the subject has been discussed openly for the first time after centuries of a veiled existence.

We can more or less follow the meaning of words, however difficult they may be, which describe mental state common to us all, or discuss intellectual problems and abstract propositions based on common experience and knowledge. But the phenomenon which I have tried to explain in these pages is so uncommon, and so removed from ordinary, that in all probability only a few will understand it. Accomplished masters of Kundalini Yoga, always rare, are almost non-existent now. The cases of a spontaneous type, where the awakening occurs suddenly at some period in life, more often than not end in mental disorder, which makes a coherent narration of the experience impossible. It is therefore, no wonder that a detailed account of this strange experience is not available anywhere.

In this critical age of science, describing a bizarre mental phenomenon never described in detail before, I am compelled, for reasons of prudence, to keep back much that should have found a place in this work but which, I am sure, will fall within the experience of many of those who chance to kindle the serpent fire accidentally, without a preparatory period of training. Acting on this plan, it is sufficient for me to say, without narrating many of the almost uncanny happenings which I witnessed within myself, that during the following months my mental condition continued to be the same as already described, but there was a perceptible improvement in my bodily health and I found my former strength and vigour returning gradually.

* * *

The Government Offices moved from Jammu *to* Srinagar, then the summer capital of the state, in the month of May, but being on leave and finding myself

unable to withstand the exhausting effects of heat in the weakened state of my nerves, I left for Kashmir in early April- The change did me good. The valley was thick with blossoms. The crisp spring air, filled with fragrance, had an invigorating effect. There was absolutely no change in the constant movements of the radiant current or in the intensified behaviour of the glow in my head. On the other hand, their activity was more intensified. My mental strength, poise, and power of endurance, came back *to* me in part, and I found myself able *to* take a lively interest in conversations.

What was more precious to me, the deep feelings of love for my family, which had appeared to be dead, stirred in my heart again. Within a few weeks, I found myself able to take long walks and to attend to ordinary affairs not requiring too much exertion.

My former appetite returned and I could eat without any fear of creating a storm in my interior. I could even prolong the interval between meals without discomfort. By the time my office opened at Srinagar I had gained enough strength and endurance to have the assurance that I could take up my official duties without the risk of aggravating my mental condition or exhibiting a lack of efficiency or any sign of abnormality in my behaviour. When I went through the papers on my desk, I noticed that *my* memory was unimpaired and the awful experience I had undergone had in no way adversely affected my ability.

I was however, easily fatigued, and became restless after only a few hours of attentive application. After a prolonged spell of mental work, I invariably found myself closing my eyes and listening internally. The buzzing in the ears was louder than usual and the

luminous circle was more extended. This served as an indication that I was still not capable of maintaining a sustained state of attention for lengthy periods, and that I should proceed with caution. Accordingly, I decided to alternate spells of work with intervals of relaxation; chatting with my colleagues, looking out of the window, or by moving out to the busy street outside.

I do not know how it happened that even in that extremely abnormal state of my mind, needing constantly the application of new measures to adapt it to changing circumstances, I often hit upon the right procedure to deal with unexpected and difficult situations arising in my day-to-day contacts. If I had so much as even breathed to others a word about my abnormality and the bizarre manifestations which were now a regular feature of my life, I might have been labelled as a lunatic and treated accordingly. If I had tried to make capital out of the mysterious occurrence and pretended a knowledge of the occult, which I did not in reality possess, I might have been hailed as a saint and pestered day and night by people seeking a miraculous way of escape out of their difficulties. I maintained a strict reserve about my abnormal state and never referred to it in my conversation with intimate friends, although even in my most sanguine moments, the fear of impending madness never left me completely.

The magnitude of the risk that one has to run in the event of a sudden powerful awakening, can be gauged from the fact that simultaneously with the release of the new energy, profound functional and structural changes begin to occur in the delicate fabric of the nervous system. Among the inmates of mental hospitals there are often some who owe their malady to a prematurely active or morbidly functioning Kundalini.

The Quest Continues

With the restoration of my faculties and the growing clarity of mind I began to speculate about my condition. I read all that came my way pertaining to Kundalini and Yoga, but did not come across any account of a similar phenomenon. The darting warm and cold currents, the effulgence in the head, the unearthly sounds in the ears, and the gripping fear, were all mentioned. There was no sign in me of clairvoyance or of ecstasy, or of communication with disembodied spirits or of any other extraordinary psychic gift, all considered to be the distinctive characteristics of an awakened Kundalini.

Often in the silence and darkness of my room at night, I found myself looking with dread at horribly disfigured faces and distorted forms. They left me trembling with fear, unable to account for their presence. At times, though such occurrences were rare, I could perceive within the luminous mist, a brighter radiance emanating from a luciferous, ethereal shape, with a hardly distinguishable face and figure, but nevertheless a presence, emitting a lustre so soft, enchanting and soothing.

On such occasions my mind overflowed with happiness and divine peace filled every fibre of my being. Strangely enough, on every such occasion, the memory of the primary vision came vividly to me, as if to hearten me in my despondency, with a fleeting glimpse of a super condition towards which I was being Painfully and inexorably drawn.

I was not sure at that time whether the visions afforded actual glimpses of a supermundane existence,

or were mere figments of my now highly excited and virtually glowing imagination. I did not know what was making me perennially conscious of luminosity, as if my own intangible mental stuff had been metamorphosed into a radiant substance, and this metamorphosis of the mind substance was responsible for radiancy in the thought images.

I continued to attend to my household and official duties, gaining more and more strength every day. After a few more weeks I was able to work attentively for hours with my now transformed mental equipment, without feeling any distressing symptoms. Gradually, as my power of endurance developed and moments of fear grew rarer, I became more reconciled to my apparent abnormality, and was not now as acutely conscious of the movements of the newly generated vital current in my spinal cord and other nerve tracks, as I had been earlier.

In the course of time the passage of the current through the scattered nervous threads became less perceptible, and often I did not notice it at all. I could now devote myself attentively to any work for hours. Comparing my later stable mental condition with what it had been in the initial stages after the crisis, the realization came to me that I had escaped from the clutches of insanity by the narrowest margin, and that I owed my deliverance not to any effort of mine but to the benign disposition *of* the energy itself.

In the primary stages, particularly before the crisis, for certain very cogent reasons, the vital current appeared to be acting erratically and blindly like the swollen water of a flooded stream, which rushes madly here and there trying to scour out a new channel for its passage. Years later I had an inkling of what had actually happened

and could guess at the marvel lying hidden in the human body, unsuspected, waiting for the needed invocation from the owner and a favourable opportunity to leap into action.

The six months of that summer spent in Kashmir passed without any remarkable event or noteworthy change in me. The stir caused by my strange indisposition died down gradually. Most persons who had any knowledge *of* it attributed my sudden breakdown to mental causes, but a whisper had gone around in some quarters that my strange distemper was the outcome of yoga practices intimately connected with Kundalini. As a result the curious came to see me on one pretext or another, trying to elicit further information. For many of them, the mere awakening of the serpent power meant a precipitate plunge into the supernatural. They were not blameworthy. Most men seem to have the notion that it is but a step from human to cosmic consciousness, a step as easily and safely taken as crossing a threshold leading from a smaller into a larger room.

This fallacious idea is often bolstered by incompetent guides, trading on the credulity of mankind, who claim knowledge of yoga, and ability to bring about positive results in their disciples, themselves utterly unaware of the fact that yoga, as a progressive science, has been dead for the last hundreds of years. In olden days the serious and difficult nature of the task was fully recognized, and the aspirants who set about it took full care to divest themselves of all worldly responsibilities. They developed a stoical attitude of mind, prepared to meet all eventualities without flinching or yielding under stress.

To the inquiries directed to gathering more information about my experience for frivolous reasons, I usually turned a deaf ear, maintaining a reserve which has continued to this day. Failing to gain satisfaction for their curiosity and finding no remarkable change in me, the story of my spiritual adventure was treated as a myth, and to some I even became an object of ridicule, for having mistaken a physical ailment for a divine dispensation.

At the end of summer I was almost as strong as before. Barring the luminous currents and the radiance in my head, I marked no other change in myself and felt none the worse for my awful adventure. At times I experienced a difficulty in applying myself attentively to any task and often spent the interval in talking or strolling in the open.

On such occasions I noticed a greater pressure on the nerve centres in the cardiac and hepatic regions, especially the latter, as if a greater flow of the radiation was being forced into the organ to increase its activity. There was no other indication of anything remarkable or unusual in me. I slept well, ate heartily, and in order to overcome the effects on my body of several months of forced inactivity, took a little exercise. I felt no inclination to read in the evening, as had been my habit in the past, or to do any mental work. Treating this as a hint from within not to tax the brain any further, I retired usually to my room for relaxation and rest soon after dinner.

Towards the end of October 1939, I made preparations for my departure to Jammu with the office. I felt myself so thoroughly fit for the journey and subsequent sojourn there for six months all by myself,

that for reasons of her health, I left my wife, my one unfailing partner in all my vicissitudes, in Kashmir, confident of my own ability to look after myself. I did not realize at that time, that I was taking a grave risk in not having her with me when away from home.

Without my knowledge, the stormy force released in my body was still as actively at work, and though I was not acutely cognizant of its movements, the strain on my vital organs was no less heavy than it had been before. The thought that I was in an abnormal state internally, was however, never entirely absent from my mind, for I was reminded of it constantly by the luminosity within. But as time wore on and the condition remained constant, it lost for me much of its strangeness and unnaturaless, becoming as it were, a part of my being, my usual and normal state.

9
Between Body and Mind

In view of the immense significance of the regenerative and transformative processes at work in my body, especially during sleep, which ultimately resulted in the development of psychic gifts, never possessed by me until the age of over forty-six, it is necessary to dwell on this most important phase of my singular experience.

The ancient treatises on Yoga and numerous other spiritual texts of India contain references to the miraculous power of shakti, or feminine cosmic energy, to bring about transformations in her devotees. The famous *Gayatri Mantra*, which every Brahman must recite daily after his morning ablutions, is an invocation to Kundalini to grant transcendence. The sacred thread worn by the Hindus, consisting generally of three or six separate threads held together by a knot, is symbolic of the three well known channels of vital energy, *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*, as passing through the centre and on either side of the spinal cord. The tuft of hair on the top of the head usually worn by men, indicates the

location of the inoperative conscious centre in the brain, which opens like a lotus in bloom, when watered by the ambrosial current rising through *sushumna*. It functions as the seat of supersensible perception, the sixth sense or the third eye, in those divinely favoured by Kundalini.

The obviously unambiguous references to her creative and transformative prowess, contained in the hymns composed in praise of the goddess by renowned sages, cannot be dismissed lightly as mere poetic effusions devoid of any material foundation. Considering also the fact that the results attained by the masters, formed subjects for experiment and verification by their disciples, these assertions cannot be treated either as mere metaphors, intended to convey some meaning, or as crude exaggeration of trivial achievements.

It is on the universal acceptance of the truth of these ancient beliefs in India, that all the system of yoga and the massive structure of Vedic religion have been built. A foundation so deeply laid that they have come to be an integral part of every religious act and ceremony of a Hindu. Consequently the average worshipper of Kali, Durga, Shiva or Vishnu, when prostrate before the image of his deity implores the boon of worldly favours and super-physical attributes *to* enable him *to* look behind the veil of illusory appearances.

If the historic record extending to more than thirty centuries embodied in the Vedas and other spiritual texts is to be relied upon, the ancient society of Indo-Aryans abounded with numerous genuine instances of transfiguration by means of spiritual strivings and yoga. This resulted in the complete metamorphosis of personality. As a result individuals of a common caliber were transformed into visionaries of extraordinary

attainments, by the touch of an invisible power which they recognized and worshipped with appropriate ceremony.

In fact one of the basic tenets of Hindu religion, and the arch stone of the science of yoga, is the belief that by properly directed efforts it is possible to complete the evolutionary cycle of human existence in one life. Thus, one can be forever released from the otherwise endless chain of births and deaths.

In addition to cases of spontaneous transformation brought about suddenly, or by slow degrees, in mystics and saints there are authentic instances where a definite alteration of personality has occurred as a result of yoga, or some other form of spiritual effort, undertaken deliberately. This is supported by unimpeachable evidence which confronts modern science with an enigma as insoluble now as it was in medieval times. What is the mystery behind this oft repeated and generally accepted phenomenon? What force, spiritual, psychical or physical, is set into motion automatically or by voluntary striving which working mysteriously according to its own inscrutable laws, brings about a radical change in the organism, moulding it into a distinct type with certain common characteristics that have distinguished mystics and seers, of all ages and climes!

In India and almost all countries professing a revealed faith, the belief in the efficacy of worship, prayer, and other religious practices, induces a mental condition favourable *to* the dispensation of divine grace. The transformation occurring in consequence of such practices is, therefore, attributed to divine favour. It must however, be remembered that a hasty recourse to

supernatural agencies to account for any obscure phenomenon not explicable by the intellect, has been a marked feature of man's existence from the earliest stage of his development. The habit still exists in the majority of mankind, though its operation has been somewhat restricted owing to the explanations furnished by science for many previously obscure phenomena of nature.

To bring in divinity for the explanation of isolated phenomena, when its position as the primordial cause of all existence is recognized, is an inconsistency for which seasoned intellects should not be guilty. When viewed in the light *of* such recognition, neither a leaf can stir, nor an atom move, nor a raindrop descend, nor any creature breathe, without divine providence. The inconsistency lies in furnishing rational explanations for some of the problems and invoking a supermundane agency for the rest. To the great sorrow of mankind, this has always been done in respect of matters both temporal and spiritual.

The existence of extraordinary intellectual talent in some and less in others, or *of* spiritual and psychic gifts in a few and none on the rest, should not, therefore, be attributed to divine intervention: there can be no pampered favourites in the just hierarchy of heaven. But as in the case of material phenomena, the variations from the rule, repeatedly observed, should act as a spur to investigate the problems presented by the extraordinary achievements of men of genius and the amazing performances *of* men *of* vision.

Working from this angle, the first effort *of* any investigator should be directed towards ascertaining the degree of relationship between the body and the mind.

Only a moment's thought is enough to convince even the least intelligent, that the body and mind are indissolubly bound to each other, from birth to death. One is astounded at the depth of knowledge and the keenness of intellect displayed by man, but none has been able to win the other completely to his point of view. The body and mind are mutually dependent and responsive to such an amazing extent that not an eyelid flickers, nor does a muscle move, nor an artery throb, without the knowledge of the mind. Similarly not a memory stirs, nor does a thought strike, nor an idea occurs without causing a reaction in the body. The effect of disease, of organic changes in the tissues, of exhaustion, of diet, of medicine, of pleasure and pain, sorrow and suffering, in the body is too well known to need mention. The close connection between the two may be likened to an object's reflection in a mirror.

In all temporal affairs affecting an individual at every moment of his existence, the correlation and interdependence of the gross body and the ethereal mind is recognized and accepted without question. Strangely enough, when dealing with spiritual matters this obviously unaltered rule determining the relationship of the two in the physical world is inexplicably lost sight of. Even eminent scholars, when discussing psychic phenomena of the most extraordinary kind, argue in a manner as if the corporeal frame has no place in the picture from the moment of entry into the spiritual realms. Even after making full allowance for the miracles performed by them, the life stories of known saints, mystics, and prophets make it undeniably clear that the inviolable biological laws, were almost as effective in their case as they are in the case of other human beings. Most

of them undoubtedly furnish unique examples of unparalleled courage and fortitude in adversity, extraordinary loftiness of character, unflinching adherence to truth, and other laudable virtues.

One can easily cite countless instances of the dominance of spirit over the frailties of flesh from any period of history. It would be a fallacy to assert that such instances are an exclusive feature of spirituality in the ordinary connotation of the term. When even the flicker of a thought or the momentary sway of passion has a perceptible reaction on the body, it is inconceivable that such abnormal and extraordinary states of mind associated with spiritual phenomena should not exhibit a corresponding physiological reaction. It has been observed that at the time of psychic manifestations, signs of faintness, partial or complete insensibility to surroundings, convulsive movements, and other symptoms of organic disturbance are frequently present. This fact alone should provide sufficient cause for questioning the attitude of those who accept the existence of the phenomena as a matter of course, as a perfectly legitimate activity *of* the mind alone. It has become a common habit when dealing with abnormal manifestations of the mind, to overlook the body, and to treat such phenomena as more or less freakish occurrences, not amenable to ordinary biological laws.

In all probability there is a basic misconception owing to a wrong interpretation of religious doctrine, which allots to the cognitive faculty in man an entirely independent status utterly divorced from the body, in respect *to* its supersensory and super physical activity. It is under the influence of such erroneous premises that not infrequently even erudite men lend their support to

dogmas crediting the human mind with unlimited powers, even to the extent of comprehending the ultimate reality behind the visible universe. Bearing in mind the stupendous extent of the universe, the conception of the Creator becomes so staggering that it is utterly beyond the capacity of the human brain. Even the developed consciousness of an ecstatic human intellect, is utterly incapable of apprehending the real nature of its immeasurable source. Hence even in the highest condition of superconscious flight, the most which renowned mystics have been able to say, is too fragmentary and vague, to justify the conclusion that what they perceived through supersensory channels was the reality in itself.

