



# ICR Newsletter

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## Prana-shakti The Link Between Creativity and Healing?

by Teri Degler

The extraordinary positive effect that creativity can have on our psychological well being has been known for decades. Based on hardcore scientific evidence, programs in art, music, and drama therapy have spread in hospitals and mental health clinics, and their effectiveness in improving moods, alleviating depression, decreasing hospital stays, and reducing the need for medication has been widely documented.

The profound benefits people have personally experienced through simple creative acts like daily writing and/or sketching have turned the once-abandoned, old-time diary into the modern-day journal and seen it become a cultural phenomenon.

This combination of scientific and anecdotal evidence that creative expression can benefit our psychological well-being and spiritual growth has certainly been a major factor in my own interest in and writing about the subject over the last twenty years.

Recently I came across some information that made me even more excited about the subject. Although I was unaware of it until recently, there has been since the late 1980s a

steadily increasing amount of evidence that creative self expression can also have a powerful impact on the body and the diseases that affect it. One of the pioneers in this field is J.W. Pennebaker, a scientist from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the University of Auckland Medical School. Pennebaker and his associates began conducting experiments on the effects of expressive writing in 1986. Since then a plethora of studies – conducted by Pennebaker and others – have not only confirmed the already known positive effects of expressive writing on mental health, but have also shown this form of creative expression to influence a startling array of physical conditions, including lowering blood pressure, improving liver function, decreasing the severity of rheumatoid arthritis, improving immune response in HIV infection, and improving lung function in asthma.<sup>1</sup>

Harvard Professor Mark Tramo, PhD, MD, has been conducting research on the effects of music on various conditions and has found that it increases the production of both endorphins and immunoglobulin.<sup>2</sup> A study done by Daniel Monti, a medical director at Thomas Jefferson

University Hospital in Philadelphia, on the impact of expressive art – from sketching to working with clay – on women with cancer showed such promising results in 2006 that the National Institutes of Health has given him a five-year grant to study the immune response in 300 cancer patients.<sup>3</sup> I was bowled over by these studies! But then I had to ask myself, why was I surprised? The ancient yogis certainly wouldn't have been. The sacred texts that have come down to us from them are full of references to both healing and creative expression. And while they do not – at least to my knowledge – directly connect the two, they certainly indicate that both are related to the flow of prana, known more completely as prana-shakti. One can even say that prana-shakti is responsible for both.

This is certainly clear in the case of the relationship between prana – sometimes referred to as the “life energy” or “life force” – and healing. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika, the oldest extant text on Hatha Yoga, indicates that one of the main purposes of the asanas, or yoga postures, is to promote the uninhibited flow of prana throughout the body and that this in turn is a key to the promo-

tion of health and the elimination of disease. The chapter on pranayama, or breathing exercises, ends with this verse.<sup>4</sup>

*When the body becomes lean, the face glows with delight, Anahatanada manifests, and eyes are clear, body is healthy, bindu under control, and appetite increases, then one should know that the Nadis are purified and success in Hatha Yoga is approaching.*

In order to understand the relationship between prana and both healing and creativity, the concept of “success in yoga” needs to be examined in a little more detail. Ultimately the phrase refers to Enlightenment or, in yogic terms, the Realization of the Oneness of the individual soul and Universal Soul.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the word yoga comes from the Sanskrit yuj which means “to yoke” and, in this sense, refers to the Oneness of the individual with the Divine.

One of the purposes of the ancient yogic texts was to describe the characteristics of someone who was having success as he or she traveled along the path towards this ultimate goal. Many of these texts – particularly those related to the school of thought that the yoga postures originated in – are replete with references to both inspired creativity and the conquering of disease. One of the most beautiful is a collection of verses thought to have been written in 8<sup>th</sup> c. Kashmir and is known as *Panchastavi*.<sup>6</sup> These verses are written in praise of the cosmic divine feminine known as Shakti – a cosmic force that manifests in the material world as prana-shakti and, as explained in more detail later, in the human body as kundalini-shakti. One of verses in the first Canto of the text states Shakti’s relationship to creative expression quite blatantly:

*Thou art the source of all sounds in the universe. Thou art also the origin of all speech and (hence) art. (Verse 15, Canto 1)*

Another verse describes the effect on the devotee :

*O Goddess, Thy grace descends and from his lotus-like mouth flow ambrosial expressions full of nectar (Verse 3; Canto 1)*

Yet another passage describes how her surpassing beauty “becomes the means of granting...the talents of a poet” to her devotees and one of my favorite lines states that Shakti’s radiance causes “words, clear and full of deep meaning, like the milky and wavy luster of the river of the gods” to flow like a “stream of ambrosia” (Verse 2, Canto 2 and Verse 8; Canto1).

