

# Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy

## Part 5 of 16

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This morning I propose to depart from the series of discourses oriented to the three fundamentals and to make a preliminary report concerning the becoming acquainted with an Oriental by the name of Gopi Krishna. A little over a week ago I received a letter from a man who signs himself as Gene Kieffer who is associated with what is known as the Kundalini Research Foundation in New York City. In this letter he states that he has received two copies each of *Pathways Through to Space* and *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object* from Mr. Ceppos of the Julian Press. Two of these copies, he said, were mailed by error to Gopi Krishna who dwells in Kashmir. At the same time as receiving the letter, we received two bound sets of essays by Gopi Krishna in typewritten form along with an interview in the paper known as *Changes*. Later we received three volumes in published form, one of which is known as *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* and consists in large measure of autobiographical material bearing upon a very unusual inner experience as will be evident later as I read from the text. I will say that I am very happy indeed to become acquainted with this *sadhu*, or sage, or relatively unconscious *yogi*. I am impressed with his quality of mind, his character, and his quality of feeling. The experience is reported very faithfully and involves a revealing of himself in intimate detail for the benefit of the reader so that he may come to an appreciation of what actually happened. As this is an introspective report, there is required the assumption that the one who is reporting is, to the best of his ability, accurate, and honest, and competent. This he appears to be, and I assume that all of this is true.

To present what is here of interest to us, I shall read into the tape the first few paragraphs of the text.

One morning during the Christmas of 1937 I sat cross-legged in a small room in a little house on the outskirts of the town of Jammu, the winter capital of the Jammu and Kashmir State in northern India. I was meditating with my face towards the window on the east through which the first gray streaks of the slowly brightening dawn fell into the room. Long practice had accustomed me to sit in the same posture for hours at a time without the least discomfort, and I sat breathing slowly and rhythmically, my attention drawn towards the crown of my head contemplating an imaginary lotus in full bloom, radiating light.

I sat steadily, unmoving and erect, my thoughts uninterruptedly centered on the shining lotus, intent on keeping my attention from wandering and bringing it back again and again whenever it moved in any other direction. The intensity of concentration interrupted my breathing; gradually it slowed down 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 at a time I lost touch with my body and surroundings. During such intervals I used to feel as if I were poised in mid-air, without any feeling of a body around me. 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 practice meditation in any form regularly for a sufficient length of time, but what followed on that fateful morning in my case, changing the whole course of my life and outlook, has happened to few.

During one such 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 so pleasing that my attention was forcibly drawn towards it. The moment my attention was thus unexpectedly withdrawn from the point on which I was focused, the sensation ceased. Thinking it to be a trick played by my imagination to relax the tension, I dismissed the matter from my mind and brought my attention back to the point from which it has wandered. Again I fixed it 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 so 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 unusually 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 began to 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 as deep in meditation as before. 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 again extended upwards, growing in intensity, and I felt myself wavering; but with a 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 instantaneously, I remained sitting in the same posture, keeping my mind on the point of concentration. The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder, I experienced a rocking sensation and then 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 myself, or to be more accurate, 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 duration of which I could not judge, the circle began to narrow down; I felt myself contracting, becoming smaller and smaller, until I again became dimly conscious of the outline of my body, then more clearly; 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 body and surroundings. When I opened my eyes and looked about, I felt a little dazed and bewildered, as if coming back from a strange land completely foreign to me. The sun had risen and was shining full [in] on my face, warm and soothing. I tried to lift my hands, which always rested in my lap, one upon the other, during [the] meditation[s]. 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 and to place them in a more comfortable position but could not. They were heavy and stiff. With the help of my hands, I freed them and stretched them out, then put my back against the wall, reclining in a position on 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 generation after generation, that it was possible to apprehend reality in this life if one followed certain rules of conduct and practiced meditation in a certain way? My thoughts were in a daze. 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 becomes active by means of certain exercises, and when once roused carries the limited human consciousness to transcendental heights, endowing the individual 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 in themselves or in others? I tried once again to repeat the experience, but was [too] so weak and flabbergasted that I could not collect my thoughts sufficiently enough to induce a state of concentration. My mind was in a ferment. 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. It was external and had not that splendor. The light I had experienced was internal, an integral part of enlarged consciousness, a part of my self.<sup>1</sup>

Later he repeated the effort at the meditative concentration and had a return of a similar state of consciousness, which, however, was not so intense and did not last as long; and in this case was greatly exhausted. There followed a period in which, later, this force which seemed to emanate from the base of the spine, took hold and persisted night and day and could not be stopped. He had an experience of an extreme burning in him which I shall later illustrate by another quotation from the text.