A Glimpse into the Transcendental

Speaking more clearly, the transcendental state may be nothing more than a fleeting glimpse of a tiny fragment of the superconscious world. Since body is the vehicle, and mind the product, of the radiation filtering through it, animating its countless cells like a living electric current, energising the sensitive brain matter to a far greater pitch of vital activity than any other region, the whole machine can exhibit only a limited range of consciousness, depending on capacity of the brain and the efficiency of its various organs and parts.

Because of the drastic restrictions laid on his sensual equipment and the extremely narrow bounds of his mental orbit, the average man is utterly unable to form even dimly, a conception of a deathless, incorporeal conscious energy, of infinite volume, penetrative power and mobility. The main stumbling block in the visualization of even a slightly higher plane of

consciousness is the normally unalterable and limited capacity of the human brain, which in each individual, is able to utilize only a specific quantity of life energy for the activity of the body and the mind. There is no known method by which the brain of a normal man can be made to overstep the boundaries set to it by nature, though it can be improved and sharpened with application and study.

The question to be answered is whether this transition from one sphere of consciousness to another can be effected, and whether there are any authentic instances of it during recent times. The answer to the first part of the question is an emphatic 'yes'. Whole armoury of every system of yoga, of every occult creed and of every esoteric religious doctrine is directed to this end.

The only shortcoming, which makes the claim appear absurd and fantastic to a strictly scientific mind, is that the biological process by which the change can be brought about has not been explained which is that the human mind can win entry to supersensory realms without affecting the body in any way. Almost all the methods in use for gaining visionary experience or supersensory perception - concentration, breathing, exercises, postures, prayer, fasting, asceticism and the like - effect both the organic frame and the mind. It is, reasonable to suppose that any change brought about by their means in the sphere of thought must also be preceded by alterations in the chemistry of the body.

The ancient authorities on yoga, though aware of the important role played by the physical organism in developing supersensory channels of cognition, and fully conversant with the methods for diverting its energies in this direction, were far more interested in the spiritual

than in the physical side of the science. They attached little significance to the biological changes occurring in the flesh as compared to the resulting momentous developments in the realm of mind. The general level of knowledge in those days and the tendencies of the time also precluded the possibility of such an investigation. Even the advocates of Kundalini Yoga, starting with the discipline and purification of internal organs, have failed to give that status to the corporeal frame as the sole channel for success in yoga, leading to transcendence, as it deserved.

From the very nature of the exercises and the discipline enjoined, it should, however, be obvious even to the least informed, that the pivot round which the whole system revolves is the living organism. It was to bring it to the required degree of fitness that the initiates devoted precious years of their lives to the acquirement of proficiency in maintaining difficult postures in the art of cleaning the colon, the stomach, the nasal passages and throat, in holding the breath almost to the point of asphyxiation, and in other extremely hard, even dangerous, practices. In the light of the facts mentioned in this volume, it is not difficult to see that they are all indicative of a sustained endeavour to purify and regulate the system in order to adjust it to the heightened state of perception. This was also a preliminary arduous preparation of the body to bear safely a possible shock, or excessive strain, on the bursting of the vital storm in it, released to effect drastic organic changes. It is however, abundantly clear that all the exercises were directed towards the manipulation of a definite organic control system in the body, capable of bringing about the earnestly desired consummation by mysterious means, even less understood now, than they were in olden days.

The State of Altered Consciousness

I returned to Jammu in a cheerful frame of mind, restored almost to my normal physical and mental health. The fear of the supernatural and antipathy towards religion that had been constantly present during the first few months, had partially disappeared. For a long time I could not account for this sudden revulsion of what had been a deep rooted feeling in me, and even during the days of acute disturbance, was surprised at this change in myself. It was not only because my irrepressible desire for religious experience had landed me in an awful predicament that I felt the fear and the aversion, but there seemed to have actually occurred an inexplicable alteration in the very depths of my personality, for which I was at a loss to assign a reason.

Into the Void

Devout and God-fearing until my abnormal condition, I had lost all feelings of love and veneration for the divine, all respect for the sacred and the holy, and all

interest in the scriptural and sacramental. The very idea of the supernatural had become hateful and I did not allow my thoughts to dwell on it even for a moment. From a devotee I became an inveterate enemy of faith and felt scathing resentment against those whom I saw going to or coming from places of worship. I had changed entirely, devoid completely of every religious sentiment.

In the early stages, desperately engaged in a neck to neck race, with death on one side and insanity on the other, I had neither the time nor the disposition to think seriously about this sudden disappearance of a powerful impulse which had dominated my thought from a very early age. As my mind grew clearer I wondered at this quite unexpected alteration in myself. On the restoration of my general health, the feelings of love, the distaste for the supernatural still persisted and I found myself empty of religious desire.

I became uneasy at the thought that it might not be Kundalini, considered to be the inexhaustible fount of divine love and the perennial source of spirituality, which was active in me, but some evil force of darkness dragging me towards the depths of irreligiosity and impiety. At such times the words of the Brahmin sadhu whom I had consulted during the preceding winter in a state of desperation always came back to me with ominous significance. He had said slowly, emphasizing every word to make it sink deep into my terribly agitated mind, that the symptoms I had mentioned could in no way be attributed to Kundalini, the ocean of bliss, as she could never be associated with anything in the nature of pain or disturbance, and that my malady was most probably due to the vicious influence of some evil spirit. I had been horrified at the words, which were

spoken with certainty to a man fighting desperately with madness, and spelled death for any spark of hope left in him. With sanity restored, but still strangely altered by a strongly marked characteristic, the idea recurred with overwhelming force to harass me, when I failed to find a satisfactory explanation for the change.

* * *

Shortly before coming to Jammu, I had begun to feel vaguely the dim stirrings of the apparently dead impulse. This happened usually in the early hours of morning, as if the refreshed state of the brain afforded an opportunity to the vanished urge to make a shadowy appearance for a brief interval. My thoughts usually dwelt on the life stories of certain mystics whose utterances had once made a powerful appeal to me. I had wholly forgotten them during the preceding months and when recalled by accident, the remembrance failed to evoke any warmth. I usually turned my thoughts to other things to avoid thinking of them.

Now their memory returned as of old for a moment, the sweetness tintured with a certain bitterness. They had said nothing clearly of the dread ordeal which they too must have gone through, in one form or another, nothing about the dangers and pitfalls of the path which they too must have travelled and which must be common to reach a goal open to all. But if they had suffered as I did or even a fraction of it, and come out of the tribulation to compose inspiring rhymes which had captivated my heart at the very first hearing, they were indeed worthy of the greatest homage.

A few weeks after my arrival in Jammu I noticed that my religious ideas, sentiments, and memories were

reviving rapidly. I felt again the same deep urge for religious experience and the same all absorbing interest in the supernatural and the mystical. I could sit all by myself brooding on the yet unanswered problem of being and the riddle of my own existence or listen to devotional songs and mystical poetry with undiminished rapture.

It was only now that I really began to recognize myself, the being who about a year before had sat cross legged in meditation, bent on invoking the supersensible, little knowing in his ignorance that the average human frame of today, emasculated a faulty civilization and enervated by uncontrolled ambitions and desires, is not strong enough to bear the splendour, of the mighty vision without long preparatory training, austerity, and discipline.

The Understanding.

Slowly it began to dawn upon me that the torture I suffered in the beginning was caused by the unexpected release of the Powerful vita energy through a wrong nerve, *pingala*, and that the but blast coursing through my nerve, and brain cells would have undoubtedly led to death but for the miraculous intervention at the last minute. Later on my suffering was probably due, firstly to the damage already sustained by my nervous system secondly, to the fact that I was entirely uninitiated into the mystery; and thirdly and mainly, to the circumstance that my body, though above the average in muscular strength, was not sufficiently developed internally, to Withstand with impunity the sudden on rush of a much more dynamic

and potent life energy than that to which the average human body is normally accustomed.

I had experienced enough to realize that this powerful vital force, once let loose even by accident, cannot be restrained from carrying one onward and upwards towards a higher and more penetrating consciousness for which it is the one and the only instrument. The awakening of Kundalini, it seemed to me, implied the introduction into the human body of a higher form of nerve force by the constant sublimation of the human seed, leading ultimately to the radiant transcendental consciousness.

I speculated in this manner without being sure about the correctness of my surmises. I had undergone a singular experience, but how could I be sure that I was not the victim of an abnormal pathological condition, peculiar to me alone? How could I be sure that I was not suffering from a continuous hallucinatory affection which was the result of prolonged concentration and too much absorption in the occult? If I had a really competent teacher to guide me, my doubts would have been resolved then and there, by which the whole course of my life might have been different.

I continued to be tormented by serious doubts about the actual nature of the abnormality of which I was the victim. The ever-present radiation, bathing my head with lustre and glowing along the path of countless nerves in the body, had little in common with the effulgent visions described by yogis and mystics. Beyond the spectacle of a luminous circle around the head, which was now constant in me, and an extended consciousness, I felt and saw nothing extraordinary, in the least

approaching the supernatural, and for all practical purposes I was the same man that I had always been.

The only difference was that I now saw the world reflected in a larger mental mirror. It is extremely difficult for me to express adequately this change in my cognitive apparatus. The best I can do is *to* say that it appeared as if an enlarged picture of the world was now being formed in the mind, as if the world image was now presented by a wider conscious surface than before.

It was at an early stage that I had become conscious of this inexplicable alteration. At that time I was not in a condition to give it serious thought and took it for granted that the change was brought about by the luminous vapour streaming into my brain. As already mentioned, the dimensions of the shining mist in my head varied constantly, causing a widening and shrinking of consciousness. This rapid alteration in the perceptive mirror, had been the first acutely distressing and completely bewildering feature of my uncanny experience. As time wore on, the extension became more and more apparent, with less frequent contractions, but even in the narrowest state of perception, my consciousness was wider than before. I could not fail to mark this startling alteration in myself, as it occurred abruptly, carrying me from one conscious state to another almost overnight.

If the transition had taken place gradually, without the other accompanying factors like the radiating spinal currents and the extraordinary sensation that made the whole phenomenon so striking and bizarre, I might not have noticed the extension at all, as one does not notice the extremely slight daily changes in one's own face which immediately strike a friend after a long separation.

As the alteration in the state of my consciousness is the most important feature of my experience, it is necessary to say more about this extraordinary development, which for a long time I considered to be an abnormality or delusion. The state of exalted and extended consciousness permeated with an inexpressible, supermundane happiness, which I experienced on the first appearance of the serpent fire in me. It was an internal phenomenon, subjective in nature, indicating an expansion of the field of awareness, or the cognitive self, formless, invisible, and infinitely subtle, impossible to delineate or depict. From a unit of consciousness, dominated by the ego, to which I was habituated from childhood, I expanded all at once into a glowing conscious circle, growing larger and larger, until a maximum was reached, the 'I' remaining as it was, but instead of a confining unit, now was itself encompassed by a shining conscious globe of vast dimensions. For want of a better simile, I should say that from a tiny glow the awareness in me became a large radiating pool of light. Speaking more precisely, there was ego consciousness as well as a vastly extended field of awareness, existing side by side, both distinct yet one.

This remarkable phenomenon, indelibly imprinted upon my memory, as vivid when recalled today as at the time of occurrence, was never repeated in all its original splendour until long after. During the following agonizing weeks and months there was absolutely no resemblance between my initial experience and the subsequent extremely disquieting mental condition, beyond the fact that I was painfully aware that an expansion had somehow taken place in the original area of my consciousness, subject to frequent partial contractions.

THE Luminous Radiance

At the time of my coming to Jammu I had gained my equilibrium of mind and soon after was restored fully *to* myself, with all my individual traits and peculiarities. But the unmistakable alteration in my cognitive faculty, which I had noticed for some time and of which I was constantly reminded when contemplating an external object or an internal mental image, underwent no modification, except that with the passage of time, the luminous circle in my head grew larger and larger by imperceptible degrees, with a corresponding increase in the area of consciousness.

It was certain that I was now looking at the universe with a perceptibly enlarged mental surface and that, in consequence, the world image which I perceived was reflected by a larger surface than that provided by my mind during all the years from my childhood to the time of the ecstatic vision. The area of my peripheral consciousness had undeniably increased, for I could not be mistaken about a fact continually in front of me during waking hours.

The phenomenon was so strange that I felt convinced that it would be useless on my part to look for a parallel case, even if the weird transformation was because of the action of an awakened Kundalini, and not a unique abnormality affecting me only. Realising also the futility of revealing this entirely out-of-the-common and unheard-of development to others, I kept my secret strictly to myself, saying nothing of it even to those most intimately connected with me. As my physical and mental condition gave me no cause *for* uneasiness in any

respect, except for this inexplicable peculiarity, I gradually ceased to trouble myself about it.

As already mentioned earlier in the initial stages of my experience it appeared as if I were viewing the world through a mental haze, or to be more clear, as if a thin layer *of* extremely fine dust hung between me and the objects I perceived. It was not an optical defect, as my eyesight was as sharp as ever and the haze seemed to envelop not the sensual but the perceptive organ. The dust was on the conscious mirror which reflected images of the objects. It seemed as if the objects seen were being viewed through a whitish medium, which made them look as if an extremely fine and uniform coat of chalk dust were laid on them, without in the least blurring the outline or the normal colour peculiar to each. The coat hung between me and the sky, the branches and leaves of trees, the green grass, the houses, the paved streets, the faces of men, lending to all a chalky appearance. It appeared as if the conscious centred in me, which interpreted sensory impressions, were now operating through a white medium, needing further refinement and cleaning to make it perfectly transparent.

As in the case of enlargement of the visual image, I was entirely at a loss to assign a satisfactory reason for this whitish appearance of the objects perceived. Any change of time, place, or weather had absolutely no effect on the transformation. It was as apparent under lamplight as in the sun, as noticeable in the clear light of morning as at dusk. Obviously the change was internal and not subject to alteration by changed external influences.

Surprised, yet mute, I continued to pass my days and nights at Jammu attending my duties and minding my

tasks as others were doing. The only plausible reason for this change which I could think of, was that the animating principle inhabiting the body was now operating the mechanism through an altered vital medium. This led to an alteration in the quality and behaviour of the nerve currents regulating the functions of the organs, as well as in the quality of the sensory impressions, and their interpretations by the observing mind. I felt easier in mind in treating it all as an abnormality rather than as natural growth, governed by regular biological laws which ultimately it indeed proved to be.

In this manner, a prey to doubts and uneasiness, I continued to pass my time until one sunny day, when on my way to the office, I happened to look at the front block of the Rajgarh Palace, in which the Government offices were located. I looked casually at first, then struck by something strange in their appearance, more attentively, unable to withdraw my gaze, and finally rooted to the spot I stared in amazement at the spectacle, unable to believe my eyes. I was looking at a scene familiar to me in one way before the experience, and in another during the last few months, but what I now saw was extraordinary. I was looking at a scene belonging not to the earth but to some fairyland. The ancient, weather-stained front of the building, unadorned and commonplace, and the arch of sky above it, bathed in the clear light of the sun, were both lit with a brilliant silvery lustre that lent a beauty and a glory to both and created a marvellous light and shade effect, impossible to describe. Wonderstruck, I turned my eyes in other directions, fascinated by the silvery shine which glorified everything. Clearly I was witnessing a new phase in my development. The lustre which I perceived on every side and in all

objects did not emanate from them but was undoubtedly a projection of my own internal radiance.

Entirely absorbed in the contemplation of the enchanting view, I lost all touch with my surroundings, completely forgetting that I was standing like a statue in the middle of a road thronged with crowds of employees going to the Secretariat. Collecting my thoughts, like one suddenly awakened from a beatific vision, I looked around, withdrawing my glance with difficulty from the delightful scene. Many pairs of eyes, from the rapidly moving crowd looked at me in surprise, unable to account for my abrupt halt and subsequent immobility. Pulling myself together, I walked leisurely in the direction of the office, keeping my eyes on the building and the portion of the overhanging sky in front of me.

Completely unprepared for such a development, I could not bring myself to believe that what I was gazing at was real and not a vision, conjured up by my fancy stimulated to greater activity by the intriguing aureole, perceptible to me always around my head. I looked intently in front and around again and again, rubbing my eyes to assure myself that I was not dreaming. No I was surely in the centre of the Secretariat quadrangle, moving slowly in the midst of a bustling throng hastening in all directions. I was like them in all other respects, except that I was looking at the world with a different vision.

On entering my room, instead of sitting at my desk I walked out on to the verandah at the back, where it was my habit to pass some time daily, for a breath of fresh air, while looking at the fine view open in front. There was a row of houses before me edged by a steep woody slope leading to the bank of the Tawi river, whose

wide boulder-covered bed glistened in the sun. On the other side was a hillock with a small medieval fortress on top. I had looked at the same sight almost daily in winter for several years and the picture of it was vivid in my memory. During the past few months, when gazing at it, I found that it too, had assumed grander proportions and had the same chalky appearance which I had noticed in all other objects.

On that memorable day when my eyes swept across the river bed to the hillock, and from there to the sky, trying to take in the whole panorama in one glance. I was utterly amazed at the remarkable transformation. The magnified dimensions of the picture and the slightly chalky appearance of the objects were both present, but the dusty haze before my eyes had vanished. I was gazing fascinatedly at an extraordinarily rich blend of colour and shade, shining with a silvery lustre which lent an indescribable beauty to the scene.