Here is one of the most beautiful verses in its entirety:

*Flawless, exceedingly sweet and beautiful, soul-enchanted, uninterrupted flow of words (speech) manifests itself on all sides in them (Thy devotees blessed by Thee with genius) who keep Thee, O Shakti (of Shiva), the destroyer of Kamadeva (God of Love), constantly in their mind, as shining with the stainless lustre of the moon in the head, seated on a gleaming lotus-throne, sparkling with the white glitter of snow, sprinkling nectar on the petals of the lotuses both in the Muladhara (the root-center at the base of the spine) and Brahma-randhra (the cavity of Brahma in the thousand-petalled lotus in the head). (Verse 12; Canto 3)*

Interestingly enough, this exquisite passage on creative expression is followed directly by one on the conquering of disease.

*O Goddess, meditated upon even once with one’s whole being, what (goal) is there that you do not accomplish without the least difficulty? You bestow all wished-for chattels of enjoyment, destroy one’s enemies, drive away calamities, subdue diseases of the body, burn away impurities, stamp out forcibly the suffering and sorrows of the mind, enhance happiness, and cure the pangs of separation (from near and dear ones). (Verse 13; Canto 3)*

Another text that deals with Shakti in all her forms and both creative expression and healing is *Saundaryalahari*, a text written by Shankaracharya, also known as Adi Shankara, this great sage is generally held to have lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and remains revered today throughout India and across virtually all branches of Hinduism.

In his translation and commentary on *Saundaryalahari*, V.K Subramanian points out that in Verses 15, 16, and 17, Shankara is envisioning the cosmic feminine power, Shakti, as the “granter of literary and artistic skills”. Indeed, Verse 15 begins with saying that “words sweeter than the sweetness of honey, milk, and grapes come flooding to the good ones”. The “good ones”<sup>7</sup> being, in this case, Shakti’s devotees.

In Verse 16, Shakti is referred to as the “Crimson One” who has the power to make the poet’s mind “flower”:

*Those few good ones, who worship you, the Crimson One, whose effulgence, like that of the rising sun makes the lotus-clusters of great poet’s minds flower, delight everyone with their profound words, flowing, like the waves of youthful passion of the goddess of learning. (Verse 16)<sup>8</sup>*

This verse is followed by the words:

*O Mother, he who meditates on you...becomes the creator of great works of art, using expressions fragrant like the lotus-face of the goddess of learning, resembling those of the great ones. (Verse 17)<sup>9</sup>*

Not surprisingly, a reference to healing is found three verses later:

*He who meditates on Thee who sends forth luminous waves of bliss from Thy body...his look can cure any ailment... (Verse 20)<sup>10</sup>*

These passages from *Saundaryalahari* and *Panchastavi* make it clear that there is a definite

relationship between Shakti – the divine mother and goddess referred to – and both creativity and healing. Earlier I made the statement that in the particular yogic tradition we are discussing here, Shakti is said to manifest in the world as prana-shakti or, as it is more commonly known, simply, prana.

This tradition can be referred to as Tantric, and both *Saundaryalahari* and *Panchastavi* are referred to by scholars as Tantric texts. Tantric is, in this sense however, very different from the way Tantra is generally talked about today where it is touted in relation to sexual pleasure and prowess and based to some extent on a late medieval form of Tantra in India that was considered corrupted and known as the “left-hand path”.

In the broadest sense, what we might refer to as the more “pure” form of Tantra refers to a variety of forms of worship that were based on a series of medieval Indian texts known as the *tantras* which, while never ignoring the importance of the divine masculine, were primarily focused on honoring the divine feminine.

