

# ELCollie

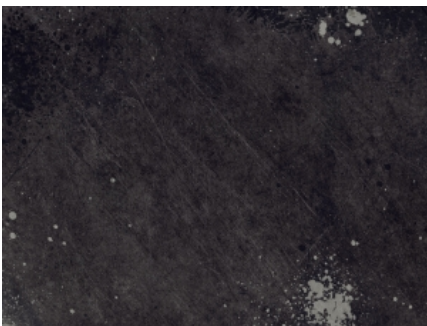
## Articles

- [Support](#)
- [Symtoms](#)
- [Branded](#)
- [Light](#)
- [Chapter 5](#)
- [Super](#)
- [Fire](#)
- [Chapter 3](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Chapter 6](#)
- [Darkness](#)
- [Chapter 4](#)
- [Dance](#)

## Issues

- [Issue 32](#)
- [Issue 22](#)
- [Issue 5a](#)
- [Issue 15a](#)
- [Issue2a](#)

## Zone of Fire



"Kundalini... awakening does not signify a sudden landing in a fabulous El Dorado of bliss. It is a stern reality denoting a gradual or sudden change in the quality and volume of bioenergy in the body." -- Gopi Krishna

Long rumored to be among the most rare of human experiences, in the past several decades, the incidence of reported Kundalini awakening has been on the increase worldwide. Kundalini awakening manifests on multiple levels. "Brought up through the body, this power promotes healing and longevity," writes transpersonal psychologist Ralph Metzner; "raised to the throat and head, it stimulates creativity and intuition." (from *The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience*) The radical restructuring of the psyche catalyzed by Kundalini leads to a state which Metzner says "has been variously referred to as mystical experience, ecstasy, cosmic consciousness, oceanic feeling, oneness, transcendence, union with God, nirvana, satori, liberation, peak experience, and by other names."

With all mystical experience, verbal descriptions are at best a pale facsimile. Firsthand accounts of the

vertiginous ascents and plunges of the unleashed Kundalini read like poetry, sci fi, or madness. In his book *The I That Is We*, Richard Moss referred to his ongoing process as his "atomic cell disruptor." Gopi Krishna -- who wrote one of the earliest and most influential Kundalini autobiographies -- found himself "staring with growing panic into the unearthly radiance that filled my head, swirling and eddying like a fearsome whirlpool..." (from *Living With Kundalini*) Psychiatrist and meditation teacher Gabriel Cousens spoke of feeling "like a plane reaching speeds and energies at which the wings were about ready to come off." (from *Spiritual Nutrition and the Rainbow Diet*) Composer and musician A. Coltrane-Turiyasangitananda (aka Alice Coltrane) said she "succumbed to the sound of planetary ether," hearing a spinning sound that whirled and revolved at such velocity, she fell into an unconscious state. (from *Monument Eternal*)

In his book *The Soul's Journey*, Lawrence Edwards, Ph.D. -- a transpersonal psychologist who has experienced Kundalini -- writes: "Even within the most bound forms of the physical realm the full power and presence of God, of Divine Consciousness, are present. The release of that bound energy is like the release of the potential energy bound in matter that suddenly results in the extraordinary power and light of nuclear reactions. The awakening of the Kundalini is the release of the bound Power and Light of God present within the human form."

Particularly in New Age circles, Kundalini proponents hold out promises of bliss, inner peace, mystical odysseys, psychic power and self-transcendence. While this is true, the journey also entails what transpersonal psychologist Bonnie Greenwell, Ph.D., describes as "physical collapse, psychic chaos, and personality upheaval, elements of human transformation that uproot us to the core, and cause us to 'know' that we have been touched by powers greater than ourselves." (from *Energies of Transformation*)

A Kundalini awakening is celebrated as an extraordinary gift for healing and growth, but the early stages (which can last for months or years) can be exceedingly difficult. The risen Kundalini restructures the body and the psyche in a process which extends through various stages of psychological and physiological clearing. As anyone who has been through this initiation can testify, these changes are radical and real. The influx of high vibrational energy throughout the system produces an array of physical symptoms and strange sensations. This energy can be strong enough to interfere with exterior electrical fields. Lights may flicker or blink off and on, and electrical appliances may malfunction in peculiar or paranormal ways.