Breathless with excitement, I looked every where to see whether the transformation was noticeable in everything or whether it was an illusion caused by the particularly clear and sunny weather on that day. I looked on, allowing my gaze to linger for some time on each spot, convinced after each intent glance that far from being the victim of an optical illusion, I was seeing a brightly coloured real scene before me, shining with a milky lustre never before perceived.

A surge of emotion too deep for words, filled my whole being, and tears gathered in my eyes in spite of myself, at the significance of the new development in me. But even in that condition, looking through tears, I could perceive trembling beams of silvery light dancing before my vision, enhancing the radiant beauty of the

scene. It was not difficult to understand that, without my being aware of it, an extraordinary change had taken place in the now luminous cognitive centre in my brain and that the fascinating lustre, which I perceived around every object, was not a figment of my fancy but a projection of my own internal radiance.

Days and weeks passed without alteration in the lustrous form of sight. A bright silvery sheen was around every object, across the entire field of vision, and it became a permanent feature *of* my being. The azure dome of the sky, whenever I happened to glance at it, had a purity of colour and a brightness impossible to describe. If I had possessed the same form of sight from my earliest childhood I should not have found anything striking in it, treating it as the usual endowment of every normal man, but the alteration from the previous to the present state was so obvious, so remarkable, and so fascinating that I could not but be immensely moved and surprised by it.

Examining myself closely for any other change in my sensual perceptions, I became conscious of the fact that there had occurred an amplification and refining of auditory sensations also, as a result of which the sounds I now heard possessed an exotic quality and distinctiveness. The alteration was not, however, so marked and striking as the change in visual impression until a few years later. The olfactory, gustatory, and tactile centres as well exhibited a peculiar sensitivity and acuteness clearly perceptible, but in point of magnitude nothing compared to what had happened with my sight.

The phenomenon was observable during darkness too. At night, lamps glowed with a new brilliance, while illuminated objects glistened with a peculiar lustre not

wholly borrowed from the lamps. In the course of a few weeks, the transformation ceased to cause me wonder or excitement, and gradually I came to treat it as an inseparable part of myself, a normal characteristic of my being.

Wherever I went and whatever I did, I was conscious of myself in the new form, cognizant of the radiance within and the lustrous objectivity without. I was changing. The old self was yielding place to a new personality endowed with a brighter, more refined and artistic perceptive equipment, developed from the original one by a strange process of cellular and organic transformation.



Cosmic Shakti: The Serpent Power

Towards the middle of April that year, before leaving for Srinagar, I went to Hardwar with the sacred relics of my departed mother whom, to my sorrow, I had lost during the year preceding the experience. I had been to Hardwar once before on a similar errand after the death of my father. On this occasion, all through the journey by rail and during the few days of my stay at Hardwar, I was constantly reminded of the marvellous change in me. I travelled by the same route, saw the same stations, towns and sights, until I reached my destination. I saw the same quaint streets and buildings, the same Ganges, with its swiftly flowing sapphire water, the same bathing places and ghats thronged with pilgrims. They were all as I had seen them last, but how different was the picture perceived by me on this occasion; every object now formed a part of a greatly extended field of vision in striking contrast to the previous one. The whole assemblage lit with a glitter like that of freshly fallen snow when the sun shines upon it. After performing the sacred rites, I

returned to Jammu, refreshed by the change, more firmly convinced about the *new* development in me. Soon after, I left for Srinagar with my office as usual.

Years passed. My health and vitality were completely restored. I could read continuously for long periods without fatigue and even indulge in my favourite pastime, chess, demanding close attention for hours. The diet became normal and the only article to remind me of my experience was a cup of milk in the morning and another in the afternoon with a slice of bread. I could not, however, stand a fast with impunity, but if obliged to keep one, was not seriously affected by it either. In spite of all these signs of normality, it was easy to perceive that mentally I was not the same old self. The lustre within and without became more and more perceptible with the passage of time. With my inner vision I could distinctly perceive the flow of lucent currents of vital energy through the network of nerves in my body. A living silvery flame with a delicate golden tinge was clearly perceptible in the interior of my brain across the forehead. My thought images were vividly bright, and every object recalled to memory possessed radiance in the same manner as in the concrete form.

My reaction to infection and disease was not, however, normal. In every illness the characteristic symptoms of the ailment, though present, were distinctly milder in nature and usually there was an absence of temperature. The rapidity of the pulse was the main indication of the indisposition, but it was seldom, if ever, accompanied by a corresponding rise in the body heat as normally occurs with disease. This peculiarity is as observable now as it was in those days. The only explanation I can think of is that my highly

nervous organism does not permit the flow of heated blood to the brain as a measure of safety to avoid injury to the now exceptionally sensitive cerebral matter, and adopts other devices to free the body from infection. I could not stand medication during illness or fasting and invariably resorted to dietetic remedies to get well.

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I have said a good deal about the working of my mental equipment during waking hours without making any mention about its condition during sleep. The first time I became aware of an alteration in my dream consciousness was during a night in February 1938 when I passed the crisis, tasting sleep after several weeks of insomnia accompanied by a maddening mental condition. I fell asleep that night wrapped in a mantle of light perceptible in the dreams also. From that day, extraordinarily vivid dreams became habitual with me.

The bright lustre in my head, always present during wakefulness, continued undiminished during sleep; if anything, more clearly apparent and more active during the night than during the day. The moment I closed my eyes to invite sleep, the first object to draw my attention was the cranial glow, clearly distinguishable in darkness, not stationary and steady but spreading out and narrowing down like a whirlpool of swirling water in the sun. In the beginning and for many months it appeared as if a piston, working in the spinal tube at the bottom, were throwing up streams of a very lustrous fluid, impalpable but distinctly visible, with such force that I actually felt my whole body shaking with the impact, to such an extent as to make the bed creak at times.

The dreams were wonderful, and always occurred against a shining background formed by the widespread luminous glow inside, which lent them a strange radiance. Every night during sleep I was transported to a glittering fairyland, where garbed in lustre I glided from place to place, light as a feather. In my dreams I usually experienced a feeling of security and contentment, with the absence of anything in the least disturbing or disharmonious, all blended into a sense of peace and happiness, which gave my dream a personality so unique and alluring that I never missed having ten hours of rest, and when distraught or dismayed during the day invariably sought the sanctuary of sleep to rid myself of worry and fear. I had never dreamt such vivid dreams before. They naturally followed the pattern of my new personality, and were woven of the same luminous stuff which formed the texture of my daytime thoughts and fancies. It was clear beyond a doubt that light not only pervaded my peripheral consciousness but had penetrated deep into the recesses of my subconscious being as well.

Crossing the Threshold

In course of time the idea began to take root in my mind that the enhanced activity of the radiant current during sleep, was an indication of the fact that in some incomprehensible way, the opportunity afforded by the passive state of the brain was being utilized for immunizing it to the newly released dynamic force in place of the former less potent vital energy. But for years I was unable to guess what was happening inside me.

I had come across vague statements in some of the ancient writings on Kundalini Yoga, hinting at the

transformative power of the divine energy. The hints were so obscure and so lacking in detail that I could not grasp how the human organism with an unalterable legacy of numberless hereditary factors, could be rebuilt from within to a far different or higher type of cerebral activity, enabling it to transcend the limits prescribed for it by nature. Taking into account the organic changes involved in a process of this kind, affecting simultaneously all constituents of the body and also the extremely delicate tissues of the brain and nervous system, the task of transformation envisaged in its true significance assumes such colossal proportions, as to make it appear almost beyond the bounds of possibility.

But something wholly inexplicable was transpiring inside my body frame, particularly during sleep, when my inactive will was powerless to cause any interference in the new, immensely accelerated anabolic and catabolic processes in the body. It was impossible to mistake the increase in the pulse rate and the greater activity of the heart during the first part of the night as well as the sudden undeniable alteration in my digestive and excretory functions. I could not disbelieve the testimony of my own senses for months and years, and the evidence of those who surrounded and looked after me. Nor can I mistrust the proof furnished by my senses now, as the apparently abnormal metabolic activity which started more than twenty five years ago, continues undiminished and, from all indications, will continue to the end.

Frantic activity was continuously going on within me, except that the organism as a whole was reacting to a new situation created inside by an altered activity of the vital organs, as happens in all pathological conditions to adjust itself to the changed environment within. Undoubtedly the disorder in my body was caused by

the rapid passage of the luminous vital energy from cell to cell.

The sudden release of the serpent power, provided the blood is healthy and the organs sound, is not attended by fatal results in individuals ready for the experience, because of safety devices already provided by nature to meet a contingency of this kind. Even in such cases it is essential that the energy be benignly disposed and that the subject take the necessary precautions to maintain the strength of the body and the balance of the mind during the subsequent period of severe trial. How far I was endowed with a constitution suited for the great ordeal I cannot say, but being an utter stranger to the science, and a prey to adversity, I was buffeted unceasingly for many years partly because of my ignorance and lack of sufficient strength, and partly because of the extreme suddenness and rapidity of the extraordinary development.

After the first most distressing period of trial, I found in sleep the supreme healer for my physical and mental suffering during the day. There were unmistakable indications of abnormal activity in the region of the Kundalini, the moment I slept. It was obvious that by some mysterious process the precious secretion of the seminal glands was drawn up into the spinal tube and through the interlinking nerves transferred into a subtle essence, then distributed to the brain and the vital organs, darting across the nerve filaments and the spinal cord to reach them.

The suction was applied with such vigour as to be clearly apparent, and sometimes in the early stages with such violence as to cause actual pain to the delicate parts. I passed hours of agony thinking of this abnormal development in myself. It was easy to see that the aim

of this entirely new and unexpected activity was to divert the seminal essence to the head and other vital organs.

With the power of observation left to me even in the initial distraught condition of the mind, I could not fail to take notice of such a startling development in the sexual region. I could not fail to mark the agitated condition of the hitherto quiet area, now in a state of feverish activity, and ceaseless movement as if forced by an invisible but effective mechanism, to produce without cessation the life fluid in superabundance, in order to meet the unending demand of the cerebral lobes and the nervous system. After only a few days of observation of this unmistakable organic phenomenon, the idea dawned on me that I had unwittingly forced open a yet imperfectly developed centre in the brain by the long continued practice of concentration. The abnormal and apparently chaotic play of vital currents which I clearly felt, was a natural effort of the organism to control the serious situation thus created. It was also apparent that in this grave emergency, the body was making abundant use of the richest and most potent source of life energy in it, the vital essence, always available in the region commanded by Kundalini.

Often at night for years, when lying awake in bed waiting for sleep to come, I felt the powerful new life energy sweep like a tempest in the abdominal and thoracic regions, as well as the brain, with a roaring noise in the ears, a scintillating shower in the brain, and a feverish movement in the sexual region and its neighbourhood. I felt it at the base of the spine, both in front and behind.

At such times, I felt instinctively that a life and death struggle was going on inside me in which I, the

owner of the body, was entirely powerless to take part. Nothing can convey my condition more graphically than the representation of Shiva and Shakti, pictured by an ancient master, in which the former is shown lying helpless and supine, while the latter in an absolutely reckless mood dances gleefully on his prostrate frame. I had every reason to believe the representation was designed to depict a condition exactly similar to mine, by an initiate who had himself passed through the same ordeal.

The utter helplessness of the devotee and his entire dependence on the mercy and grace of the cosmic vital energy, Shakti, when Kundalini is aroused, is the constant theme of hymns addressed to the goddess by eminent yogis of yore. As the supreme mistress of the body, she and she alone is considered to be competent to bestow on earnest aspirants (who worship her with true devotion, centering their thoughts and actions in her, resigning themselves entirely to her will), the much coveted and hard to attain boon of transcendental knowledge and super-normal psychic powers. All these writings assign to Kundalini the supreme position of being the queen and architect of the living organism, having the power to mould it, transform it, or even to destroy it as she will. But how she manages to do it, consistent with biological laws, governing the organic world, no one has tried to state in explicit terms. In my opinion it is more reasonable to assume that even in those cases in which apparently a sudden spiritual development takes place, there must occur gradual changes, in the cells and tissues of the body for a sufficiently long period, perhaps, even from the embryonic stage or early childhood, without the individuals ever coming to know what was happening in their own interior.

The Transformation

Viewed in the light of the physiological reactions for which unmistakable evidence was furnished by my body every day, I had ample ground to suppose that some kind of transformative process was at work, but I could not tell with what object. The most I could imagine was that I was gradually being led towards a condition of the brain and the nervous system which would make it possible for me to attain occasionally the state *of* extended consciousness peculiar to yogis and mystics in trance-like conditions. The extension was of a superior kind, signifying a complete negation of the ties that bind the spirit *to* the body, leaving it free to soar to super physical heights, and to return to the normal state refreshed and invigorated.

This was my idea of supersensible experience, gleaned from the scriptures, the stories of spiritual men and their accounts of the ecstatic condition. Barring the blissful vision *of* extended personality which I perceived twice in succession earlier, there was certainly no comparison between my now undeniably extended and

luminous self, and the exalted, full of happiness, free-from-fear, immune-from-pain, and indifferent-to-death super consciousness of the ecstatic. I was the same being mentally, as I had been before; a man of clay, intellectually and morally, far below, to the spiritual giants about whom I had read.

I missed *no* opportunity to study my symptoms critically and thoroughly. There was no other change save the unaccountable alteration in the nerve currents and the ever present radiance inside and out. The lustrous visibility, which represented the latest phase in my strange development, had a heartening and uplifting effect upon me. This was indeed something that gave to my weird adventure a touch of sublimity.

There could be no doubt now that I was undergoing a transformation, and although I had in no respect risen above the average, I had at least the consolation that in this particular aspect, I was nearer to the hallowed hierarchy than to the men of common calibre, whom I resembled in every other way. But at the same time I could not ignore the glaring fact that the suffering I had undergone was out of all proportion to the results achieved; there was no explanation, save that either I had developed an abnormality, or that the internal attempt at purification and transformation which began with the awakening, had proved abortive in my case. Consequently, perhaps as a result of inherent physical or mental deficiency, I had the unenviable position of being a rejected candidate, a 'Yoga *Brishta* - one who had been tried and then given up as utterly unfit for the supreme state of yoga.

* * *

Years passed, and I perceived no other indication of spiritual unfolding, or the growth of a higher personality endowed with superior intellectual and moral attributes. But as there was no decrease in the activity of the radiant force, I did not altogether cease to hope that perhaps the attempt would not go wholly for nothing, and that one day I might unexpectedly find myself favoured, if not to the maximum, at least to a noticeable extent.

Physically, I became almost my old self again, hardy and tough, able to withstand hunger, the rigours of heat and cold, bodily and mental fatigue, disturbance and discomfort. The only thing I could not stand well was sleeplessness. It always caused haziness of mind and depression, which lasted for several days and did not wear off until the deficiency was made good by a *longer* period of rest during the day or night, following the sleepless one. I felt on such occasions as if my brain had been deprived *of* its usual dose of energy, which had earlier enabled it to maintain the extensive dimension to which it had now grown gradually, over the years.

But there was absolutely no diminution in the activity of the radiant vital currents during sleep. My dreams, which possessed a highly exotic and elusive quality, were so extraordinarily vivid and bright, that in my dreams I lived literally in a shining world in which every scene and every object glowed with lustre against a marvellously luminous background, the whole presenting a picture of splendour and sublime beauty. The last thing I remembered on waking suddenly from sleep, was usually a landscape or a figure enveloped in a bright blaze of light, in such sharp contrast to the encircling gloom which met me on awakening, that it seemed as if a celestial orb shining brilliantly in my

interior was eclipsed all at once. The vivid impressions left by a well remembered happy dream during the night, lingered for the whole day.

The magnificently brilliant effect present in the dreams was noticeable, though in a considerably diminished form, in the waking state also, but the sense of exaltation felt in the former was entirely absent. I distinctly experienced a partial eclipse of personality, a descent from a higher to a lower plane of being, during the interval separating the dream state from wakefulness, and could clearly mark a narrowing down of the self, as if forced to shrink from a state of wide expansion to one of close confinement. There was undeniable evidence to show that the temporary transformation of personality apparent in the dreams was brought about by physiological processes which affected the whole organism, causing a heavy pressure on every part. During sleep my pulse rate was often considerably higher than during the day. On numerous occasions I found it so rapid as to cause anxiety. The full and rapid beats clearly pointed to a quickly racing blood stream, to countless formations and alterations in cellular tissues. This was all affected by the vital current which swept like a storm through the entire organism, with the obvious aim of refashioning it to a higher pitch of efficiency.

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Lack of sufficient knowledge of physiology made it difficult for the ancient adepts to correlate the psychic and physiological reactions caused by the activity of Kundalini. I experienced the same disadvantage, but on account of the fact that a superficial knowledge of every branch of science is an easily acquired possession these

clays, it became possible for me to observe critically the effects of the sudden development upon my system, and to draw tentative inferences from it.

I was irresistibly led to the conclusion that this extraordinary activity of the nervous system and brain is present in varying degrees in all cases of supernormal spiritual and psychic development, in a lesser measure in all cases of genius.

Kundalini, as known to and described by the ancient authorities, signifies the development, sometimes spontaneous, of extraordinary spiritual and mental powers associated with religion and the supernatural. The incessant, easily perceptible, rapid movement at the base of my spine, affecting the nerves lining the whole area was an indication of the fact that, controlled by an invisible mechanism, a hidden organ had begun to function all of a sudden in the hitherto innocent looking region converting the reproductive fluid into radiant vital essence of high potency. For a long time I thought that the glow in the head and the powerful nervous currents darting through my body were all occasioned by the sublimated seed, but as time wore on I was forced to alter my opinion. The activity in the reproductive region was not the only new development that had occurred. A corresponding change in the brain and other nerve centers had also taken place, which regulated the consumption and output of the new mechanism. After the crisis the luminous currents did not move chaotically.