One of the main principles of this tradition is the concept that the macrocosm – the entire universe as we know it – is mirrored in the microcosm that is the individual. While volumes have been written to explain how the ancient Tantric adepts believed this “worked” in the world around us, for our purposes here three rather simplified points can be considered.

The first is that Shakti is the creatrix of the universe and that, as such, she is perceived as pure energy. The word shakti in Sanskrit, in fact, means “power” or “force” and is today often translated as “energy”.<sup>11</sup>

The second is that in order to create the universe Shakti *becomes* it. Thus, the world around us and everything in it consists, at the most fundamental level, of energy. (A concept not

unfamiliar to today’s physicists!) When Shakti manifests in this way she is known as prana-shakti.

In the Tantric worldview this process of creation is a highly complex process that evolves over time – and *evolves* is a key word here for prana-shakti’s job is not just to create the material world but to propel it along its evolutionary path. When she is in this form<sup>12</sup> prana-shakti is the *intelligent* life energy that pulses throughout the world around us and in each one of us. As this intelligent energy, she is *consciousness* itself. She is the force that makes our hearts beat, heals our wounds, fights disease, and fosters all the other life functions that go on without our conscious awareness. She also guides us along our evolutionary path; the goal of which - like the goal of all types of yoga mentioned earlier – is Enlightenment or the Realization of Oneness with the Divine.

Third, in this tradition it is held that in order to facilitate this Realization, Shakti manifests in the human body as a potent, intensified form of prana-shakti that is given the name kundalini-shakti. Traditionally, kundalini is symbolized as a serpent coiled three and a half times at the base of the spine – or in Mudlahara, the root chakra. This coiled serpent is a powerful symbol for “potential energy”.<sup>13</sup> It is believed that this “energy” can rise up a central channel in the spine, enter the brain, and activate a dormant center there known in yoga as the *brahmarandhra*. The opening of this center is said to lead to the state of higher consciousness known as samadhi and, possibly eventually, to Enlightenment. The yoga asanas, or postures, and various breathing exercises, known as pranayama, were developed to facilitate this process – in some cases to speed it along and in others so that the body was healthy and strong and in this way prepared for the process.

One of the purposes of these Tantric texts was to describe the experiences a seeker would have and/or the

characteristics that would evolve as part of this transformative process or, as the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* puts it, when success in yoga “is approaching”. *Saundaryalahari* and *Panchastavi* make it abundantly clear that health and a facility for creative expression<sup>14</sup> are two of these characteristics.

One of the most interesting things I have found about the studies done so far on creative expression and healing is related to the fact that they imply a cause and effect relationship. In other words, the studies show that creative expression somehow causes or triggers certain immune responses, etc, but they do not address in any way the issue of *why* or *how* this happens!

At some point in the future the knowledge gleaned by the ancient tantric adepts who developed the practice of postures and breathing exercises might provide an answer to both these questions. Unfortunately this might not happen until the day when science has developed research tools that can accurately measure “life energy” – call it prana, chi, bioenergy, orgone, or what you will. Although advances have been made in this direction in the last two decades – particularly in regard to studies focused on chi – science is still a long way from being able to accurately detect this force and its flow through the body.<sup>15</sup>

However, it would even now be possible for researchers to carry out a study on creative expression and health that added a group doing pranayama into the mix. It would certainly be easy enough to design a study similar to the ones done by Pennebaker and Tramo that did this. The results might very well be intriguing and, at the very least, spur further and more in-depth research.

There is little doubt that Gopi Krishna, widely considered the leading authority on kundalini-shakti, would have encouraged a study such as this. He spent much of his life attempting to convince the scientific and medical communities of the importance of

research into the concept of Shakti and its function both as the life energy in the human body and as a potential trigger for higher states of consciousness and its characteristics.

In the meantime, it would surely seem worthwhile for anyone in the healing arts whose interest is piqued both by the studies already done and by the teachings of the yogis to explore ways they might work creativity exercises and pranayama type breathing exercise into their practice or encourage specific clients to explore these practices for themselves.