The Kundalini process repeatedly cycles through the stages of the mystic path outlined by Evelyn Underhill: (1) awakening or conversion to divine reality; (2) purgation and purification; (3) illumination, visions, ecstatic states; (4) death, "the dark night of the soul"; and (5) union with the divine.

B.S. Goel, who spent nearly twenty years buffeted between agony and ecstasy in his long Kundalini awakening, spoke of reading and rereading Swami Muktananda's and Gopi Krishna's accounts of their own staggering Kundalini experiences. He said that this reminder that others before him had struggled and endured equally monumental highs and lows in their spiritual evolution "often gave me courage and solace." (from *Third Eye and Kundalini*)

When employing traditional methods to raise the serpent-power, it takes a decade or longer to complete the task. According to the spiritual teacher Dr. R.P. Kaushik, yogis were expected to undertake twelve years of intensive work to safely elevate the Kundalini. And following sanctioned methods was no guarantee of success. Kundalini releases "so much unconscious material" and "so many different obscure energies" says Kaushik, that "this whole process was a bit dangerous, frightening, and lengthy." (from *The Ultimate Transformation*)

## **Defining Kundalini**

"There is nothing in either this world or the next which is beyond the domain of Kundalini." -- Tantric Saying

Essentially, Kundalini is "associated with the spiritualizing of body and mind," says Greenwell, "expanding the capacity of the human to experience and hold the infinite." (Energies of Transformation)

The most succinct (if understated) synopsis of a Kundalini awakening I've come across is Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield's, who calls it "a whole series of powerful energetic phenomena." While not inaccurate, to the extent that his statement evokes images of a lively aerobics class, it's a bit like calling Mozart a piano player. From a somewhat scientific standpoint, Ralph Metzner comments: "At this point, all that can be said about the phenomenon... is that it involves some aspect of bioelectricity, or what Russian researchers refer to as 'bioplasmic' or 'psychotronic' energy." (The Unfolding Self)

In a more classical definition, consciousness pioneers Stanislav and Christina Grof refer to Kundalini as "creative cosmic energy." Once activated, the Grofs say this energy "rises through the channels in the 'subtle body,' which is described in the yogic literature as a field of nonphysical energy surrounding and infusing the physical body. As it ascends, it clears old traumatic imprints and opens the centers of psychic energy, called chakras." (Spiritual Emergency)

Wrote Gopi Krishna: "With the awakening of Kundalini, an amazing activity commences in the whole nervous system, from the crown of the head to the toes. In Chinese documents this phenomenon is described as the 'circulation of the light' and in Indian manuals as the 'uprising of shakti,' or life energy. Nerves in all parts of the body whose existence is never felt by normal consciousness are now forced by some invisible power to a new type of activity, which either immediately or gradually becomes perceptible to the subject." (Kundalini for the New Age)

Although the Sanskrit word "Kundalini" originated in India, this dramatically regenerative process has been recorded in nearly every culture and religion in the world. The transformational energy the yogis call "shakti" (the risen Kundalini) is alternately known in other traditions as Holy Wind, Serpent Fire, Vital Winds, Seiki (mystical Japanese), mana loa (Hawaiian Kahunan), Lung (pronounced "loong," this is the Tibetan term which literally translates as "wind"), the greater kan and li (esoteric Chinese), huo (Taoist) and tumo or Dumo Fire (Buddhist). These metaphoric names describe the tremendous rushing, burning, spiralling and wavelike physical sensations of the aroused spiritual energy. When the Kundalini rises, these sensations may be subtle and pleasurable, or they make strike with unexpected gale force, literally thrashing the body around like an internalized hurricane. And Kundalini is renowned for setting the body ablaze with incandescent inner heat. (When I was experiencing this, I had uneasy thoughts of spontaneous human combustion.) The Buddhist tumo literally translates as "fierce woman."