By virtue of the evolutionary processes still going on in the human body, a high powered conscious centre is being evolved by nature in the human brain, at a place near the crown of the head, built of exceptionally

sensitive brain tissue. The location of the centre allows it to command all parts of the brain, and the entire nervous system, with a direct connection with the reproductive organs, through the spinal canal. In the common man the budding centre draws its nourishment from the concentrated nerve food present in the seed, in such extremely limited measure so as not to interfere with the normal reproductive function of the parts. When completely built, the centre in evolved individuals is designed to function in place of the existing conscious centre, using for its activity a more powerful vital fuel extracted by nerve fibres, from the body tissues, in extremely minute quantities.

The whole organism now begins to function in a most amazing manner, which cannot but strike terror into the stoutest heart. Tossed between the old and yet incompletely built new conscious centre, the subject, unprepared for such a startling development, sees himself losing control of his thoughts and actions. He finds himself confronted by a rebellious mind and unruly senses, and his organs working in an inexplicable way, entirely foreign to him.

It is for this reason that the ancient teachers of Kundalini Yoga, insisted on an exceptionally robust and hardy constitution, mastery over appetites and desire, voluntarily acquired control over vital functions and organs, and above all, the possession of an inflexible will, as the essentially needed qualifications in those offering themselves for the supreme undertaking of rousing the shakti.

It is not surprising, therefore, that any one who sets himself determinedly to the hazardous task of awakening Kundalini, before her time, was acclaimed a *vira*,

meaning a hero, and the practice itself designated as *vira sadhana*, or heroic undertaking even by fearless ascetics themselves, indifferent to physical torture and death.

After the awakening, the devotee lives always at the mercy of Kundalini, wafted to a new state of existence and introduced to a new world, as far removed from this one of rapid change and decay, as reality is from a dream. The hypersensitive and critical condition of the nerves and the brain, caused by the unceasing effort of the marvellous, invisible power to mould them to a higher state of cognition, the possibility of injury and damage to the over-sensitive tissues, and the tremendous strain on the excessively worked reproductive organs, may continue undiminished for years. The only change is that with time the individual becomes more accustomed to the play of the newly developed force in him, and is able to regulate his habits and appetites according to the revised requirements of his system.

The time of sleep, when the body is at rest and the mind quiet, provides the best occasion for the remodeling process to gather momentum, by using the surplus energy, dissipated during the day in voluntary physical and mental activity, for reconstructive purposes. This results in a greater flow of the radiant vital energy into the brain, with a corresponding amplification of the dream personality and other contents of the dream. The entire matter of the brain is invigorated with a copious flow of the subtle essence, abundantly supplied by the organs of reproduction, which makes it possible for the delicate tissues to maintain their activity at the pitch to which they are raised by the powerful vital current, in conformity with the needs of the newly opened centre

of higher consciousness. The self-regulating mechanism of the body, trying desperately to adjust itself to the sudden development, lets no opportunity escape to bring about the necessary changes in the organism, on every favourable occasion.

My dreams had, therefore, a peculiar significance and from the time of the awakening to the present day they have been no less an active and remarkable feature of my existence than the busy hours of wakefulness.



The Thousand Petalled Lotus

The awakening of Kundalini is a perfectly natural biological phenomenon, in any healthy human body, on the attainment of a certain state of evolutionary perfection. The only peculiarity which gives it a semblance of the bizarre and the uncanny, is the biological process which leads to the emergence of a superior conscious personality. Those who possess an extensive knowledge of the animal kingdom know of numerous surprising instances of such extraordinary instinctive and uncanny behaviour in certain lower forms of life. When corresponding gifts of an amazing nature, developed by the operation of yet obscure biological laws, are consciously exercised by a human being who has a more elaborately fashioned brain and nervous system, the phenomenon is often regarded with suspicion and disbelief.

To deny that the human body is capable of exhibiting an organic activity that can sustain a consciousness of the super sensual type, involves the denial of some fundamental concepts of religion, and of all kinds

of spiritual phenomena. It is a great mistake to treat man as a completely finished and hermetically sealed product, entirely debarred from passing beyond the limits imposed by his mental constitution. There is a big gap between him and the most intelligent anthropoid apes, whose habits it is said, he shared only a few thousand centuries ago. The cause of departure must have originated within, as external influences have no radically modifying effect on a mental compartment sealed by nature.

According to the popular beliefs in India, Kundalini is possessed of marvellous attributes. She is *para shakti*, the supreme energy, which as illusive maya, traps the embodied *jeeva* into the mesh of transitory appearances, bound helplessly to the ever rotating wheel of life and death. She is the seductive female who lures him to procreation and pain. She is also the compassionate mother who creates in him the thirst for knowledge and the desire for supersensible experience, and finally endows him with spiritual insight.

Many men became the fortunate recipients of her grace and from common men, soared to unrivalled heights of poetic and literary genius almost overnight. They emerged as accomplished poets, rhetoricians, dramatists and philosophers, without the aid of teachers, without training, and sometimes without even the rudiments of education. There are also incredibly strange anecdotes of the marvellous psychic gifts showered by the *sbakti on* many exceptionally favoured devotees.

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Try as I might, I could not observe in myself the slightest sign of any such incredible development, and as year after year passed, without bringing the least alteration in my mental or spiritual endowment, barring the

luminosity and the widening of consciousness, I began to feel that the episode was over and the peculiarity in my mental make-up was probably all that I was destined to see of the supersensible. I was neither happy nor dejected. The awful experience I had undergone and terror that had haunted me relentlessly, had a chastening and curbing effect on my previous desire for supernatural adventure.

The boundary line dividing the natural from the supernatural was not, I thought, negotiable by all and sundry. Subsequent events clearly revealed to me that the cleverest man is sure to blunder in one pitfall or another, unless guided at every step by a higher self illuminating intelligence, which ceases to shine at the slightest tinge of impurity in the heart. The existence of a super intelligent internal monitor has been acknowledged by some very famous men of the world, both past and present. This monitor being none other than the mystic personality developed by Kundalini, imperceptibly active in them from birth.

Now I lived an almost normal life, similar *to* that of other men in all respects, except for the ferment noticeable during the hours of sleep. The great increase in the metabolic activity of the body, resulting in more rapid heart action followed by lassitude in the mornings, and the dynamic nature of my dreams. These signs unmistakably pointed to the possibility that my system was being subjected to some kind of internal pressure, which tended to accelerate the organic functions beyond the normal limit.

On numerous occasions I was struck by the resemblance that I bore, during those days, to a growing baby, utterly unconscious of the great changes occurring in every part of the tiny frame, tending to bring it by imperceptible degrees, nearer and nearer to the massive

proportions of manhood. I closely resembled one, in the frequency of intake and more rapid digestion of food, and quicker elimination, longer periods of rest and sleep, and by an abnormal rapidity of the pulse, unaccompanied by fever or any other symptoms of illness. It was obvious that under the action of the transformed nervous energy, my body functioned in a definitely altered manner in certain respects, forced to greater activity probably with some ultimate object in view, which I could in no way guess at that time.

Apparently my body had become a target for invisible but superintelligent living forces, which were making the whole system fit for the operation of a more potent life energy.

The consistency in the symptoms and the mechanical regularity with which my body functioned under the action of the new vital current, made it evident that even in its altered behaviour the organism was following a certain clearly marked rhythm, an essential characteristic of life in any form. This was a matter of great consolation to me, whose every night was a witness to strange, incomprehensible activities going on in my interior. Whatever transpired was taking place in accordance with certain biological laws, to which the body was responding in a systematic manner.

The Six Lotuses

The descriptions contained in the ancient esoteric treatises on Kundalini represent the goddess as a stream of radiant energy, ambrosial in effect, which when roused by the power of concentration and pranayama, can be led gradually to her supreme abode at the crown of the head,

to taste the ineffable bliss of an embrace with her divine spouse, God Shiva, residing in the consciousness of the yogi.

In the course of her ascent from her seat at the base of the spine to the crown, she, it is averred, waters with nectar the six lotuses flourishing at the six important nerve junctions on the cerebro-spinal axis, governing the vital and sensory organs, which bloom at her approach, until she arrives at the thousand-petalled lotus at the top of the head, and is absorbed in ecstatic union with her heavenly consort. When released from the chains which bind it to earth, the embodied consciousness soars to the sublime heights of self-realization, aware of itself after ages of bondage of its own ineffable, deathless nature.

At the time of her descent she repasses the lotuses, which droop and close their petals at her departure, until she assumes her original dormant state at the base of the spine, bringing down with her the temporarily liberated consciousness.

The writings on Hatha Yoga contain graphic descriptions of these lotuses, their exact location, the number of petals on each, the name and form of the presiding deity, the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet associated with them, and the like. The students of yoga are enjoined to meditate on them in that form while practising pranayama, beginning particularly with the lowest, or *Muladhara Chakra*, close to the abode of the goddess. The centres bearing the lotuses are called chakras. Five of them are considered to be the centres of vital energy distinguished by thick clusters of nerves situated at different points, along the spinal cord, which some modern writers identify with the various Plexuses. The sixth is said to be located in the brain at a spot

corresponding to the *point* of junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, and the seventh is in the cerebrum.

Biologically, a healthy human organism with an intelligent brain should provide at its present stage of evolution a fit abode for the manifestation of a higher form of consciousness. The brain, nervous system, and the vital organs should have attained the state of perfection, according to the evolutionary standard, where a higher personality can step in to take control over the body. But ages of incorrect living dictated by civilization have played havoc with this most intricate machine. This is the main reason why the present day human organism, instead of expediting the process, offers a strong resistance to the installation of a higher personality.

All systems of Yoga aim at 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 deteriorated either by its own defective mode of life or because of a retrogressive heredity.

The awakening being a rare but natural biological phenomenon, it is futile to enter into a discussion of the reality of the lotuses, on which a good deal of emphasis has been laid by the ancient authorities. I did not come across any such instance in the course of my own long adventure, not even a vestige of one in any part of the cerebro-spinal system. To assume their existence even for an instant in these days of physiological knowledge and research would mean nothing short of an insult to intelligence. In all probability their existence was suggested graphically to the disciple with colourful detail

as an aid to concentration and to signify the location of the more sensitive and easier to effect brain and nerve centres, as well as to symbolize chastity. The lotus flower, unaffected by the condition of water in which it grows, has always served as an emblem of purity. By denying the existence of the lotuses and other accessories associated with them, it is not intended in the least to undervalue the colossal work done by the ancient masters.

The idea of chakras and lotuses must have been suggested to the mind of the ancient teachers by the singular resemblance which, the lustrous nerve centres bear to a lotus flower in full bloom glistening in the rays of the sun. The circle of glowing radiance round the head, tinged at times with rainbow colours and supported by the thin streak of light moving upward through the spinal duct, bears an unmistakable likeness to a blooming lotus with its thin stalk trailing downwards in water, conveying to it the nutritive elements drawn by means of innumerable root fibres. This is exactly in the same manner as the living stalk of *sushumna* supplies the subtle organic essence to every part of the corporeal frame, by means of countless nerve filaments, to feed the flame lit by Kundalini. It resembles in effect a gorgeous lotus of extraordinary brilliance, having a thousand petals to denote its large dimensions.

In most writings on Kundalini, reference to chakras and lotuses, are so lavishly dealt with that a whole literature has grown around them, detracting from the scientific value of the actual phenomenon. I never practiced yoga by tantric methods, of which Pranayama meditation on the nerve centres, and posture are essential features. If I had done so, with a firm belief in the existence of the lotuses, I might well have mistaken the

luminous formations and the glowing discs **of light** at the various nerve junctions along the spinal cord for lotuses. In the excited state of my imagination I might even have been led to perceive the letters and the presiding deities in vivid form, suggested by the pictures already present in my mind. By the grace of the divine energy I was destined to witness a phenomenon of another kind, a unique phenomenon.

I was destined to witness my own transformation, though simple in nature and ordinary in effect, a transformation attended by great physical and mental suffering. But what I witnessed and still witness within myself is so contrary to many accepted notions of science, at variance with many time honoured dogmas of faith, and so antagonistic to many of the universally followed dictums of civilization, that when my experiences are proved empirically there must occur a far reaching, revolutionary change in every sphere of human activity and conduct.

What I realized beyond the least shadow of doubt is the fact, that in the human body there exists an extremely subtle and intricate mechanism located in the sexual region which, while active in the normal man in the naturally restricted form, tends to develop the body, generation after generation. This mechanism, known as Kundalini, is the real cause of all genuine spiritual and psychic phenomena the biological basis of evolution and development of personality, the secret origin of all esoteric and occult doctrines, the master key to the unsolved mystery of creation, the inexhaustible source of philosophy, art and science and the fountainhead of all religious faiths, past, present and future.

Experimenting with Meditation

It was my good fortune to have relatives and friends whose affection, loyalty and help contributed to make the risky path I was traversing, safe and smooth for me. My two sisters, their husbands, the father and brothers of my wife, and also my friends, surrounded me with affection and loyalty. My mother had died more than one and a half years before the occurrence and yet it was no less to her excellent upbringing than to the great devotion of my wife that I owed my survival. Among all my benefactors they stand out like two ministering angels, and the debt of gratitude for the unbounded love they bore me and the invaluable service they rendered, I can never hope to repay. It was my good luck to have a mother whose kindness of heart, nobility of character, sense of duty, and purity were exemplary, and whose love moulded my childhood and youth, exercising the greatest influence for good on my whole life.

Looking back now at the years which followed the awakening, I can affirm unhesitatingly that but for the robust constitution bequeathed to me by my parents

and certain good traits of character inherited or learned from them, I could never have survived the ordeal and lived to relate it. Although for many years of my altered life, I never breathed freely like a man sure of himself and of what he had to do, I managed by adopting an attitude of calm resignation to the inevitable, and indifference to death.

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An ordinary man in a humble walk of life, burdened with responsibilities, as I always have been and think myself to be, I never allowed any false idea about myself to take root in my mind after the new development. On the other hand, my absolute helplessness before the manifest power in me, had the effect of humbling what little remnant of pride I still possessed. I attended to all my affairs in the same manner as I had always done before the change. The only thing to remind me of the internal upheaval was rigid regularity in diet, and an adherence to certain austere ways of conduct, which experience taught me to adopt to minimize resistance to the activity of the mighty energy at work inside me.

Outwardly I lived a strictly normal life, permitting no one, save my devoted wife, to have the least glimpse into the mysterious happenings in my interior. Every year I moved with my office to Jammu in winter and to Srinagar in summer. In this manner I managed to escape the rigour of heat and cold which might have proved injurious to the growth of the supersensitive tissues, then in a state of development within. Gradually in the course of a few years, my body attained a degree of hardiness and strength required in my new condition.

I became almost my old self again, humbled and chastened by the experience, with a good deal less *of* ego and a great deal more of faith in the Unseen Arbitrator of human destiny. The only thing I was aware of was a progressively expanding field of consciousness and a slowly increasing brightness of the external and internal objects of perception, which in course of time brought the idea irresistibly home to me that though outwardly one with the restlessly active mass of humanity, I was a different being inside, living in a lustrous world of brilliant colours of which others had no knowledge whatsoever.

Transformation of personality is fraught with risk, needing attention to every phase of conduct and careful regulation of activity. If all I have to relate was known but a few centuries earlier, and the knowledge properly systematized and applied, it might have helped physicians to save many persons from the clutches of insanity.

It was my great ill luck not to have understood for many years what I have learned now, after repeated bitter struggles. Side by side with the suffering, however, I have also tasted moments of incomparable happiness, supreme moments which liberally compensated me for long periods of pain and anguish, as the mere act of waking to reality instantaneously compensates a sleeper for the awful agony suffered in a prolonged nightmare.

About three years after the incidents, I began to feel an irresistible desire for a more nourishing and substantial diet than that to which I had accustomed myself from the time *of* the awakening. The desire was more in evidence in winter when I was in Jammu than in the months of summer spent in Kashmir. Those were

the closing years of the second world war and the prices of commodities had risen enormously.

Unable to assign any reasons for the sudden excess in a now otherwise normal appetite, I restrained the inclination because our extremely limited means did not allow me the additional expenditure. Despite meagre resources our diet was sufficiently nutritious and balanced, including certain varieties of nonvegetarian food, against which Kashmiri Brahmins as a community do not have any scruple. But the urge in me was not without good reason, and I had to pay bitterly for my shortsighted resistance to an impulse intended to expedite the process going on as strong as ever in my interior.

Soon after our annual move to Jammu in November of 1943, I received an invitation from my relatives in Multan to spend a few days with them during the winter. As it afforded me an opportunity to meet my cousins whom I had not seen for many years, I determined to go there during the Christmas holidays, extending the period by a few more days if necessary. That year, feeling particularly fit and strong, I left my wife at Srinagar and came alone to Jammu to stay with her brother, the municipal engineer of the town. He hired a building in the outskirts of the town where, having a room all to myself and finding all my simple needs well provided for, I felt entirely at home, happy at the change and harbouring not the slightness suspicions that all my cheer would vanish in the horror of another awful trial.