For those of us who simply want to see if creative expression might make us feel better physically or emotionally, there doesn't *seem* to be much hindering us. We should just go out and give it a try. Unfortunately, we are hindered! Although fear of failure is often discussed as the factor that keeps us from pursuing our creative longings, in my years leading workshops on the subject, I have found that there is a deeply seated attitude that is an even greater deterrent: A belief that – unless you are a professional in the arts or a particularly gifted person – taking the time out of your busy life to be creative is, at best, frivolous and, at worst, a waste. Creative expression is seen, in short, as having little *value*. Discovering that the ancient yogis saw creative expression as an integral facet of our spiritual transformation and that contemporary scientists are saying it can have profound positive effects on *healing*, does much to abolish this misconception. If we have a desire to write, to paint, to dance, to sing, to play an instrument we can throw ourselves into the pursuit full of joy and free of guilt for we are nourishing both the body and the spirit.

## References and Endnotes

1. Baikie, Karen A., and Wilhem, Kay. "Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing" in *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*. 11 (2005): 338-346. <[http://apt.rcpsych.org/content/](http://apt.rcpsych.org/content/11/5/338.full)

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2. Friedrich, M.J. "Institute Probes Music's Therapeutic Potential". *Journal of the American Medical Association*, p. 1554-1555. Web 7 April 2004, Vol. 291, No. 13. <<http://www.brainmusic.org/HealthAndMedicine/Clinical%20Trials/iMABS04JAMA.pdf>>

3. Larsen, Christine. "The Fine Art of Healing the Sick: Embracing the benefits of writing, music, and art." *U.S. News & World Report*, n. page. Web 28 May 2006 – See more at: <[http://health.usnews.com/usnews/health/articles/060605/5art\\_2.htm](http://health.usnews.com/usnews/health/articles/060605/5art_2.htm) > (Note: URL no longer alive).

4. Muktibodhananda, Swami, Commentary. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika: Light on Yoga*. Bihar, Indian: Yoga Publication Trust, 2008, p. 181.

5. All the traditional forms of yoga refer to this state of Oneness or Union – in some branches, such as Hatha, the focus is on the "realization" of this state as it is held that the individual soul is already one with Universal Soul, or the Divine, and only needs to "realize" it. In other traditions, the human soul is seen as separated from the Divine and needs to be reunited.

6. Krishna, Gopi. *Secrets of Kundalini in Panchastavi*. Darien, Connecticut: Bethel Publishers, Inc.: 2010.

7. Subramanian, V.K., Trans. and Comm., *Saundaryalahari of Sankaracarya*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Ltd., 2006.

8. Ibid. Verse 16.

9. Ibid Verse 17.

10. Tapasyananda, Swami, Trans. and Comm. *Saundaryalahari of Sankaracarya*. Mylapore: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2007.

11. It is important to point out that none of these terms are really adequate or exact, in part because Shakti as the Divine defies description just as the

word "God" does and also because our word "energy" does not convey the sense of this being a vital, intelligent presence.

12. Using the word "form" is also somewhat misleading as in this worldview Shakti is really *everything*. It might be more accurate to think of this force/energy taking on different states of being, the way water can appear as ice or steam but is still essentially water.

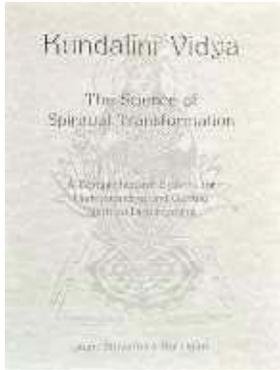
13. Here again the word "energy" is limiting but, perhaps, as close as we can come.

14. The characteristics of higher consciousness are described in detail in Richard Maurice Bucke's book *Cosmic Consciousness* and in Gopi Krishna's *Higher Consciousness*. My article [Hildegard of Bingen: A Yogini in Nun's Clothing](#) also describes them and the continuum they manifest along.