People who have never experienced Kundalini tend to think these descriptive metaphors imply something abstract. A man once posed the question to an Internet Kundalini list: "How does the Kundalini heat manifest itself?" The answers came back: "As HEAT. It feels HOT!"

Kundalini has been called the lifeforce -- the vital, animating current within all creation. The energy of Kundalini has been used everywhere in the world for healing and accessing spiritual experience. The Greek philosopher, mathematician and physician Pythagorus knew it as pneuma, which, according to metaphysical researcher Mary Coddington, "came from a central fire in the universe and provided man not only with his vitality, but his immortal soul." The Turkish genius and founder of neurology Galen, born in 129 A.D., also spoke of pneuma. (Mary Coddington, Seekers of the Healing Energy)

Hippocrates seemed to be aware of it as well; he referred to it as vis medicatrix naturae. To the French

philosopher Henri Bergson, it was the elan vital. The brilliant physician Paracelsus, born in 1493, was convinced of "a healing energy that radiates within and around man like a luminous sphere," says Coddington. "This force, which he called archaicus, could operate at a distance and was able both to cause and cure disease."

In a book entitled Comte de Gabalis, published in Paris three hundred years ago, the Abbe N. de Montefaucon de Villars was quite familiar with Kundalini: "The primordial electricity or solar force, semilient with the aura of every human being, was known to the Greeks as the Speirema, the serpent coil; and in the Upanishads, the sacred writings of India, it is said to lie coiled up like a slumbering serpent." (Kundalini for the New Age)

The Flemish chemist Jan Baptista van Helmont perceived magnetic fluids emitting from the body; in the 1800's, Mesmer described this phenomena as a mobile fluid which could be influenced for healing purposes. The famous psychic Edgar Cayce, Coddington notes, "described a flow of energy in the body that is shaped like the figure eight, with the lines crossing at the solar plexus." And D.D. Palmer, who is credited with founding chiropractic medicine, identified a life energy which was also to be found in "that Intelligence which fills the universe." He named it the "Innate." Says Coddington, "This Innate was the power that kept the automatic system functioning, and it expressed itself through the nervous system."

This life force or energetic expression of the divine is known by many names in other cultures. The Mexican Huichols call it kupuri, the Dakota Indians speak of wakan; the Hurons of oki; the Algonquian of manitou; the African Sotho of moya; the Bantu of nzmbi; the Australians of joja; the Dajak of Indonesia of petara; the Batak of Sumatra of tondi; the Eskimos of quaumaneq, the Hebrews of ruach; the Chinese of chi or ki.

Traditionally, the Hindus regard Kundalini as the divine mother, the earth goddess indwelling in all form and phenomena. The Sanskrit word kundalin, according to mythologist Joseph Campbell, means "that which is coiled or spiral in nature." Charles Breaux says that this "refers to the spiral patterns of energy found throughout the natural world, from the DNA molecule to the shape of galaxies." (from Journey Into Consciousness)

## **Fire and Snakes**

"Everything becomes fire, and from fire everything is born." -- Herakleitos

Searing heat is Kundalini's classic signature. It may blast up the spine, torch localized areas of the body, or come as hot flash episodes. The heat is so fierce it sometimes feels as if one is about to burst into flames. Religious descriptions of hell fires which torment the soul may have originated as commentary on the suffering endured by initiates in the throes of Kundalini heat.