I was happy to find myself in full possession of my normal health with a surplus amount of energy demanding an outlet. From early November I started taking light physical exercises, beginning at the first gray streaks of dawn and ending with the sun just near the

horizon, after which I had a cold bath and retired to my room for rest and study until office time.

I do not know how it happened, but after only a few weeks of the programme the urge to take exercise partially disappeared, yielding place to a strong, almost irresistible desire for meditation. The glow of vibrant health resulting from systematic exertion made me feel reckless, and looking for an avenue to make the best use of my superb physical condition, I felt half inclined to yield to the impulse and try my luck again.

In spite of my sober reflections, in spite of the suffering I had borne in consequence of it, I again began to meditate, starting from the early hours of dawn, losing myself in the contemplation of the wondering lustrous glow within, until the sun, risen high above the horizon, shone full into my room, indicating the nearness of the office hour. I began to practise from the first week of December, enjoying the marvellous extension of personality, the enrapturing conscious glow that I had experienced on the first day of the awakening, differing only in the colour of the radiance. I felt a sense of elation and power impossible to describe. It persisted through the day and in my dreams, to the hour of practice, and was replenished again the next morning to last for another day.

Astounded at the results of my effort, I increased the interval by beginning earlier, completely overpowered by the wonder and glory *of* the vision which, luring away my senses from the harsh world of mingled joy and pain, carried me to supersensory plane. It was indeed a marvellous experience, and I felt my hair literally stand on end when the stupendous vision *wore its* most majestic aspect. It seemed on every such occasion as if

I, or the invisible cognitive self in me, was leaving my safe anchorage in the flesh, and was carried by the strong outgoing tide of a lustrous consciousness, towards an existence of such immensity and power that made everything I could conceive of on earth, tame and trite in comparison. An existence where, untroubled by any idea of bondage or limitation, I found myself lost in an amazing immaterial universe of stupendous extent, and sublime and marvelous nature!

There could be absolutely no doubt that I was the exceedingly fortunate possessor of an awakened Kundalini. It was only now that I understood why in ancient times success in this undertaking was thought *to* be the highest achievement possible to man. The followers of this path considered no sacrifice too much and no effort too great for the supreme prize attainable at the end. I now understood why accomplished yogis were always revered in India and how adepts, who had lived long ago, even now commanded a homage and a reverence which have not fallen to the share of any other class of men. There was certainly no honour more precious than that which, without my asking for it, had been bestowed on me.

But alas, my good luck was exceedingly short-lived. After only a couple of weeks I found that the ferment caused in my mind by the breath-taking experience was so great that I could hardly sleep for excitement and was awake hours before the time of meditation, impatient to induce the blissful condition again as soon as possible. The impressions of the last three days terminating this extraordinary period of excursions into the normally forbidden domain of the supersensible, are indelibly imprinted upon my memory. Before losing myself entirely in the contemplation of an unbounded, glowing,

conscious void, I distinctly felt an incomparably blissful sensation in all my nerves, moving from the tips of fingers and toes and other parts of the trunk and limbs towards the spine, where concentrated and intensified, it mounted upwards with a still more exquisitely pleasant feeling to the upper region of the brain. I call it nectar, a name given to it by the ancient savants.

All authorities on Kundalini Yoga are agreed about the reality of the ambrosial current, which irrigates the seventh centre in the brain, at the moment of the union of Shakti with Shiva, the superconscious principle behind the embodied self. It is said that the flow of the nectar into it or into one of the lower centres on the spinal axis is always accompanied by a most exquisite rapture, impossible to describe, exceeding many times in intensity that most pleasurable of bodily sensations, the orgasm, which marks the climax of sexual union.

Columns of Fire

On the last day of this unique experience I had no sleep. My mind was in a state of excitement and exhilaration at this most unexpected and unbelievable stroke of luck. I awoke at my usual time and after feasting my mental eye on the grandeur that was now a reality for me, went to the market to make some purchases. I returned at nearly one o'clock in the afternoon in an unusual state of exhaustion which surprised me. I had not taken my breakfast that day and accordingly attributed my weakness to an empty stomach. The next day, the twenty fifth of December, I had to leave for Multan by the morning train to see my

cousins. I remained busy, preparing for the journey, and after dining at the usual hour, retired early to bed.

Only a few minutes after lying down, the stark realization came to me that I had woefully blundered again. My head reeled, my ears buzzed with a harsh, discordant noise, and in place of the usual resplendent glow in my head a wide column of fire was mounting up, shooting out forked tongues of flame in every direction. Trembling with fear, I watched the awful display. Too late I understood what had happened. I had overdone the practice of meditation and strained my already over-stimulated nervous system to a dangerous limit.

It is needless for me to recapitulate all the incidents and details of the torture that I suffered again on this occasion for more than three months. After passing a restless night I did not feel fit to undertake the long journey to Multan in the morning and was compelled to abandon the idea. Discarding meditation, I again took all care to regulate my diet as I had done the last time. In a few days I noticed a slight relief in the tension in my head, but the insomnia grew worse and I became weaker every day.

Alarmed at my condition, my brother-in-law expressed his intention of writing to my wife to come to Jammu. It was the middle of January now and the winding mountainous roads from Srinagar were covered with snow, making travel extremely uncomfortable and even risky. I dissuaded him from doing so, hoping that the disturbance would cease after some time.

One day, finding that I was unable to rise from bed without assistance and losing all hope of survival, I yielded to my brother-in-law to send a telegram to my wife. She arrived in all haste, half dead with anxiety, accompanied

by her father and my younger son. My wife waited on me day and night, attending to my every need, trying to soothe by her presence the internal agony I was suffering, which she could not visualize in all its horror, but the external indications of which she could see every moment. My father-in-law, whose parental love and solicitude for me had impelled him to undertake the arduous journey to Jammu despite his age, was beside himself with grief and anxiety at my precarious condition.

Alarmed by the seriousness of my condition and unable to think of any other way, as a last resort and without my knowledge they decided to take experienced sadhus and fakirs into their confidence. But all those who were brought to treat me expressed their inability to do anything. One *of* them, a venerable saint hoary with age, then on a visit to Jammu, suggested that I should seek directions from the same teacher who had prescribed the practice responsible for the disturbance.

Growing more desperate with my progressively worsening condition, they ultimately approached a Kashmiri Sadhu staying at Lahore in those days and persuaded him to come to Jammu to see me. He stayed with us for some days studying my condition attentively. I had now grown extremely weak, almost exhausted, with spindle legs and emaciated arms, a skeleton with gleaming eyes, which made my wife wince very time she looked at me. For more than a month I had starved myself, subsisting on barely half a cup of boiled rice and a cup of milk two or three times a day. The poisoned condition of my nerves caused by acute digestive disturbances had translated itself into an ungovernable rear of eating because of a constant threat of the dreadful consequences. I should have preferred not *to* eat anything

at all, but knowing well that a completely empty stomach meant a dreadful death, I used all my will power to perform the extremely unpleasant task.

Unable to penetrate the cause of my distemper, the learned sadhu, imputing my dislike for food to a whim, asked me to eat in his presence, directing that the full quantity I was accustomed to take be served to me. On his insistence, I swallowed with great difficulty a few morsels more than my usual intake, washing them down with water to overcome the resistance offered by my throat. The moment I did so, a sudden unbearable stab of pain shot across my abdomen and the area round the sacral plexus, attaining such an intensity that I fell prostrate, writhing and twisting. Pale with mortification, the sadhu rose hurriedly and left the room. That evening he was attacked by a sudden sickness which kept him on his feet for the entire night without sleep, and he left the house in the early hours of the morning, attributing his own malady to the terrible power possessing me.

I recovered from the pain in a few hours, without any serious after-effects, but the incident exposed the helplessness of my condition as being entirely beyond human aid and added immensely to the worry of my wife. Some days after the episode, my son came into my room accidentally with a small plate of food in his chubby little hands. As usual I had taken a few spoonfuls of rice, my principal meal of the day, an hour before. The boy squatted down in front of me and began to eat, licking his lips and enjoying each mouthful in the manner of children. Unlike other times, the sight of food caused no revulsion, and as I watched the child eating with delight I felt the dim stirrings of hunger, for the first time in weeks. In place of the usual bitterness

I noticed a reawakened sense of taste in my mouth. After a few minutes the feeling disappeared and the old chaotic, condition overcame me again.

Puzzled at the occurrence, which could not fail to strike me forcibly even in that distraught condition, I racked my brain to find a satisfactory explanation for the apparently trifling incident, full of the greatest import for me. Could it be, I asked myself, that the interval between the meals set by me was too long in my present debilitated condition? The next day I paid scrupulous attention to time, taking a few mouthfuls with a cup of milk every three hours, each time unwillingly and with fear gripping my heart. But I managed to carry out my purpose without noticing any adverse consequences, though there was no perceptible improvement either. I continued in this manner for a few days, but the condition of my brain was deteriorating and the convulsive movements of my limbs, coupled with intensely painful sensations along the path of nerves, especially in the back and abdomen, signified a serious disorder of the nervous system. I felt myself sinking and even the will to live was leaving me.

The Horror of *Death*

After some days I noticed with a shock that I was slightly delirious at times. I had still enough sense to realize that if the condition worsened I was doomed. I had exhausted all my resources, but had failed miserably to find a way out of this condition. Finally, losing every hope of recovery and apprehending the worst, in a mood of utter depression, I prepared myself for death, resolved

to end my life before the delirium of madness rendered the task impossible.

Overwhelmed by the horror which surrounded me, I had now almost lost the power to think rationally or to exert my will to resist the dreadful impulse. Before going to bed that night I embraced my wife with enfeebled, palsied arms for a long time, noting with anguish her pinched face, and with burning tears in my eyes I resigned her to God. Calling both my sons to me by name, I embraced them fondly, clasping each to my breast, entrusting them also to His care for ever and ever. I remembered with sorrow that I could not have a last look at my dear daughter, who was at Srinagar looking after the house. Resigning her also to God and looking for the last time at her image in my mind, I recovered my breath and stretching my aching body on the bed, closed my eyes, unable to stifle the great sobs that shook my breast.

It took me some time to grow a little composed after what I had thought was *my* last adieu to my wife and children, believing death to be inevitable. Then I began to think seriously about my resolve. It was foolish to expect, I told myself, that if the malady were allowed to run its course I would have a peaceful end. Death would definitely be preceded by a raging madness which I had to avoid at any cost. Arguing in this manner I revolved in my mind the various methods within *my* reach to end my life, trying to select the one which was the easier and the least painful.

I weighed the possibilities, passing now and again into a delirious condition, all the while tossing from side to side in the relentless grip of unconquerable insomnia. Hours passed and my agitated brain refused to come *to*

a decision, passing from one hazy chain of thought to another, without the power to complete any. I cannot say how it happened that towards the early hours of dawn, I passed into a sleep-like condition, the first in weeks, and for a brief interval dreamed, a vivid dream in which I saw myself seated at a meal with a half-filled plate in front of me, containing boiled rice and a meat preparation common in Kashmir, which I ate with enjoyment.

I awoke immediately, the lustre noticed in the dream persisting during wakefulness for some time. A sudden idea darted across my now almost delirious mind, and calling my wife to my side, in a weak voice I asked her to serve me nourishment every two hours that day, beginning early, each serving to include in addition to milk a few ounces of well-cooked, easy-to-digest meat. Following my muttered instructions to the letter, my wife with her own hands cooked and served the food to me at the specified intervals, punctual to the minute. I ate mechanically, my arms and hands shaking while carrying the food to my mouth, a clear indication of a delirious condition. I found it even more difficult that day to chew the food and swallow it, but managed to gulp it down with milk. After finishing the last meal at nine, I felt a slight relief. The tension grew less, yielding to a feeling of extreme exhaustion, followed by a soothing wave of drowsiness until, I felt blissful sleep steal upon me. I slept soundly until morning, enveloped in a glowing sheet of light as usual.



The Invisible Medium

As if guided by a newly developed sense of taste, I selected the constituents of every meal, rejecting this article and taking more of that, choosing a combination of acids and alkalis, sugars and salts, fruits, and vegetables, in a manner that helped my digestion. I was now passing through an amazing weird experience and I was utterly bewildered by the new direction taken by my body. No man in his senses would believe such an abnormal performance of his digestive organs possible, turning all of a sudden, from a moderate eater into a voracious one. My stomach worked under the stimulation of a fiery vapour, and consumed incredible quantities of food without causing the slightest adverse effect, as if licked up by fire. I had heard and read of yogis said to have commanded incredible powers of digestion, who could consume prodigious amounts of food with the aid of the luminous energy, but I had never lent credence to such stories. What I had disbelieved, I now witnessed in myself, all the time overwhelmed at the powers and possibilities lying hidden in the body.

I was not so much alarmed by the voracity of my appetite, as I was amazed at the capacity of my stomach. I was consuming at least four times the amount of food I was used to before the occurrence. During the first week the quantity devoured must have been six times the normal amount. It was atrocious. The food disappeared in my stomach as if it had evaporated, no doubt sucked greedily by the hungry cells of the body. A disregard of time in eating was always visited with a sudden cessation of the desire for food and an absence of taste, aggravated at times by a feeling of nausea and utter dislike for any kind of nourishment.

Experience had taught me that such symptoms were a result of the *awakening*, for which there is no known antidote except proper feeding, in spite of the aversion, done in a manner as may be indicated by the habits and the condition of the system. One should take care to use only the most easily digestible, complete natural foods, at regular intervals. The availability of a nutritious diet is essential in all normal cases and has, therefore, to be arranged with due care to enable the nervous system to rid itself *of* impurities.

At present we are entirely in the dark about the nature of the subtle organic essence in the body, which serves as nourishment for the ever-active nerves and the constantly fleeting nervous and thought energy. In the first stage of the awakening and until the system grows accustomed to the flow of the radiant current, the only preservative of life and sanity is diet in right measure at proper intervals. The whole science of Kundalini is fundamentally based on the assumption that it is possible for one to rouse to activity a mighty dormant vital force in the body.

In the initial stages nourishment is taken by the initiates in surprising quantities as an offering *to* the power within. Aversion to food is a common feature in cases of a sudden awakening of Kundalini. The abrupt release of the new force and its stormy dash through the nerves causes acute disturbances in the digestive and excretory systems. The constant presence of the teacher at this critical juncture has, for this reason, always been considered essential. The disciple, completely unnerved by the weird developments in his interior, loses command over himself and is unable to muster enough strength to perform the act of eating.

To avert disaster in acute conditions and to guard against the utterly unpredictable behaviour of the digestive and excretory organs after the awakening, the students of Hatha Yoga devote many years to acquire an ability to empty the stomach and the colon at will, to prepare for emergencies which may arise sooner or later. Except for this, there can be no other meaning or utility, for the extremely difficult system of physical discipline and body control, enjoined by all the exponents of this form of yoga. The would-be aspirants have necessarily to attain proficiency in all preliminary exercises and methods of body control before embarking on the supreme but hazardous course of awakening the serpent.

* * *

We traveled to Srinagar in the beginning of April 1944. Owing to the efforts of my wife and her father and the pains taken by them to make every kind of provision for the two-day hilly journey, I reached Srinagar in my extremely weak condition without mishap. There, surrounded by relatives and friends and

nursed by my wife and daughter, I made rapid progress, gaining enough strength in a few months to resume my duties in the office.

* * *

In the course of a year I grew hardy and strong, able to beat strain and fatigue, exertion and pressure, but I could not overcome the susceptibility to digestive disorders in the event *of* an unusual delay or irregularity in diet. I resumed my old habit of two meals a day, with a cup of milk and slice of bread in the mornings and afternoons. By the end of the year my appetite became normal and the amount of food I ate was moderate, with a small measure of meat as a necessary ingredient. The lustrous appearance of external objects, as well as *of* thought *forms*, and the brilliance of dream images, became intensified. It grew in brightness to such an extent that when gazing at a beautiful sunlit landscape I always felt as if I were looking at a heavenly scene transported to the earth from a distant realm, illuminated by dancing beams of molten silver. This astounding feature *of my* consciousness, purely subjective of course, never exhibited any alteration, save that it gained in transparency, brilliance, and penetrative power with the passage of time, and continues to bathe me and all I perceive in inexpressible lustre even today.

Years passed without bringing any development in me to the surface. Whatever was happening was transpiring within, beyond my knowledge and away from the reach of *my* eyes. Failing to notice any other change in me except for the sea of lustre in which I lived, I occupied myself fully with the world and its affairs, in an attempt to lead a normal life.

In 1946, in collaboration with a few friends and colleagues, I started a movement for economic reform in all obligatory social functions in our community. I had become acutely conscious of the crushing load *of* misery which a low income family had to carry, almost to the funeral pyre, for the transitory pleasure of pomp and show. We made an attempt for reform, creating more enemies than friends, earning more censure than praise, and meeting more opposition than support, and finally had to desist.

In the summer of 1947, my daughter was married in an unostentatious manner in conformity with our reform scheme, the credit for which went not to us, but to her husband, a struggling young lawyer, orphaned at an early age and left without resources, who refused tempting offers of rich dowries to marry the daughter of a poor man. The alliance was proposed to his elder brother by a friend while I was at Jammu, and all I had to do was signify my assent to it. In this way, in my peculiar mental condition, nature spared me the ordeal of having to hunt indefinitely for a match for one who, out of filial loyalty was as keen as I was myself to ensue that my principles in regard to dowry were not violated in any way.