15. "The Benefits of Tai Chi". Harvard Health Publications. Web May 2009. [http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Harvard\\_Womens\\_Health\\_Watch/2009/May/The-health-benefits-of-tai-chi](http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Harvard_Womens_Health_Watch/2009/May/The-health-benefits-of-tai-chi)

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Award-winning author Teri Degler, has written ten books including *The Fiery Muse: Creativity and the Spiritual Quest* (Random House, Canada). Her most recent book, *The Divine Feminine Fire* (Dreamriver Press, USA) has been an Amazon.ca #1 Bestseller in two spiritual categories. A widely experienced public speaker, she has taught workshops on creativity and creative writing in the United States and Canada and has appeared on many national television and radio programs. *The Divine Feminine Fire* is now available as an e-book in Italian and was published in German by Aquamarin Verlag in 2012. For more information on scheduling her for a workshop see [www.teridegler.com](http://www.teridegler.com).



# Kundalini Vidya: The Science of Spiritual Transformation

by Joan Shivarpita Harrigan

Reviewed by S. Myrna Fletcher

Joan Shivarpita Harrigan's *Kundalini Vidya, The Science of Spiritual Transformation*, describes a comprehensive system for understanding and guiding spiritual development particularly regarding *Kundalini-Shakti*. Harrigan is the designated successor in the lineage of her teacher Swami Chandrasekharanand Saraswati, himself the successor of the eighth century Indian saint Adi Shankaracharya, the reformer of the Advaita Vedanta school of Hinduism. Her goal is to summarize and organize the teaching of this lineage, which she designates as *Traditional Kundalini Science*.

Harrigan proposes that there's not a single path (for example, yoga, meditation, breathing exercises) for achieving a Kundalini rising. Rather, practices must be customized for each individual, supported by maintaining a life-style that promotes a healthy rising.

Self-published, 256-page, letter sized, and spiral bound, the book has massive text and artful illustrations. The author asserts that the book is an overview of basic teachings and an aid to promoting a spiritual life, but is neither a training manual for Kundalini practitioners nor a guide for self-directed Kundalini practice. Harrigan, spiritual director of the Patanjali Kundalini Yoga Care (PKYC) in Knoxville, Tennessee, uses the book when assisting those who are in Kundalini process.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter the author defines Kundalini Shakti as the "Divine Power that permeates everything.. in the phenomenal world, the inseparable manifestation of Absolute Reality, the One or Pure Consciousness." Following the lineage teaching, Kundalini Shakti is used interchangeably with *Divine Mother*, the latter being Harrigan's favored term-the book begins with a full color image of the Divine Mother and a prayer dedicated to Her and is followed by *Saundaryalahari of Adi Shankaracharya*, a poem praising the Divine Mother. This sets the tone of the book; Divine Mother is in charge of both microcosm and macrocosm. She determines favorable and safe Kundalini rising and ultimate liberation.

The remainder of the chapter provides cultural and historical background and a brief history of Kundalini in America. It also dispels misconceptions surrounding Kundalini common in the west, including a tendency to treat it as pathology. Harrigan presents factual information about Kundalini Shakti, including its pervasive existence, obedience to the natural laws of subtle body physics, and its diversity of manifestations.

The technical aspects of Kundalini Shakti comprise most of the rest of the book. These chapters explain the function of the major aspects of subtle body physiology, including the charkas, nadis,

and vayus. They describe the causes and dynamics of a kundalini rising and the causes for a difficult rising. Features of kundalini rising are categorized according to physical, psychological, and non-ordinary experiences. The book details and describes the various types and levels of most kundalini rising. The later chapters focus on the purifying and transformative qualities of a full rising, and describes the advanced routes for continuing to a Complete rising, reaching a pinnacle experience at Bindu. It then indicates the Plateau stages of spiritual absorption beyond the final culmination at Omega, Turiya .

The fifth chapter discusses the renovation and Restoration Project that occurs after reaching a certain (Makara) Point. This phase involves strengthening, repairing and detoxifying the subtle body, which includes the vital energy and mind. This process can be unpleasant; the chapter offers important advice about managing these manifestations.

The last chapter offers basic guidelines for supporting a healthy Kundalini process, including how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, achieve a spiritual lifestyle and maintain a spiritual practice.