Theosophist G.S. Arundale tells us that the verb kund means "to burn" and is significant in relation to the fiery aspect of Kundalini. He goes on to say that kunda refers to a hole or a bowl -- "Here we are given an idea of the vessel in which the Fire burns." And kundala represents a coil, spiral or ring, which expresses the way the inner fire unfolds. "Out of all these essential derivatives," says Arundale, "the word Kundalini is born, giving creative femininity to the Fire, Serpent-Fire as it is sometimes called, the feminine creative power asleep within a bowl, within a womb, awakening to rhythmic movement in uprushing and downpouring streams of Fire." (Kundalini: An Occult Experience)

The Kundalini serpent/fire are archetypal symbols found in the world's spiritual traditions. Among other

things, fire signifies purification and spiritual energy. It appears in sacred literature from Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush to the Rig Veda's statement: "Universal Order and Truth were born of blazing Tapas."

In her analysis of Teilhard de Chardin's work, religious scholar Beatrice Bruteau says that Teilhard often equates the primal energy of the universe to a devouring divine fire: "It is... pointed out by science in the form of the various energies of the world, from nuclear fusion in the stars, to life, to soul. In all these ways, 'See, the universe is ablaze!' he cries. Fire is, for Teilhard, the archetypal energy; it represents the ultimate energy of which all other energies are special manifestations... Everything is illumined and animated from within by this divine Fire. God is in the world as 'a universal transparency aglow with fire.'" (from *Evolution Toward Divinity*)

In what sounds suspiciously like a description of the awakened Kundalini, Bruteau continues: "For we ourselves are now the fuel of this living flame... We must open our arms to 'call down and welcome the Fire.' It is not enough to contemplate this 'super-substantial, personal Fire which solicitously preserves what it consumes. We must resolutely give ourselves to it as food."

"Fire is the transformative element par excellence," remarks Ralph Metzner. He notes that it is universally associated with "processes of purification, purgation, destructuring, and the dissolving of limitations and obstructions." Metzner points also to the mention of fire in old alchemical texts, which refer to "liquid fire," "living fire," "elemental fire," or "invisible fire", all of which personify Kundalini. Describing the miseries of the cleansing process, a seventeenth-century alchemical tome states: "The old nature is destroyed, dissolved, decomposed, and, in a longer or shorter period of time, transmuted into something else. Such a man is so well digested and melted in the fire of affliction that he despairs of his own strength." (from *The Sophic Hydrolith*)

While the inner flames purifying and tempering the soul may feel horrendous, Metzner reminds us that even the biological response of fever to illness occurs as a bodily attempt to burn away toxins and bacteria, "thereby accelerating the healing process." Says Metzner of his own trials by fire: "This process brings about definite changes in the psychophysical totality: a dissolving of emotional and mental fixations, a melting and releasing of hard, painful tensions in the body, a cleansing of the 'doors of perception' so that inner and outer realities are seen more clearly, and a reduction of separative factors blocking inner unification. These changes are experienced as healing, both physically and psychologically, and as accelerating the individual's growth toward a more integrated, whole sense of self, though the process itself can at times be quite painful." (all Metzner quotes from *The Unfolding Self*)

The other emblem of Kundalini, the serpent or snake, is universally associated with Goddesses and represents primordial energy, great mysteries, cosmic forces, and, by virtue of shedding its skin, rebirth. To the Australian aborigines, a spirit snake is believed to be the female creator of the world and represents a growth and vitality principle. This definition would apply equally to Kundalini.

"The serpent has long represented the power of mystics," says dance and fitness instructor Karen Andes. "The Kundalini cobra is not the only one. The snake appears in old woodcuts of alchemists who tried to turn base metal into gold... snakes represented the primal wisdom of the Earth..." (*A Woman's Book of Power*)

The snake appears in the spiritual literature and religious art of nearly every culture on earth. In some portrayals, it has an evil connotation, standing for unregenerate or unconscious impulses. In Egyptian and other lore, even such a sinister snake represents the potential for good. The snake which has been conquered corresponds to forces which have been mastered, harnessed and rechanneled for the benefit of the psyche and humanity. Even so, Joseph Campbell maintained that "the usual mythological association of the serpent is not, as in the Bible, with corruption, but with physical and spiritual health." He writes: "In America, a

feathered serpent god was recognized as symbolic of the power that casts off death to be resurrected." (Campbell quoted by Swami Muktananda, from Kundalini: The Secret of Life)