In the autumn of the same year, the peaceful valley of Kashmir was thrown into convulsions by a sudden raid of frontier tribesmen, who, organized and led by trained martial talent, came down upon the defenseless Kashmiris, pillaging, raping, and killing indiscriminately. Almost the whole northern side of the valley shook with the lamentation of the bereaved and cries of the plundered and ravished. When the carnage was over, and the invaders had retired after several scuffles with Indian forces, the

members of our small band of enthusiasts, threw themselves into the arduous task of providing relief to the ravaged victims.

That winter the offices did not move to Jammu, and I therefore continued to attend my duties at Srinagar, oblivious to the horror of the situation, in the all absorbing mission of service to which we had devoted ourselves. Entirely preoccupied with the task, I could not leave Kashmir during the winter of 1948 and had to apply for leave of absence to complete the welfare work, even though then our own fate hung in the balance. During this interval momentous changes occurred in the political framework of the State. The hereditary ruler had to abdicate to make room for a peoples government. This great upheaval brought in its wake countless smaller upheavals, bringing new values in place of the old and new ways of thought and action. The old order changed, as has always happened, often without effecting the needed change for the better, in human nature which, forgetting the lesson taught by a revolution, acts again in a manner that makes another upheaval inevitable after a time.

In November 1949, I went to Jammu again with the office. My wife chose to stay at Srinagar to look after the house and children. She had grown confident of my health and my ability to look after myself, in view of the endurance displayed by me during the past two years. My system had functioned so regularly that there had occurred not the slightest cause for any perturbation. on the other hand, I found myself fully equal to Undertake the strenuous task of relieving the distress of hundreds of families. I stayed at Jammu with an old friend who was good enough to place a room at my

disposal, and I was glad to accept his hospitality. \ enjoyed the opportunity of being all by myself, absorbed in the contemplation of the luminous glow within, which had begun to assume the enrapturing character of the vision perceived on the first day *of* the awakening,

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Profiting by the awful experience I had undergone earlier, I made no attempt to meditate as before. What I did now was quite different. Without any effort and sometimes even without my knowing it, I sank deeper and deeper within myself, engulfed more and more by the lustrous conscious waves, which appeared to grow in size and extent, the more I allowed myself to sink into the sea of consciousness. After about twelve years, a curious transformation had occurred in the glowing circle *of* awareness around my head, which made me conscious *of* a subtle world of life stretching around me. Speaking more clearly, it seemed as if I were breathing, moving and acting surrounded by an extremely subtle, viewless, conscious void, as we are surrounded by radio waves, with the difference that I do not perceive or feel the existence of the waves and am compelled to acknowledge their presence by the logic of certain facts in this case.

I was made aware of the invisible medium by internal conditions, as if my own confined consciousness, transcending its limitations, was now in direct touch with its own substance.

During the past months I had on a few occasions noticed this tendency of my mind to turn, without encountering any barrier to its expansion within itself, extending more like a drop *of* oil spreading on the surface of water. I had not attached much importance

to this phase, believing it to be an attempt of the mind to fall into reveries. Because of its luminous spaciousness it created the impression of further internal expansion, without implying any additional change in my already peculiar mental condition.

* * *

About a month after my arrival at Jammu I noticed that not only had this tendency become more marked and frequent, but the daily plunge into the depths of my lucent being was maturing into a great source of happiness and strength for me. The development was however, so gradual and the change so imperceptible, that I was led to believe that the whole occurrence was the outcome of the general improvement in my health due to the salubrious climate rather than to any new factor operating within me.

Towards the third week of December I noticed that when returning from these prolonged spells of absorption, which had now become a regular feature of my solitary hours, my mind usually dwelt on the lyrics of my favorite mystics. Without the least idea of trying my skill at poetic composition, I made attempts at it, keeping the mystical rhymes which I liked most, as models before me. Beyond the fact that I had committed to memory a few dozen Sanskrit verses culled from the scriptures, and a few dozen couplets picked up from the works of mystics, I knew nothing of poetry.

After a few days of mere playful dabbling, I became restless, and for the first time in my life I felt an urge to write verse. Not at all impressed by what I thought was a passing impulse, I put to paper a few stanzas, devoting several hours every day to the task.

I wrote in Kashmiri, but after about a fortnight of daily endeavour I found I did not improve. The sterility of my efforts to write in verse, instead of dampening my spirits, urged me to greater efforts. I devoted more time to what now became a regular, fascinating hobby. The standard of the compositions did not improve, and I had often to labour for hours to complete a line and then longer to find another to match it. I never associated the new tendency with the mysterious agency at work in my body. But these unsuccessful attempts I was making at writing verse were a deliberately maneuvered prelude to a startling occurrence soon after. I was being taught internally to exercise a newly developed talent in me, about the existence of which I had no inkling. My crude attempts were the first indication of the schooling.

During those days an ardent member of our small band of zealous workers in Kashmir, was on a visit to Jammu. She came often to my place, usually to share news of our work at Srinagar, about which I received regular reports from our Treasurer or our Secretary. One day I offered to accompany her home when she rose to depart, intending by the long stroll, to rid myself of a slight depression I felt at the time. We walked leisurely, discussing our work, when suddenly while crossing the Tawi Bridge I felt a mood of deep absorption settling upon me, until I almost lost touch with my surroundings. I no longer heard the voice of my companion; she seemed to have receded into the distance though walking by my side. Near me, in a blaze of brilliant light, I suddenly felt what seemed to be a mighty conscious presence, sprung from nowhere, encompassing me and overshadowing all the objects

around, from which two lines of a beautiful verse in Kashmiri poured out to float before my vision, like luminous writing in the air, disappearing as suddenly as it had come.

When I came to myself, I found the girl looking at me in blank amazement, bewildered by my abrupt silence and the expression of utter detachment on my face. Without revealing to her all that had happened, I repeated the verse, saying that it had all of a sudden taken form in my mind. She listened in surprise, struck by the beauty of the rhyme, weighing every word, and then said that it was indeed nothing short of miraculous for one who had never been favoured by the muse before. I heard her in silence, carried away by the profundity of the experience, I had just gone through. Until that hour, all I had experienced of the superconscious was purely subjective, neither demonstrable to, nor verifiable by, others. But now for the first time I had before me a tangible proof of the change.



After escorting my companion to her destination, I returned to my residence in time for dinner. **All** the way back, in the stillness of a pleasant evening and the welcome solitude of an unfrequented path, I remained deeply engrossed in the enigma presented by the Vision and the sudden leap taken by my mind in a new direction. The more intently I examined the problem, the more surprised I was at the exquisite formation, and the highly appealing language of the lines. On no account could I claim the artistic composition as mine, the voluntary creation of my own deliberate thought.

I reached my place still deeply absorbed in the same train of thought and, still engrossed, sat down for dinner. I took the first few morsels mechanically, oblivious to my surroundings and unappreciative of the food in front of me, unable to bring myself out of the state of intense absorption into which **I had fallen, retaining** only a slender link with my environment.

The Shoreless Ocean

Without any effort on my part and while seated comfortably on a chair, I had gradually passed into a condition of exaltation and self-expansion, similar to what I had experienced on the very first occasion, in December 1937. In place of a roaring noise in my ears there was now a cadence like the humming of a swarm of bees, enchanting and melodious. The encircling glow was replaced by a penetrating silver radiance, already a feature of my being within and without.

The marvellous aspect of the condition lay in the sudden realization that although linked to the body and surroundings, I had expanded in a strange manner into a titanic personality, conscious of an immediate and direct contact with an intensely conscious universe, a wonderful inexpressible immanence all around me. My body, the chair I was sitting on, the table in front of me, the room enclosed by walls, the lawn outside and the space beyond, including the earth and sky, appeared to be most amazingly mere phantoms in this real, interpenetrating and all pervasive ocean of existence. From this marvellous point the entire existence, of which my body and its surroundings were a part, poured out like radiation.

* * *

The shoreless ocean of consciousness in which I was now immersed appeared infinitely large and infinitely small at the same time. Large when considered in relation to the world picture floating in it, and small when considered in itself, measureless, without form or size, nothing and yet everything.

It was an amazing and staggering experience for which I can cite no parallel and no simile, an experience beyond all. I was intensely aware of a marvellous being so concentratedly and massively conscious as to outshine and tower over the cosmic image present before me, not only in point of extent and brightness but in point of reality and substance as well. The phenomenal world, ceaselessly in motion characterized by creation, receded into the background and assumed the appearance of an extremely thin, rapidly melting layer of foam upon a substantial rolling ocean of life. It showed the previously all-dominating cosmos reduced to the state of a transitory appearance, and the formerly care-ridden point of awareness, circumscribed by the body, grown to the spacious dimensions of a mighty universe and the exalted stature of a majestic immanence, before which the material cosmos shrank to the subordinate position of an evanescent and illusive appendage.

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I awoke from the semi-trance condition after about a half-hour, affected to the roots of my being by the majesty and marvel of the vision. During the period, probably due to fluctuations in the state of my body and mind, caused by internal and external stimuli, there were intervals of deeper and lesser penetration not distinguishable by the flow of time but by the state of immanence, which at the point of the deepest penetration, assumed such an awe inspiring, absolutely motionless, intangible and formless character that the invisible line demarcating the material world and the boundless, all conscious Reality ceased to exist, the two fusing into one. It was an inexpressible sizeless void which no mind can conceive nor any language describe.

Before coming out completely from this condition, and before the glory in which I found myself had completely faded, I found floating in the luminous glow of my mind, the rhymes following the couplet that had suddenly taken shape in me near the Tawi Bridge that day. The lines occurred one after the other, as if dropped into the three-dimensional field of my consciousness by another source of condensed knowledge within me. They started from the glowing recesses of my being, developing suddenly into fully formed couplets and vanished so suddenly as to leave me hardly any time to retain them in my memory. They came fully formed, complete with language, rhyme, and metre, finished products originating, as it seemed, from the surrounding intelligence to pass before my internal eye for expression. I was still in an elevated state when I rose from the table and went to my room. The first thing I did was to write down the lines as far as I could remember them. It was not an easy task. I found that during the short interval that had elapsed, I had forgotten not only the order in which the rhymes had occurred, but also whole portions of the matter, which it was extremely difficult for me to recollect or supply. It took me more than two hours to supply the omissions.

I went to bed that night in an excited and happy frame of mind. After years of acute suffering I had at least been given a glimpse into the supersensible and at the same time made the fortunate recipient of divine grace, which all fitted admirably with the traditional concepts of Kundalini. I could not believe my good luck; I felt it was too astounding to be true. But when I looked within myself to find out what I had done to deserve it, I felt extremely humbled. I had to my credit no achievement remarkable enough to entitle me to the

honour bestowed. I had lived an ordinary life and never done anything exceptionally meritorious and never achieved a complete subdual of desires and appetites.

I reviewed all the noteworthy incidents *of* the last twelve years in my mind, studying them in the light of the latest development, and found that much of what had been dark and obscure so far, was assuming a deep and startling significance. In the intensity of joy which I felt at the revelation, I forgot the terrible ordeal I had passed through, as also the gruelling suspense and anxiety that had been my companions. I had drunk the cup of suffering to the dregs to come upon a resplendent, never-ending source of unutterable peace lying hidden in *my* interior, waiting for a favourable opportunity to reveal itself, affording me in one instant a deeper insight into the essence of things than a whole life devoted to study could do.

Infinity

When I awoke in the morning, the first recollection that came to my mind was of the transcendental experience of the previous evening. Even the fleeting memory of a superconscious flight into the wonderland of Infinity is transporting, surpassing anything we can think of or encounter in the physical world. Considering the stupendous nature of the vision it is no wonder that the ancient seers *of* India, in constant communion with the transcendental reality, regarded the world as no more than an inexplicable shadow, an illusory appearance before an eternal, resplendent sun of indescribable grandeur and sublimity.

During the next two weeks I wrote a few stanzas in Kashmiri daily, that without exception dealt with some aspect *of* the unknown; some of them were definitely apocalyptic in nature. The verses occurred suddenly at odd times in the day or night, preceded by a voluntary pause on my part in the normal process of thinking. This preliminary cessation of mental activity was soon followed by a state of deep absorption, as if I were diving within myself to reach a certain depth where I could catch the vibrations of the message always expressed in poetry. The lines developed from an extremely subtle form, an invisible seed, and instantaneously passed before my mind as fully formed verses, following each other in rapid succession until the whole passage was completed, when I suddenly experienced a desire to withdraw myself from the state of semi-entrancement and return to normality.

On one more occasion during that fortnight I had the same transcendental experience as on the first day, tallying in almost all respects with the original *one*. I was sitting on a chair reading a piece written on the preceding day when noticing the command, I leaned back in the chair and closed my eyes in a mood of relaxation, waiting for the results. The moment I did so I felt myself expanding in all directions, oblivious to the surroundings, and enveloped in an immense sea of glowing radiance. Entertained by a sweet internal cadence unlike any symphony heard on earth, drawing nearer to the supreme condition, until with a plunge I found myself detached from all belonging to the causal world, lost in the inexpressible void, a marvellous state of being absolutely devoid of spatial and temporal distinctions. I returned to my normal state after more than half an hour and during

the few moments of transition, found a beautiful composition waiting for cognizance by my mind, staggered by the extraordinary experience that it had just gone through.

After a fortnight the language changed and instead of rhymes in Kashmiri they occurred in English. The slight knowledge of English verse which I possessed was confined to the study of a few selected poems in school and college texts. Beyond that, having no taste for poetry, I had never cared to read it. But I could easily perceive that the passage before me was similar to the poems I had read, but having no knowledge of the rhyme and metre of English poetry, I could not form any judgment about its excellence.

A few days later, the poems appeared in Urdu instead of in English. Having a workable knowledge of the former, I did not feel any difficulty in writing down the lines, but all the same many blanks were left which were filled months later. Urdu was succeeded by Punjabi in a few days. I had not read any book in Punjabi but had learned the language by constant contact with Punjabi-speaking friends and associates during the several years stay in Lahore as a school and college student.

My surprise, however, knew no bounds when a few days later the direction came that I should prepare to receive verses in Persian. I had never read the language nor could I in the least understand or speak it. I waited in breathless expectancy and immediately after the signal a few Persian verses flashed before my mind in the same manner as the compositions in other languages. I had no difficulty in recognizing many Persian words and even the verse form of the lines. Kashmiri being rich in Persian words, it was easy for me to understand words

already used in my mother tongue. After a great deal of exertion and straining, I at last succeeded in penning down the lines, but there were many blanks and mistakes which could not be filled in or set right until long after.

The few short poems in Persian that I was able to jot down, involved such a strenuous effort that after some days I was obliged to desist from it. I felt exhausted and what was more serious, the unhealthy effect of the exertion and excitement elicited, was becoming seriously apparent in the prolonged spells of restlessness preceding my sleep. Consequently I gave myself complete rest for more than a week.

After a short rest, feeling somewhat restored to health, I no longer felt it necessary to resist the impulse and submitted to the elevating moods at opportune times. One day, when I obeyed the unspoken direction for relaxing my mind to prepare myself for reception, and had sunk deeply enough into my subconscious to reach the subtle emanations from the amazing conscious source within, I felt a thrill of deep excitement, not unmixed with fear, pass through every fibre of my being when the signal flashed across my now quiescent mind to make myself ready for taking down a piece in German. I came back from the semi-trance condition with a ferment in my mind, unable to reconcile myself to the idea that such a weird performance could ever be possible. I had never learned German, nor seen a book written in the language, nor to the best of my knowledge ever heard it spoken in my presence, and yet I was expected *to* write down a poem in it which in plain terms meant a complete negation of the time honoured truth that language is an acquired and not inherited possession.

German was followed by French and Italian. Then came a few verses in Sanskrit followed by Arabic. Surely there could be nothing more convincing than the phenomena I had witnessed during the previous few weeks, that I was in occasional contact with an inexpressible fount of all knowledge, and that but for my inability to understand and transcribe, I could take down poetic pieces in most of the well-known languages of the earth. I felt wave after wave of conscious electricity pass through me, replete with knowledge to which, because of the poor capacity of my brain, I could not have full access.

Language fails me when I attempt to describe the experience which, since then, has been the most sublime and the most elevating feature of my existence. On every such occasion, I am made to feel as if the observer in me, is floating with an extremely dim idea of the corporeal frame in a vividly bright conscious plane, every fragment of which represents a boundless world of knowledge. On every visit to the supersensible realm, I am so overwhelmed by the mystery and the wonder of it that everything else of this world, appears to be trite and trivial before the indescribable glory, the unfathomable mystery, and the unimaginable extent of the marvellous ocean of life, of which I am at times permitted to approach the shore.

The Subliminal Existence

The daily dive into the conscious ocean to which I had now unexpectedly found access, had a most exhilarating effect on my mind. I was overwhelmed with wonder at the incalculable wealth I had found within myself. The distracting anxiety I had felt about my Condition vanished altogether, yielding place to a feeling of inexpressible thankfulness *to* the divine power, which in spite of my ignorance, constant resistance, many faults, frailties, and mistakes, had wrought with matchless skill a new channel of perception in me, a new and more penetrating sight in order to introduce a stupendous existence.