The book concludes with three appendices, a glossary and bibliography. Appendix I presents Patanjali Kundalini Yoga Care, the services provided by the author and her

teacher, located in Knoxville Tennessee (www.kundalinicare.com).

The Second Appendix details a preliminary research report on a study that examines the experiences of individuals who sought guidance for their spiritual development through PKYC. The report was first presented at the Seventh Symposium of the Kundalini Research Network, 1998. This report will interest those curious about research methodology.

The last (3rd) Appendix describes the chakras from an archetypal, ener-

getic and psychological perspective.

This book lives up to the author's goal to organize and summarize the teaching of her lineage of Traditional Kundalini Science. Although she presents it as an overview, the wealth of information in this dense volume could easily make this book a primer on the subject. Many books have been written about Kundalini, but no modern guidebook is as comprehensive as this. It is well written and well researched, including more than 160 bibliographic references. The book's many charts and meticulous illustrations add to its clarity.

The author condenses a trove of complex information into an easily understood, accessible body of work that informs and inspires those interested in the study of Kundalini.

**S. Myrna Fletcher** is a Psychiatric and Neuroscience Nurse Practitioner who resides in Northern California. She became interested in spiritual topics at a young age. Following a profound Kundalini awakening at the age of 21, she traveled to Europe where she met Gopi Krishna. She has been involved in Kundalini research for more than 30 years

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## ICR's 29th ANNUAL CONFERENCE and RETREAT

### Kundalini: A Personal Experience – On A Universal Path

It seems that Kundalini has no chosen path, but that it is in itself a Universal Path. Through our study of the lives of mystics, genius and everyday people who are having these interior experiences, it is clear that they are being initiated into their own evolutionary process through many different directions, and yet, with similar outcomes. Perhaps the many paths taken are somehow all linked in their approach that stimulates activity within the human system to a heightened activity of awareness, where subtle changes are affected in the brain and nervous system. If this universal path is the catalyst of our continuing evolution, then we need to understand its workings so that we may evolve in a positive and healthy manner. This evolutionary process may be awakened slowly by the natural flow of compassion and love, or may burst into ones consciousness causing all kinds of disturbances, both positive and negative. Throughout the conference this year there will be a number of discussion/forums about Kundalini, Prana, and sharing of personal experiences that

may give us a better overview of what this universal path involves and how we can live in tune with the intelligence guiding it.

Our program this year includes:

**The Concept of Kundalini:** According to various esoteric traditions Kundalini is the latent force/energy in the human organism, a biologically based mechanism responsible for creativity, genius, psychic ability, religious and mystical experience, as well as some types of aberrant mental illness. Kundalini can be viewed as a dormant force that can be aroused to activity through certain disciplines such as various forms of Yoga or other spiritual disciplines, but has also been known to awaken spontaneously. In this presentation we will discuss the concept of Kundalini as postulated by Gopi Krishna. He suggests that Kundalini represents a specific psychosomatic power centre in human beings and that human evolution has proceeded by the action of this mechanism in the human body and brain, with the ultimate goal of reaching a state of higher conscious-

ness. In this context we will show why individuals are having "spontaneous" mystical type experiences and some of the challenges that may come with a spontaneous awakening of Kundalini. We will also discuss the importance of leading a balanced lifestyle to help insure a healthy conclusion to this process and what we can do to foster a healthy environment for this process – whether it occurs spontaneously or is brought about by a regularly practiced spiritual discipline. **Sabine Bruestle** first became interested in the "spiritual world" in 1984 and as part of her own healing process studied various energy healing modalities. She became involved with ICR and the exploration of Kundalini in the early 1990's after spending several months in Zuerich, Switzerland, administering the literary estate of the late Pandit Gopi Krishna. Connecting with our "inner sparkle", that light, that love, that moves us deeply, and creating a healthy lifestyle and physical environment to support that, are topics very close to her heart. Sabine is actively engaged in the corporate world as Director of Operations

of a Specialty Medical Device company and is a long-time board member of ICR.