"The Kundalini watches over the door to the Brahman [God-knowledge], but she is also the creator of the world, the world mother who went to sleep and coiled up in the Muladhara after sparking the earth to life," says psychoanalyst Arnold Mindell: "As the snake she is an earth goddess. She is also called the 'sad widow' because she has forgotten her heavenly origins." (from Dreambody)

Many of the Kundalini sensations echo the fire and snake motif. Undulating energies are felt throughout the body. The physical shaking and vibrating experiences have a serpentine quality. In fact, the spiritual teacher Dr. R.P. Kaushik has said that Kundalini is called serpent energy precisely because Kundalini energy always moves in waves. When the Kundalini is active, the hands, arms, head and entire body may move in involuntary sinuous, snakelike motions. Those with an active Kundalini often describe sensations in their spines that feel like little snakes or an electric worm wriggling its way up the back.

Karen Andes describes what may well be a depiction of awakened Kundalini in the famous Minoan goddess/priestess statue, with "her eyes wide, her body voluptuous, her whole being 'charged' with the power of the snakes in her hands."

As I mentioned earlier, at the crux of my painful illness (but weeks before I realized I was involved in a Kundalini awakening), I awoke one night in angst, with every muscle from the soles of my feet to the top of my scalp writhing, wrenching and spasming. I cried out to Carl, wailing that my body felt like "Burning snakes!" Several weeks later I was to have another extraordinary snake-experience. Thankfully, this one entailed no pain, only pressure in the crown of my head. I was in quite an altered state at the time, and had the peculiar sensation that my skull had become oblong and egg-shaped... and that something alive was trying to hatch out from it. Although I could literally feel this procedure, I somehow knew the "hatching egg" was a metaphoric enactment. The hatchling broke free and wriggled down to my forehead; I was awed to recognize that the creature born from my egg-skull was a baby snake! Strangely, although the sensations from this were quite convincing, I was not repulsed in the least. To the contrary, I felt inexplicable joy. (It was not until some time later that the Kundalini symbolism became apparent to me.)

Another woman with an active Kundalini had a similar experience. She spoke of it as a light which wrapped around the top of her head and shone down over the front of her face in a way that reminded her of the Egyptian serpent on the headdress of the pharaohs. (Called the uraeus, this sacred cobra symbolized the creator Goddess.)

Those undergoing transformation often dream of snakes or fires. When the Kundalini is active or is about ready to rise, people may have dreams of being bitten by a snake or of snakes entering their bodies. In one case, a twenty-year-old man who had been unable to get medical help for his perplexing symptoms had a vivid dream in which a large snake spoke to him. Because he knew nothing of Kundalini symbols or symptoms, it was not until he later recounted this dream to some friends that someone finally made the connection.

A woman undergoing a relatively mild Kundalini awakening specifically asked for a dream to help her understand what was causing her illness. At the time, she didn't suspect it was anything but a physical problem. In her dream, a doctor showed her a little "worm" coiled in his hand. Interestingly, Joseph Campbell spoke of the Kundalini as a tiny snake, about the size of a hair.

Fires and snakes also appear in quite overtly during Kundalini awakenings. In his autobiographical book, *Play of Consciousness*, Muktananda mentions that snakes are often present during Kundalini awakenings. In

his own case, a cobra lurked nearby (yet never harmed him) during the intense phase of his process.

Six months into my awakening, a new neighbor on the block was visiting next door. I looked out across the yard to see him showing off his pet -- a twelve foot long python! One man in a Kundalini process came home from an afternoon walk to find a large black snake sprawled at the foot of his apartment door. He lived in an urban area, and the snake was inside a locked entry hall! Another woman kept inadvertently tuning into radio and TV programs about snakes at the early stage of her Kundalini awakening.