In spite of all my efforts, the news of the strange psychic manifestations in me leaked out. My host, friends, and colleagues at the office were struck by my altered behaviour and my constant mood of deep absorption. Even if I had tried, I could not have shaken it off, being entirely carried away by the wonder of an occurrence beyond anything I could have imagined. I certainly could not hide from my close associates, a development that had

the effect of starting me out of my equilibrium. My host, uneasy at my constant perambulations in a state of deep abstraction, almost to the point of being totally oblivious at times, grew positively alarmed at seeing my lights on at odd hours in the night and finding me awake, writing in a mood of utter preoccupation. Knowing of my mystical tendencies, he remonstrated with me gently under the misapprehension that my constant absorption and nocturnal exertions were a prelude to a complete renunciation of the world, in order to take up a monastic life.

In the course of a few weeks, unable to resist the fascination of the newly found subliminal existence, I found myself powerless to come out of my contemplative moods. Except for a few hours of irregular sleep at night they were continuously upon me for the whole day, making it almost impossible for me to apply my mind to anything. I ate mechanically, almost as child does in sleep. I went to the office more by force of habit than by choice or inclination. My whole being rose in revolt when I attempted to climb down from the ethereal heights of transcendence to the dry files lying unattended on my table. After some days the mere act of sitting in the cramped atmosphere of the room for hours became so unpleasant and oppressive that I took long leave, never to enter the premises again. I realized that the severance of my connection with the office would reduce my income to a great extent, but the urge to liberate myself from the bonds of servitude was too strong to be suppressed by monetary or wordly considerations.

In the meantime the strange news travelled through the town, and crowds of people called at my residence, attracted by the rumours of the miraculous development

in me. Most of them came merely to satisfy their curiosity and to verify what they had heard, much as they would have gone to look at a freak or to watch the astounding performance of a conjurer! In a few days the rush of people became so great and continuous, that from early morning to the hour of darkness I had not a moment to myself. Feeling that it would be discourteous to refuse interviews, and labouring under the notion that such an attitude on my part would be misconstrued as pride, I bore the daily rush patiently at the cost of my mental peace. I was usually in an exalted state of mind throughout, and in the same condition talked to the people gathered round me, frequently passing into deeper moods from which I was often recalled to my surroundings, by the entry of other groups. I greeted the eager crowds mechanically, barely mindful of what I said or of those who arrived and left during the day.

After a few days the strain became unbearable, and I began to feel its adverse effects on my health. The first indication of the trouble was a growing restlessness during nights, which soon assumed the state of partial insomnia. Instead of feeling alarmed at the development, I interpreted it as first sign of a liberated existence, of freedom from the domination of the flesh, considered to be an essential feature of true spiritual growth. My wife, with a woman's true instinct, always exercised a strict supervision of my diet. I grew indifferent to food also, revelling in the thought that I had at last overcome a weakness which had compelled me to be too attentive to my nutrition and a slave to regularity. Gradually a feeling of detachment from the world began to take hold of me, accompanied by an increasing desire to break the chains that bound me to my family. I wished to lead

the life of a sanyasi untroubled by desire and unfettered by customs and conventions.

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I had passed through a strange experience which had culminated in something beyond my expectations and about which it was necessary to make known to others. It was therefore my duty, I argued with myself, to lead a life entirely free of the fret and fever of a worldly existence, devoted exclusively to the service of mankind, with the object of making known the great truth I had found. The only obstacle to the execution of this resolve, I thought, would be presented by the strong ties of affection which bound me to my family and friends and which, judging from my own past experience and inherent tendencies, would be very hard to break.

When I pondered more deeply on the issue and searched my heart for the answer, I found to my great surprise that the amazing experience I had undergone had purged me clean of worldly love. I could part from my family and friends without so much as a single look behind, to perform unhampered the sacred task I eagerly wished to take upon myself.

Though I was afforded a glimpse into the state of mind and the motive power that drove the prophets and seers of old to unparalleled feats of renunciation and asceticism, which appear beyond the capacity of the ordinary man, I was not destined to follow in their footsteps. There was a weak spot in me which often gave way under the ascetic way of life or continued irregularity in the matter of diet and sleep. I believe it is because of this vulnerability that I was able to trace the close connection existing between the body, and the mind, even

in transcendental conditions of the brain which might not have been so clearly apparent to me otherwise.

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For more than a month I lived in a state *of* triumph and spiritual exaltation which is impossible to describe. During this period my whole being was always pervaded by a distinct feeling that while moving, sitting or acting I was constantly encompassed by a stupendous silent presence from which I drew my individual existence. Frequently I had moods *of* deeper absorption when speechless with wonder, I lost myself completely in the indescribable. These moods were attended occasionally by inspirational flashes towards the close. After the end of this period, owing to insufficient sleep and irregularity in diet, the feeling *of* exaltation and happiness, diminished perceptibly, and I again began to feel signs of exhaustion and uneasiness in my mind.

I was roughly shaken out of this short-lived state of heavenly *joy* when one morning, rising from bed after a restless night, I found myself in the grip of acute depression which continued for the whole day, acting like a dip in ice-cold water on one in a state *of* inebriation. Startled out *of my* mistaken optimism and reprimanding myself sharply for the neglect, I forced myself to give immediate attention to my diet, and after some days noticed signs of improvement in my condition.

But my immoderate indulgence in psychic enjoyment, excessive mental exertion, and neglect of organic needs had, without my detecting it, depleted my vitality to an alarming extent. I had heard stories of men who, intoxicated with joy on their first glimpse of the supersensory state of existence after the awakening, had

been so entirely carried away from earthly life that they found it impossible to come down to the normal level of consciousness in order to attend to the needs of the body.

I immediately refrained from exhibiting myself before the curious crowds that came in an unending stream. Instead of encouraging the moods of intense absorption, always ready to settle upon me the moment my mind turned inwards, I deliberately avoided introversion, devoting myself exclusively to wordly trifles in order to allow a period of rest to the already overstimulated brain. It was about the middle of March, marking the beginning of spring in Kashmir, and I felt I should no longer delay returning to my home, my only asylum in times of distress, in order to submit myself to the affectionate care of my wife, my sole guardian during illness.

Without losing a single day I journeyed to Srinagar by air, relinquishing forever the thought of roaming the earth in the traditional way to effect the regeneration of mankind. A fantasy in my case born from the desire for power, the yearning for mental conquest, which often accompanies the activity of Kundalini in the intellectual centre, causing a slightly intoxicated condition of the brain.

At home I entrusted myself completely to the care of my wife, who at once concluded that I was in a state of exhaustion and stood in urgent need of rest. The news of my strange feats had travelled to Srinagar before me, and it became a difficult problem to prevent the crowds which assembled at my house from gaining access to me. After a few days I was able to devote several hours daily to meet the visitors without fatigue.

It took more than six months for me to be normal again and to attend my duties without losing myself all

of a sudden in the rapt contemplation of an unconditioned existence.

Spiritual Liberation

By the time my leave expired I had made up my mind not to serve any longer. The way of escape from the sordidness and misery of the material world into the unutterable peace and tranquility of the effulgent internal universe was too narrow and too risky to allow me to make use of it with a heavy load of worldly responsibilities upon my shoulders. In order to taste the fruit of true spiritual liberation, it was necessary for me to free myself as far as possible from the chains that bound me to the material world.

The secluded corner of a busy office room, throbbing with noiseless activity and tense with subdued excitement was not a place where a man now constantly preoccupied with the unseen, could pass several hours at a stretch, always at the call of others, without running the risk of serious injury to his mental health. There were other reasons too, which precipitated my decision to sever my connections entirely with the office.

The change of government had brought in its wake a host of burning problems all demanding immediate solution. They had to be handled carefully at a time when the whole country was in a state of ferment caused by a wild scramble for power and possessions on the one side, and the efforts made to avert deprivation and dispossession on the other. Our office could not escape the general commotion and soon its atmosphere grew charged with mutual suspicion, to an extent that for a

man in my condition it was positively dangerous. Accordingly I applied for premature retirement.

I was now free to pass my time as I pleased, untroubled by any thoughts of how to find my way out of the ever present official dilemmas, and the constant conflicts between my conscience and the wishes of my superiors. After an absence of many months, during which there had occurred a world of difference in me, I joined the staunch group of friends who had kept our movement alive during the interval. I again participated in their activities, which were now directed towards providing amenities for the utterly destitute widows in our society. We moved public opinion for the remarriage of those of them who were agreeable to it, in this way mitigating to some extent, the suffering of many subjected to inhuman treatment in the name of religion and caste by their own families.

In spite of the deep desire of every member of the little group to confine their activities to the mission of service, they were drawn unwillingly into political rivalry and ambition by constant opposition, aimed at forcing their allegiance.

The Joy of New Existence

During the critical years that followed my first experience of the unseen, the work centre of our group served for me the two fold purpose of providing congenial occupation without any curtailment of my freedom, and also a fruitful and healthy hobby for my leisure. I had for the first time tasted the joy of a new existence, and it maddened me to an extent I could not

believe possible, creating a feeling of estrangement from the world and an aversion towards the things of life as if I were captive in an alien land, impatient to break away from the prison but unable to do so. I might have turned a recluse to assuage the fire of renunciation kindled in me but for the constant touch with suffering and misery and the slender chance I had of alleviating it.

My active participation in the charitable endeavour, though extremely limited in scope, induced to some extent to keep me normal with enough attachment for the world to combat the morbid escapist tendencies that had developed in me. The rest was accomplished by my wife, whose immense love, unremitting attention to my smallest need, and constant care made me so dependent on her that the idea of residing in solitude, away from her even for a short time, appeared too formidable to be possible.

From the very beginning of the new development, many persons prompted by desire or driven by necessity came to see me within ulterior object in view. They waited for hours, seeking an opportunity to talk to me alone about the purpose of their visit. During the earlier period, when the crowds showed no signs of abating and I was generally in an elevated and far from communicative mood, they came several times in succession until able to snatch a few minutes of private conversation with me. For most of them I had attained a state of authority, of command over the subtle forces of nature, able to do and undo things, competent to alter circumstances, to change the destiny and modify the effect of other peoples action and conduct. They allotted to me a position of suzerainty, of close intimacy with the Almighty, with powers to defy the laws of nature, and to interrupt the march of events by merely a gesture or an effort of my will.

I heard their stories in silence, touched at the scenes of human misery and tales of harrowing grief which they narrated. Some were destitute, some unemployed, some childless, some involved in litigation, *some* hopeless invalids, some in the grip of reverses, some entangled in domestic troubles, and so on. They expected me to intercede with fate on their behalf to rid them of their sorrows and to free them from their difficulties against which they were powerless to battle, and were eager to catch at every passing chance, holding the slenderest ray of hope as a drowning man catches at a straw. They were all of them afflicted, frustrated, or disillusioned men and women for whom life was a bed of thorns.

The Crowds Come In

The general belief among the masses about psychics and men of vision, stretching back to prehistoric times, credits them with amazing supernatural powers. The impression is that they possess a mysterious link with intelligent forces of nature and hold a command over the elemental and spirits. I could not escape the consequences of this conception, and no amount of denial and argument on my part was effective in carrying conviction to people not only deeply steeped in the superstition and forced by exceedingly painful situations to be eagerly on the lookout for a supernatural source to extricate them from their difficulties. Ascribing my honestly expressed inability to help them out of their afflictions to reluctance on my part to do anything, they behaved like children, imploring my assistance with folded hands and tears in their eyes. The sight of tears and manly voices husky with emotion left me powerfully affected, as shaken with grief as they were.

These afflicted men and women who came to me for a miraculous escape from their ills were mostly the victims of social injustice, and my heart went out to them in sympathy. In their position I too, might have acted in the same manner. My utter inability to relieve their distress added greatly to my sorrow that, I sometimes had *to* seek the sanctuary of my deeper being to gain assurance and strength to overcome it. I consoled them as best as I could, and often they went in more peaceful frame of mind than that in which they had come, leaving me restless and unsatisfied.

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While there is a solid foundation for the venerable belief which attributes transcendental powers to visionaries, the popular idea has persisted through centuries that those possessing the power are in a position to set aside the laws of nature and to change the ordained course of events. This idea rests on an incorrect evaluation of the position and also on an unhealthy attitude towards the problems of life. The development *of* a supersensory channel of knowledge, for the perception of subtle realities beyond the reach of senses and reason is not intended to supplant, but rather to aid, the rational faculty in the management of temporal affairs rigidly ruled by temporal laws. The psychic and even physical powers possessed by prophets and seers are merely in the nature of a manifestation, an emblem of sovereignty bestowed by nature.

The curative and other powers sometimes exercised by mystics and saints never went beyond the sphere of individual application.

As time wore on and I firmly refused to be tempted into making a vulgar exhibition of the priceless gift which heaven had bestowed on me, there occurred a perceptible thinning in the number of supplicants who came purely with the object of a miraculous redress, and ultimately they ceased altogether. I scrupulously adhered *to* a normal mode of life, performing all the duties incumbent on me as the head of a family, and in my dress, manner and behaviour displayed not the slightest deviation from the pattern which I should have followed in the usual course. This made most of the people, revise their opinion of my developments and regard the development as either freakish, or as an abnormality that subsided of its own accord, with the passage of time. In the course of a few years the event was almost forgotten.

In view of this experience I wonder at the inability of the mass mind to move out even an inch beyond the accustomed rut. Barring not more than half a dozen people in all, the thousands who came to see me evinced no curiosity to know how the development had occurred and what the mystery was behind the surprising manifestation. If in the beginning, I had started to whisper in a mysterious manner and edit recondite volumes for mystified readers to pore over, each at liberty to draw his own meaning from the vague expressions and obscure passages, instead of making plain, unambiguous statement of facts, and had followed the same principle in my dress and behaviour, the interest created would have increased enormously, securing me not only popularity but money as well, at the cost of truth.



The Evolution Continues

In the course of time I came more and more towards the normal, descending mentally from a state of intoxication to one of sobriety. I became more keenly conscious of the fact that, though my psychophysiological equipment had now attained a condition that made it possible for me *to* transcend the boundary rigidly confining the mental activity of my fellow beings, I was essentially in no way different from or superior to them.

Physically I was what I had been before, a normal man in *every* other way save the alteration in the mental sphere. On the other hand, my system had grown more delicate. I was the same man, now advanced in age, who had sat for meditation on the memorable day when I had my first experience of the super physical. The difference was that since then my brain had become attuned to finer vibrations from the unimaginable conscious universe all around us, and as a consequence I had acquired a deeper and more penetrating inner vision. Except for the alteration in the vital current and

certain peculiar biological changes, there was no distinctive external feature to mark me out from the rest. The moods of deep absorption, leading to the indescribable super-condition, became a normal feature of my existence. I lost touch with it, except, in the debilitated condition of the system which followed illness.

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The transcendental experience has been repeated so often that there is no room for doubt about its validity. The experience tallies so clearly with the descriptions left by mystics and yogis that there is no possibility of mistaking it for any other condition. The experience is genuine, but there is a difference in my recognition of it as compared to that accorded to it in the past. The variation lies in treating the manifestation not as a mark of special divine favour, but as an ever present possibility, existing in all human beings by virtue of the evolutionary process still at work. This tends to create a condition of the brain and nervous system that can enable one to transcend the existing boundaries of the mind and acquire a state of consciousness far above that which is the normal heritage of mankind at present. In other words, it represents to me an upward climb from one rung of the ladder of evolution to another. To me there appears to be no reason not to attribute the phenomenon to the direct intervention of Divine Will, irrespective of physical and spiritual cosmic laws. The progress made by man during the aeonic cycle of his evolution could not be accidental. Nor could his transformation be effected without divine guidance and favour at every step.

There is a law at work even in such cases where the manifestation is sudden, following extraordinary spiritual striving and penance, or there occurs to all a miraculous intervention at a critical moment, for which there is no explanation but to treat the phenomenon as an act of divine grace. The fact remains that from the very start, an inborn conviction gradually gathered in my mind that what I had experienced in the transcendental state was but the next higher phase of consciousness, which humanity is destined to acquire in the course of time as its normal level, aspiring again to a still more sublime form, impossible even to conceive of at present.

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Warned by the ill effects that followed my excessive absorption in the superconscious at Jammu, I gradually succeeded in exercising moderation on the supersensory activity of my mind. I kept myself engaged in healthy pursuits and the work of the organization. The exhausting mental effort needed for the reception of compositions in foreign languages was too high a price to be paid for a performance which had only a sensational or surprise value for others. Later, however, in the course of time I found that only a slight knowledge of a language was sufficient to enable me to receive passages in verse without straining the memory. This phase of the newly developed psychic activity ceased after a while but, passages in the known languages continued to come off and on, especially during winter, when probably owing to a greater adaptability to cold, my system could sustain the higher moods more easily than in summer. But whether summer or winter, it was essential for the supersensual play of my mind that the

body be in normal health, entirely free of sickness and infection.

The luminous glow in the head and cadence in the ears continue undiminished even now, but there is a slight variation in the lustre as well as in the quality of the sounds during bodily or mental disturbance. My reaction to infection and disease is also slightly different. First there is only a slight rise in temperature during illness, with an abnormal rapidity of pulse, and secondly, I am unable to undergo a fast with safety.

It appears that the drain on the vital fuel in my system to feed the ever-burning flame is too excessive, and the reserve of energy too small, to allow it to carry on the increased vital activity for lengthy periods without replenishment. This susceptibility might be because of the tremendous strain borne or damage sustained by my nervous system, on more than one occasion, owing to my unconscious violation of the conditions governing my new existence, or due to the inherent weakness of some vital organ, or to both. For this reason in any disorder of the body *system*, I have to be extremely careful about diet and regularity.