**Prana: The Master Key of Life:** In order to understand Kundalini, it is first necessary to understand the nature of Prana, or 'bioenergy' as it is sometimes called in the West. What is it? Where does it come from? How does it operate in the body? What is the difference between Prana and Kundalini? How does Prana fit in with modern, scientific concepts of life and evolution? In a brief review of some of the ancient Indian spiritual traditions, Michael shows how Prana is regarded as an integral part of the very fabric of Creation, and answers these and many other questions about this mysterious 'energy'. He also discusses the key role it plays in the spiritual process of the individual and the evolution of the race. **Michael Bradford** has been involved in research on Kundalini for more than 30 years. In 1977 he traveled to India where he spent six years serving as a volunteer worker for the Central Institute for Kundalini Research, founded and directed by the late Pandit Gopi Krishna. Michael is a long-time board member of ICR, and currently works as both a computer consultant and a Vedic astrologer.

**My Experience of Kundalini and Thoughts on Kundalini as the Energy of Evolution:** For me, the most important way to view Kundalini is as an intelligent divine energy that drives human potential or evolution. On the micro level, Kundalini is responsible for the evolution of each individual; by its release or activation, a process is started that changes body and mind, in particular, a remodeling of the brain. On a macro level, humans evolve from simpler to more complex beings affecting large populations. Both genetics and environment play a role in micro and macro evolution and the speaker will comment on these based on her personal experience and studies of Kundalini. **S. Myrna Fletcher** is a Psy-

chiatric and Neuroscience Nurse Practitioner who resides in Northern California. She became interested in spiritual topics at a young age. Following a profound Kundalini awakening at the age of 21, she traveled to Europe where she met Gopi Krishna. She has been involved in Kundalini research for more than 30 years.

**Yoga with Helga Schroeder:** In this session I will share with you the routine I follow in the yoga classes I offer. My motto is Patanjali's Yoga Sutra : *Sthira sukham asanam* ( May the posture be steady and comfortable). Participants will be directed with great emphasis of good alignment and balance. Moving with the breath into a posture and continuing to breathe with awareness it then becomes a meditation in motion. This allows everyone to experience harmony and wholeness. **Helga Schroeder**, having been deeply impressed by Yoga and all the positions that her body was capable of, came to make Yoga an integral part of her life. She became more serious when she trained and studied to become a Yoga Therapist with Phoenix Rising. After she completed the training, Helga decided to immerse herself into the yoga lifestyle and lived for six months in an ashram in Massachusetts. She received her yoga teacher certificate and joined the staff as a teacher for yoga teacher trainees, as well as a yoga therapist teacher. Next she went to India to study Yoga Philosophy with Pundit Rajmani Tigunait. When she returned to Canada she opened a small yoga studio 'Beyond Limits' in Meaford, in 1995.

**Discussion Forum: Share Your Personal Experience:** Facilitated by Alf Walker, this forum provides an opportunity for attendees to share their own spiritual experience(s), as well as ideas or questions concerning the Kundalini process. **Alf Walker** has had a life long interest in the mind and spirituality. He first met Gopi Krishna in August 1978 in Srinagar Kashmir and has been a student of his work since. Alf has been a

Registered Massage therapist since 1980, practicing and teaching bio-dynamic massage and shiatsu. In 1992 he began working as a Psychodynamic Psychotherapist in Toronto. He has been attempting to meditate since he was sixteen years old. (And he knows less about life and spirituality now than he did thirty years ago!)

**Qigong with Beverley Viljakainen:** I will share with you a meditative movement practice that promotes physical and emotional well-being, mental clarity and spiritual awareness. **Beverley Viljakainen**, is a life-long student of the deeper aspects of human consciousness, a pursuit that now has her practicing and sharing Qigong with others. She also has a long history of being a Yoga teacher/student