Fires seem to break out in the vicinity of the one with the awakening Kundalini. Usually, these combustions occur as natural accidents. Several people in the throes of Kundalini awakenings have reported kitchen fires, which they attributed to their own "spacing out" while cooking. One woman undergoing an awakening found her bed on fire when a lit candle fell from the nightstand. Another "barbecued" her house when she left a bag of what she thought were cold fireplace ashes behind her house. The wind fanned sparks and set the back of the house ablaze.

When St. Teresa of Avila's Kundalini awakened, she became ill and fell into a death-like coma for four days, during which time a fire broke out in the convent. The week my Kundalini arose, Carl and I were startled in the middle of night by explosive sounds. The house next door (fortunately unoccupied at the time) was a flaming inferno. It burned almost to the ground before firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze.

In the fourth month of my Kundalini awakening, I had a particularly vivid dream in which the whole city was burning. My father appeared in the dream and, eyeing me suspiciously, asked if I was responsible for the fire. I told him I hadn't done anything to cause it. To which he ominously replied, "Yes, but it's happening because you are a shaman." (This was the first time any reference to my shamanic path was made in my dreams. The dream was prophetic in more ways than I realized.)

In the dream, the conflagration was a natural disaster called a "fire storm". The next day, recalling the dream, I thought it had been merely symbolic. I had never heard of a "fire storm" except in war devastation. Two months later, a cataclysmic fire storm (as the media called it) raged through Oakland, where I live, destroying 3000 homes.

I haven't heard of anyone undergoing a Kundalini awakening who was seriously hurt by either a snake or a fire, though a few have been injured. Yet I wouldn't underestimate the dangers of such occurrences. Like the risen Kundalini, fires and snakes represent powerful, unpredictable, and potentially devastating primal forces. Once unleashed, such forces cannot be taken lightly. I know of two people who committed suicide during overwhelming Kundalini episodes. I've met others who were locked in psychosis states for months or years. I don't mean to terrify anyone by these disclosures. I believe that for most of us, despite the severity and painfulness of our process, we will survive and even live to rejoice in our transformation. But it's important to give due respect to this experience. Even if we aren't always able to meet the next twist in our process with faith, courage or fortitude, it helps to remember the magnitude of what we are undergoing. Even the saints had a hard time enduring these things. How can we expect more of ourselves?

Sadly, we live in a society that pressures us to "normalize" everything, and to downplay or deny our extraordinary experiences. Being "in control" is extolled as the highest personal virtue. But those of us whose lives have been infused by spiritual energies know such control is illusory. Whether we feel elated and ecstatic or battered and broken by these energies, we cannot repress or stop them. Too often, this leads to self-condemnation.

What we are going through isn't normal, but that doesn't mean it's unnatural. We have become vehicles of the spectacular. It seems easier when we can accept whatever comes. It's okay to feel overwhelmed. It's okay to

feel helpless, hopeless, angry and resentful. It's okay to feel incapable of suffering through another day, another hour, another minute of this incredibly demanding process. We need to be as compassionate to ourselves as we can. Perhaps on some deep, heroic level, our souls have volunteered to go through this incredible fire. And whether we go through it consciously surrendered, or kicking and screaming every inch of the way, we can't turn back. No matter what we may at any moment feel about it, we are on an awesome, ancient and sacred path.

## Ice to Steam

Swami Muktananda described Kundalini as "Shakti, supreme energy... She is the active aspect of the formless, attributeless Absolute." Kundalini is also hidden in the trinity represented in the Christian mythos of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The God-realized master Paramahansa Yogananda perceived a parallel between the Christian and Hindu trinities. God is the "vibrationless void beyond phenomena," Christ is the "perfect intelligence that permeates the universe," and the Holy Ghost is the "divine vibratory power that produces all forms in the cosmos". (Sayings of Yogananda)