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Fate had destined me for no less severe trials in the temporal sphere as well. The severance of my connection with the office resulted in the reduction of my income. I was in an extremely delicate condition, both mentally and physically, for years to allow me to take up any occupation to augment my resources. I needed freedom and rest to save myself from a mental disaster in that extremely sensitive condition of the brain. During this very period inflation soared, making it impossible with

our limited income to make ends meet. However, I did not allow the least indication of our crushing poverty to leak out. I had no brother or uncle from whom to expect assistance. My poor father-in-law, always solicitous for my welfare, was shot dead by the raiders at the time of their incursion in 1947, and his eldest son was held captive and underwent great hardships for more than a year before he was given *freedom*. My two sisters, were themselves caught in economic distress and for many years could not extricate themselves from a financial quagmire.

The chilling wave of penury which submerged us also swept over almost all other families bound to us in kinship, and there was no possibility of support from any side. Even if there had been, I would have been the last person to avail of it. Compared to pre-war prices, the cost of food had risen many times. The entire salary I received before my retirement, even if doubled, could not have enabled us to meet the needs of our small family. But with the income halved, the cost of living at least fourfold, and the unavoidable demand for a more nutritious and costly diet, placed me in a predicament at a time when I was mentally in a precarious condition.

The struggle lasted for nearly seven years. Only the heroism of my wife saved my life. She sold her ornaments and denied herself almost everything to provide the food needed for me. She was the only person who knew all about my condition, and tortured herself to save me from the pain of violent bodily disorders, which invariably followed a marked irregularity or deficiency in diet. During this period on no less than three occasions, I came back from the jaws of death because of grinding poverty, lack of amenities,

insufficient and unsuitable diet. But even in the most gloomy conditions, an unshakable conviction always persisted in my mind gleaming faintly, that I would somehow survive and live to place in the hands of mankind the great secret on which depended the future safety *of* the race. It was mainly because of this inward strength, that I was able to put up a strong resistance even in the most desperate situation, with no possibility of help from any earthly source.

The evil effects of serious breakdowns in health, the unavoidable result of destitution, lasted for several months each time and once for nearly two years. During such periods until the body regained the depleted store *of* vital energy, I lost the sublime moods and for part of the time even suffered from disquieting mental symptoms. But there was no diminution in the vital current or in the radiant halo around the head, even in the weakest conditions. The violent reaction of my system to any default on my part, which impeded in any way the processes within, especially any laxity in the matter of nutrition, was clearly understandable. It is necessary for any natural transformative tendency to be effective, that it should be attended by a biological activity directed to that end, and for any biological activity to be operative, food in sufficient and wholesome quantity is indispensable. If it is obligatory for an athlete to adhere to certain rigid rules of conduct, how much more necessary it is for one whose entire organism, is in a state of feverish activity, akin to the exertions of an athlete during intensive training, to be cautious in all these and other respects in order to save his system from irreparable harm.

But for the care taken of me by my mother in my childhood and youth, and thereafter by my wife through the critical phases of my transformation and all the vicissitudes in my life to this day, I could never have emerged from the terrible ordeal alive and intact. Were it not for the colossal self-sacrifice *of* my wife and the anxious care lavished by her for more than twenty-four-years, counting only the period after the manifestation, I would not be alive now to write these lines. Whenever I tried to visualize how I should have acted in her position, had our roles been reversed, I have been humbled by the thought that I would have failed to emulate her in the performance.

* * *

Perhaps anyone who reads this account would be as surprised as I am myself at the marvellous ingenuity of nature and at the wonder hidden in the frail frame of men, which allows his spirit to soar unfettered to giddy heights to knock for admission at the portals of heaven itself. When I look within, I am lifted beyond the confines of time and space, in tune with a majestic, all-conscious existence, which mocks at fear and laughs at death. An existence which is absolutely removed from everything in this world.

The one really remarkable change I perceive in myself is that, a day-to-day observable but still incomprehensible activity of a radiant kind of vital energy, present in a dormant form in the human organism, has developed in me a new channel of communication, a higher sense. I am as firmly convinced of the existence of this supersense, as I am of the other five senses already present in every one of us. In fact on

every occasion when I make use of it, I perceive a reality before which all that I treat as real appears unsubstantial and shadowy, a reality more solid than the material world reflected by the other senses, more solid than myself, surrounded by the mind and ego, more solid than all I can conceive of. Apart from this extraordinary feature, I am but an ordinary human being with a body perhaps more susceptible to heat and cold and to the influence of disharmonious factors, mental and physical, than the normal one.

The truthful, unembellished account of a normal life unfolded in these pages, before the sudden development of the extraordinary mental and nervous condition already described is, I believe, sufficient to provide ample corroboration for the fact that initially I was no better and no worse as a human being than others. I did not possess any entirely uncommon characteristics. Also, the final exceptional state of consciousness, which I continue to possess now, did not appear all at once, but marked the culmination of a continuous process of biological reconstruction covering no less than fifteen years, before the first unmistakable sign of a new florescence. The process is still at work in me, but even after an experience of more than twenty-five years I am still lost in amazement at the wizardry of the mysterious energy responsible for the marvels which I witness day after day in my own mortal frame. I regard the manifestation with the same feelings of awe, adoration and wonder with which I regarded it on the first occasion.

Contrary to the belief which attributes spiritual growth to purely psychic causes, to extreme self-denial and renunciation, or to an extraordinary degree of

religious fervour, I found that a man can rise from the normal to a higher level of consciousness, by a continuous biological process, as regular as any other activity of the body. At no stage is it necessary either to neglect his flesh or to deny a place to the human feelings in his heart. A higher state of consciousness, able to liberate itself from the senses, appears to be incompatible, unless we take the biological factors into account, with a physical existence in which passions and desires and the animal needs of the body, however restricted, exist side by side. But I can say confidently, that a reasonable measure of control over appetites coupled with some knowledge of the mighty mechanism, proved a safer way to spiritual unfoldment than any amount of self-mortification or abnormal religious fervour can do.

I have every reason *to* believe that mystical experience and transcendental knowledge can come to a man as naturally as the flow of genius, and that for this achievement it is not necessary for him, to depart eccentrically from the normal course of human conduct. Whether the transformative process is set in motion by voluntary effort or is spontaneous, purity of thought and disciplined behaviour, are essential to minimize resistance to the cleansing and remodeling action of the mighty power on the organism. The subject must emerge normal in every way from the great ordeal, to be able to evaluate and taste in full the supreme happiness of an occasional enrapturing union with the indescribable ocean of consciousness in the transcendental state. It is only in this way that the incomparable bliss of liberation can be realized.

Towards Supreme Consciousness

The existence of the spiritual world and the possibility of development of a higher state of consciousness in a normal man can become acceptable to a strictly rational mind. Such an explanation must appear as convincing to the anthropologist and as reasonable to the psychologist as to the student of history. The answer ultimately came to me, after about half a century of waiting and watching, and a little less than a quarter century of suffering. It needs now but the labour and sacrifice of the able men from the present and the coming generations to inspire and guide mankind towards a higher state of consciousness.

Without pride of achievement, without the least pretension to any divine office, I humbly submit on the strength of knowledge gained, that religion is in reality the expression of the evolutionary impulse in human beings. It springs from an imperceptibly active though regularly functioning organic power centre in the body, amenable to voluntary stimulation under favourable conditions. The transcendental state, of which as yet

only a faint though unmistakable picture is available from the descriptions furnished by visionaries, is the natural heritage of man. It accommodates all his feelings and desires, except that these are refined and restrained to act in consonance with the needs of a higher kind of perception. Also, that happiness and welfare of mankind depends on adherence to the yet unknown laws of this evolutionary mechanism, known in India as Kundalini. The power of kundalini is carrying all men towards a glorious state of consciousness in obedience to the dictates, and in accordance with the decrees, of a correctly informed intellect, fully aware of the goal in front of it.

From my own experience, I am led to the conclusion that the human organism is evolving by the action of this wonderful mechanism, located at the base of the spine, depending for its activity mainly on the energy supplied by the reproductive organs. When manipulated and roused to intense activity by men already advanced on the path of progress, conducting it ultimately to the zenith of cosmic consciousness and genius combined.

Civilization and leisure, divested of the glaring abuses that have crept in due to ignorance and fundamentally wrong conception of the goal of human life, are but means to this important end. Crudely planned and wrongly used at present, they will necessarily have to pass through a process of refinement when the goal is clearly established. All great sages and seers of the past, and all great founders of religions, whether guided intuitively or led by observation, have consciously or unconsciously laid emphasis on such traits of character and modes of conduct which are definitely conducive to progress. The highest products of

civilization, prophets, mystics, men of genius, clearly indicate the direction and goal of human evolution. Studied in the light of the facts mentioned in this volume they will all be found to have common characteristics. The motive and guiding power behind them in all cases without exception is Kundalini.

Studied critically from this angle, the ancient religious literature of India, the doctrines of China, the sacred lore of other countries and faiths, will all be seen pointing unmistakably in the same direction. Extensively in India, to a lesser degree in China, and to some extent in the Middle East, Greece and Egypt, the methods to activate supernormal mental faculties and spiritual powers were known and practiced centuries before the Christian era. In India its ability to confer genius was recognized and consciously availed of for its pragmatic value.

There is sufficient material available in the sacred books of India to corroborate these assertions in almost every respect. The doctrine of Yoga, owes its origin to the possibility in the human organism of remoulding itself to a higher state of functional and organic efficiency, tending to bring it closer to the primordial substance responsible for its existence. This possibility cannot be accidental, nor can it be merely an artificial product of human effort entirely divorced from nature. It must exist as a potentiality, naturally present in the human body, dependent for its effective materialization on laws and factors not yet properly known or understood.

The awakening of Kundalini is the greatest enterprise and the most wonderful achievement for mankind. There is absolutely no other way for the restlessly searching intellect to pass beyond the boundaries of the meaningless physical universe. It

provides the only method available to science to establish empirically the existence of life as an immortal, all intelligent power behind the organic phenomena on earth. It brings within its scope the possibility of planned cultivation of genius in individuals not gifted with it from birth. These heroic enterprises can only be undertaken by highly intelligent, serene, and sober men of chaste ideals and noble resolves.

When conducted by the right type of person in a proper way and with due precautions, partly explained in these pages, the experiment will surely be successful enough to demonstrate the existence of a mechanism leading after the awakening to divergent results. The reaction created in the system may subside after a while, fizzling out without effecting any noteworthy alteration in the subject, after existing as a remarkable and weird biological phenomenon for months, open to observation and capable of analysis and measurement. It may also vary leading ultimately to permanent injury, either mental or physical, or death. In the successful case the transformative process generated may lead to super physical heights, in joyous proximity to the everlasting, omniscient, conscious reality, which manifests itself in countless forms.

The experiments, besides providing indisputable evidence for the existence of design in creation, would open to view a new and healthy direction designed by nature for the sublimation of human energy and the use of human resources. The knowledge of the safest methods for awakening Kundalini will yield for humanity a crop of towering spiritual and mental prodigies who will be able to discharge in a proper manner, the security of the race.

It is not difficult to see that at present there exists a greater menace to the safety of mankind than any it has faced before. Though it may not assume the terrifying danger of wiping off every trace of civilization, yet it is not likely to cause widespread havoc, loss of millions of lives, untold misery and suffering. It was a riddle to me why the world situation should wear such a threatening aspect. But when the answer came, I at once saw light where there had been complete darkness before, and in that light the mighty scroll of human destiny unfolded itself, and allowed me a glimpse into man's past and future. I thus came to know why human efforts to amass wealth finally go to feed dissipation, why attempts to raise empires lead always to invasion, and why endeavours to gain power invariably end in dissension. All that knowledge pointed to but a small screw in the human organism which, neglected so far, exercises, the same effect on the rise and fall of men and of nations.

A host of highly important issues, demanding urgent attention, is bound to arise when it is established that an evolutionary mechanism, ceaselessly active in developing the brain towards a pre-determined state of higher consciousness, really does exist in man.

It is easy to see that a clearly discernible alteration is occurring in the extremely delicate fabric of the human mind, which we are apt to attribute to change of times, to modernity, to progress, to freedom, to liberal education and to a host of other relevant and irrelevant factors. When closely studied, the change, although in part brought to the surface by any or several of these factors, in reality springs from the hidden depths of personality, from the foundations of

life. For the proper growth of man, *on* which depends the safety and happiness of the individual and mankind, it is essential that his mental content shows a harmonious and appropriate blending of emotion, will, and thought, and that there be a concordant development of the morals and intellect. If this does not come to pass it is a sign that the growth is abnormal, and as such can never be conducive to happiness or to the progress of the race.

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The present disquieting world situation is the direct outcome of such an inharmonious growth of the inner man. By no exercise of the intellect can mankind escape the penalty it has to pay for continued violation of evolutionary laws. Although yet unperceived, Kundalini discharges an important role in shaping human destiny, and in the spiritual and mental development of man, as the reproductive system does in the propagation of the race. The time is near when the mechanism will make its existence felt by the sheer force of inexplicable concomitant factors, which are not amenable to any other solution. The progressive sphere of human knowledge must first widen to an extent, to make detection of the lacunae existing in the current explanations possible to the intellect.

In the present era of unprecedented technological development the vagaries of the mind in the leaders *of* men, especially in those holding seats of power, is fraught with the gravest danger for the race. A single unpremeditated act, or an unforeseen chain of circumstances, reacting on ethically inferior minds, can give off the spark that might suffice to reduce humanity to mounds of virulent ash.

The only sure safeguard against the constant threat of annihilating war, is comprehensive knowledge of Kundalini. I feel it is the unseen hand of destiny, which in spite of my limitations, drives me to present a demonstrable religious truth of paramount importance that can save humanity at this crucial time.

The only source of strength I possess is my absolute conviction of the correctness, under all circumstances of the disclosures I am making about Kundalini. I feel completely sure that the main characteristics of the awakening described in this work, the results defined, and ultimate consequences foretold, will be fully established in the centuries to come. I am also certain that the disclosure of a mighty law of nature, that could *well* have remained shrouded in *mystery* for a long time, is in the nature of a divine revelation. I was led to the knowledge of this momentous truth step by step by the action of super physical energy upon my *system*, shaping it by degrees to the required state of nervous efficiency. As if to be instructed in the ancient science, I was destined to make kundalini known in a verifiable form suited to the tendencies of the age.

One may ask how all that I say will have such an effect on the world as to succeed in creating the mental climate that will remove the threat of wars and usher in an era favourable to the establishment of a universal religion. All the changes I have mentioned will be brought about by the simple device *of* demonstrating empirically the alteration in the human organism by a voluntarily awakened Kundalini. In every successful experiment the results would be so astounding as to demand immediate revision of some of the most firmly established scientific theories and concepts of today. This

would lead inevitably to the transference of the world's attention from purely materialistic objectives and projects to spiritual and psychical problems and pursuits.

The fortunate man in whom the divine energy is benignly disposed from the beginning, possessing the psychical and biological endowments, which show remarkable developments, both internally and externally, so unexpected that they are sure to strike with overwhelming effect not only the subject himself, but also the trained scientist engaged in the observation of the phenomenon. Inwardly the man will bloom into a visionary, the vehicle of expression of a higher consciousness endowed with a spiritual or mental sixth sense. Outwardly he will be a religious genius, a prophet, an intellectual giant, with bewildering versatility and insight, completely altered mentally from what he was before the experiment. In exceptional cases, the favoured mortal may develop into a superman, capable of prodigious spiritual mental and physical feats. Most of the successful hierarchs will sooner or later find access to the eternal repository of infinite wisdom for the enlightenment and guidance of mankind.

Only a few successful experiments would suffice to convince the world of the validity and the natural character of the phenomenon. The results obtained will furnish the evidence necessary to find out the nature and purpose of the religious impulse in men. On the empirical side the effects will be uniformity of symptoms, regularity and ordered sequence of the biological processes, clearly observable for years, indicative of the action of a superior form of vital energy in the organism. This will be resulting finally in the complete alteration of personality and development of superior mental faculties.

The paramount importance of the issues raised by this psycho-physiological phenomenon, viewed in the perspective of the modern scientific trend, cannot be exaggerated. The emergence of a consciousness of the transcendental type at the end of a certain period, the inevitable result of the awakening of Kundalini provides evidence the regenerative force at work in the body. It is at the very beginning aware of the ultimate pattern to which it has to conform by means of the remodeling biological processes set afoot.

The inquiry is not to be approached in a spirit of conquest or arrogance, with the intent to achieve victory over a force of nature, but rather with humility, in a spirit of utter surrender to the Divine Will and absolute dependence on divine Mercy, in the same frame of mind one would approach the flaming sun. There is no there way open to him to find out what path has been assigned for his progress by nature, nor is there way for him to know and recognize himself, and no other way to save himself, from the awful consequences of conscious or unconscious violation of the mighty ways which rule his destiny. This is the only method to bridge the gulf at present yawning between science and religion. This is the Immortal Light, held aloft by nature from time immemorial, to guide the faltering footsteps of erring humanity across the winding path of evolution, the light which shone in the prophets and sages of antiquity, shines in the men of today, and will continue to shine for eternity, illuminating the vast amphitheater of the universe, of the marvellous, unending play of the eternal, **Almighty Queen of Creation, Life itself.**