**Architecture as the Material Expression of Spirit:** After reading *Cosmic Consciousness*, I was amazed with the personal experiences of Dr. Maurice Bucke and how they related to similar experiences in my own life. They all are representative of our evolution moving forward towards a state of cosmic consciousness. As an Architect I have been able to express the spiritually alive cosmic reality in forms and shapes that were morally exulted and joyful. My intuition was to work with clients and associates who were interested in exploring and discovering the meaning and our place in the universe and how our habitat would be made more harmonious with metaphysical forces and spiritual energies around us, knowing that Man and Nature are one. After a Near Death Experience I became aware that we only use 10% of our brain capacity. There were no answers for what the 90% was used for. The last 20 years have been explorations and insights about the 90% of our brain capacity, and how the use of it inspired my work as an Architect. It also gave me indications of the possibilities of how and where it will lead us in our evolution. To illustrate this, I plan to share pho-

tographs of projects that I have worked on. **Laszlo Nemeth Ph.D.** has been the principal designer behind some landmark buildings including the Eaton's Centre, the Panasonic Canada Head Office in Toronto and 1st Canadian Place - where the green roof-top park was honored with a City of Toronto Urban Design Award in 1992. His firm, Laszlo Nemeth Associates was established in 1976. Dr. Nemeth is a recipient of the Canadian Architect Award of Excellence and the Governor-General's Medal for his work related to the environmental sciences building at Trent University. Among its many accomplishments, his firm has designed the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, a NASA Research Centre in Cambridge, Mass., and was the principal designer for the Cambridge Historical Centre in London, England.

**Discussion Forum: Individual Expression of Spirit:** After a death-defying automobile accident in 1989 my creative process, as well as my intuition, became very heightened. At that time I became inspired to move along in my own individual creative process. Through observations of the figure I am led on a journey of deeper discovery into the human form. It is then that I abstract the images into my drawings. For me the process is as important as the final moments of painting the image on the canvas. As I work, I feel a presence is guiding me in the process, culminating in images from my soul. **Vivien Nilssen**, was born in Norway and grew up in an artistic environment. Her uncle was a painter and her father a musician. She was educated and lived in Spain during the Franco regime and modeled and painted with a German artist. Vivien returned to Norway to finish her education, lived and studied

drawing in England and then moved to Canada. She studied at the Haliburton School of Fine Art and completed the 3 year program at the Toronto School of Art. Then she attended Harold Klunder's workshop in Flesherton and studied with Dennis Cliff and Brian Bennett in independent studio. Dennis Cliff, an artist and teacher, became her mentor. She went on to spend 3 years painting in Scotland and exhibiting with a Scottish artist. Currently Vivien is working in her studio on a new work entitled "the figure", for an upcoming two person show in Owen Sound at the Deboer Gallery in November 2014.

**Open Forum: ICR and its Future:** Facilitated by Tom Howe. For decades The Institute for Consciousness Research has been an enthusiastic part of the movement begun by Pandit Gopi Krishna to spread knowledge of Kundalini and to encourage science to take up research into Kundalini. Now ICR is being challenged to balance its devotion to those big goals against its modest workforce and energy. Attendees at the conference are invited to add their thoughts to this open forum in which we will focus on how ICR can, most effectively, continue along this path. Website? Newsletters? Book publication? Conferences? What is working? What is the best use of resources? Your heart and your imagination will be welcome. Promises to be interactive and challenging. **Tom Howe** is a founding member of ICR. In addition to his long term support for research into the nature of Kundalini, he is a supporter of a variety of environmental and socially focused NGOs. Tom is a professional engineer and the retired Chief Underwriting Officer of a specialty insurance company.

**Music - Universal Rhythms of Oneness:** Throughout history music has always had the power to bring people together as one. There are musical rhythms that have a way of centering our souls, where we come to a place of knowing that we are all a part of one creation. The music, in subtle and not so subtle ways, has the potential to awaken the depth of our being to the reality of the "Oneness". We would like to invite you to share a piece of music that has in some way drawn you into a sense of the oneness of creation. Before we share your special music we would love to hear in a few words how this music affected you. To contribute to this musical experience, please let us know by sending us the title of the piece, as well as the orchestra, band, or singer, since many versions may be out there and we would like to get the exact one that you experienced. Send them along to us no later than July 15<sup>th</sup> as we need to put them all on a CD to be played at the conference. If you do not feel comfortable presenting the music you have chosen, we can share the description of your selection by proxy. Also, if you cannot make it to the conference and have a piece of music that you would like to share please send them along with your description and we will present it for you. We can't wait to hear the music that you have chosen and share in your experience of it. We look forward to receiving your music.

#### Closing Ceremony

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