Although Christian dogmatists might protest the equation, it seems evident that the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit) and the Kundalini are one in the same. The Holy Ghost, like Kundalini, is symbolically represented by a flame. (Many of the Christian saints who were not familiar with the Eastern concept of Kundalini suffered from mysterious illnesses in which they claimed to be "burning" with the spirit of God within them. This was officially known as *incendium amoris*, the fire of love.) The other common Christian symbol for the Holy Ghost is the dove. Again, parallels to Kundalini can be found: much of the mythology of the dove centers around the sacred feminine and divine mother. The Greek Goddess Aphrodite was said to have been born from an egg brooded by a dove, and Jung wrote, "It is not without reason that the dove of Aphrodite is the symbol of the Holy Ghost." He also mentions that "in the Acts of Thomas, the Holy Ghost is addressed as the mother" (as is Kundalini).

Gabriel Cousens observes that numerous references to what would seem to be Kundalini awakening appear in the Bible. "Kundalini is referred to in John 20:22," he claims, in which it says that Jesus "blew upon them and said to them: Receive Holy Spirit."

Some, including Yogi Amrit Desai, believe that the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4) is a description of Kundalini awakening: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." ("Kundalini Yoga Through Shaktipat," from *Kundalini: Evolution and Enlightenment*, ed. by John White)

Some Christian teachers view only the solar energy entering the crown chakra, which the Eastern texts call "Shiva," as the Holy Spirit. Whether or not one makes this distinction, the Holy Spirit is involved in the Kundalini process. And whether the divine is conceived as a trinity, a pantheon of deities, a monotheistic supreme being or an eternal creative power, what is being communicated is the greater-than-self omnipresent Whole. Being integral to this Whole, there is nowhere in the universe where Kundalini is not.

It can seem contradictory. If Kundalini is present in all creation, what is a Kundalini awakening? It might be considered a quickening of this pervasive energy. Imagine that Kundalini is water, and that across most of the planet, it is so cold that this water is frozen. In some places, the water heats up a bit, and becomes liquid. And in places where it heats up a great deal, it turns to steam. We might think of a Kundalini awakening as the process by which we are changed from this ordinary "ice" state to the much faster vibrational state of



"steam." Another way of putting it is that while Kundalini is active in everything, there are certain places (power spots) and people in which she is more concentrated. Those with a risen Kundalini have much more life force in their systems than those who have not begun this process.

Kundalini is alive in everyone, and in Her most active form, She catalyzes quantum leaps in personal and spiritual growth. This isn't to say that anyone who is experiencing physical or mental illness, or that anyone who goes through life changes and revises their outlook, values or behavior has an awakened Kundalini. Such individuals, using the previous analogy, might be turning into "liquid water," but they are not vibrating at the "steam" level. In other words, every life crisis is an invitation to inner growth, but not all inner growth is propelled by the risen Kundalini.

There are also degrees of Kundalini awakening. A partial Kundalini awakening is a brief Kundalini release lasting anywhere from a few minutes to a few weeks. These experiences are often triggered by meditation, prayer, psychedelic drugs, or being in the presence of an illumined being or spiritual master. While such experiences can bring important revelations and self-change, they do not have the radically life-altering impact of a full awakening.

Most of the literature I have found on this says that in partial awakenings, the spiritual energy falls back into dormancy in the root chakra, while in full awakenings, the energy continues to pulse up through the crown chakra and does not recede. But even isolate pranic-releases can be precursors to a future full blown Kundalini process.

A full Kundalini awakening continues for the rest of one's life, albeit in a gradually more refined and consistently joyous, positive way. The period generally referred to as the years of awakening designates the most dramatic and difficult manifestations of the process. In a full awakening, all the chakras remain open and one's being is bodily and psychologically transformed.

To summarize, Kundalini is both the all-pervasive energy of the cosmos and the mysterious bioenergetic agent of personal evolution. The operative word here is "mysterious." All the explanations and definitions I've given are still just scratching at the surface. We can speak of what Kundalini does and how to recognize Her, but Kundalini's domain will always be the incomprehensible and ineffable.