But now let us look at what has happened. I would, from the reading of the works of Sir John Woodroffe, who wrote under the *nom de plume* of Arthur Avalon and contributed the book known as *The Serpent Power* and several other *tantric* texts, from this I would have at once assumed that this was an example of the rising of the serpent power; but our subject, Gopi Krishna, though an East Indian and familiar with the lore of the East, was not sure, from what he says in the text, what had happened to him. He sought sources in India and had found difficulty in finding anyone who could confirm what his experience meant. Ultimately he did find certain individuals who identified it as a rising of the Kundalini. This to me was a surprising fact, for of all peoples in the world, if we are to judge by the literature that has come to us, the East Indians are the most experienced and adept in the field of these occult forces. The literature has come to us in the West, and I have such literature here in English form that would have led to an immediate identification. How can it be, then, that an East Indian had difficulty in finding anyone in his motherland who understood this? I find it a mystery.

There followed a period of several weeks in which this force ascended through the spine night and day and could not be controlled. It culminated in an experience of extreme suffering, and this I will indicate to you through another quotation starting on p. 63 of the book. It was at the time of the festival of Shivratri or the night of Shiva.

As usual every year my wife had prepared painstakingly 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 anxiety-filled mind, I acquiesced and forcibly swallowed a few morsels, then gave up and washed my hands. Immediately I felt a sinking sensation

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<sup>1</sup> Gopi Krishna, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1967), 11-14.

at the pit of my stomach, a fiery stream of energy shot into my head, and I felt myself lifted up and up, expanding awfully with unbearable terror 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 cord like the ruddy blast from a furnace and now, acting like a poison on the brain, struck me numb. I was overpowered by faintness and giddiness.

I staggered to my feet and dragged myself heavily 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. But I was in a terrible condition, burning internally from head to toes, outwardly cold as ice, and shivering as if stricken with ague. I felt my pulse; it was racing madly and my heart was thumping wildly below my ribs, its pounding distinctly audible to me. But what horrified me was the intensity of the fiery currents that now darted through my body, penetrating into every part and every organ. My brain worked desperately, unable to give coherence to my frenzied thoughts. To call in a doctor for consultation in such an unheard of disease would be a mere waste of effort. His first thought on hearing of my symptoms would turn to a lunatic asylum. It would be futile on my part to seek help from any other quarter 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, subsisting only on a few oranges and a little milk, the fiery current could not attain such awful intensity as it had now done 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 grew every moment, causing such unbearable pain that I writhed and twisted from side to side while streams of cold perspiration poured down my face and limbs. But still the heat increased and soon it seemed as if innumerable red-hot pins were coursing through my body, 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 and more terrific, acquiring such a spasmodic violence that I thought it must either stop beating or burst. 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 not the least 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 scorched and every part of my body flaming

and 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 a 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. But at that moment my eyes fell on my small daughter, Regina, lying in the next bed awake, watching my feverish movements with wide-opened 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 and that 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 a corpse with blackened face and limbs to make people 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 a torment beyond my power to endure. 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 sufficient to prevent me from giving way completely to acts of madness and self-violence.

Pulling the cover over my face, I stretched myself to my full length [in] on the bed, burning in every fibre, lashed as it were by a fiery rain of red-hot needles piercing my skin. 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, I thought desperately and as if by divine dispensation the idea flashed across my brain to make a last-minute attempt to arouse *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.

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 luster in place of the flame that had been tormenting [me] for the last three hours. Completely [shaken] taken by surprise 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 with a mind flooded with emotion, unable to believe I was really free of the horror. Tortured and exhausted almost to the point of collapse by the agony I had suffered during the terrible interval. I immediately fell asleep, bathed in light and for the first time after weeks of anguish felt the sweet embrace of restful sleep.<sup>2</sup>

There are several points to note in this record of an experience that is unquestionably connected with the *Kundalini*. First of all, I would like to direct your attention to the capacity of this man and the will to control himself in the midst of extreme agony so that he might not injure his loved ones—the little girl and his wife. This speaks highly for this man and I'm deeply impressed.

Second, concerning the factuality of the *Kundalini* energy, references to this power exist rather broadly in the literature and is handled at some length in the writings of the man I formerly referred to, namely, Sir John Woodruff; but this is a record from at least relatively ancient literature. The descriptions as given in that literature are very flowery, and the statements concerning the action of the energy are in a language that seems less than factual to our modern consciousness. But in this case we have the best evidence I have so far seen supporting the factuality of this power in nature. It is true that Gopi Krishna interprets it as a biological force in this body of ours, which is the object of study of the physiologist and the anatomist. The older literature states otherwise: that these powers operate through lines of communication in a subtle body, that they operate through *nadis* which correspond to what we call nerves in the gross physical body; but they are not actually forces in the gross physical. I doubt very much that an anatomical research will find in the gross physical anything corresponding to a receptacle for the *Kundalini*. In the literature it's located in the *muladhara*, and ascending above it there is a series of *chakras* as follows: *svadisthana*, located rather low opposite a point in the abdomen; then *manipura*, opposite what would be known as the solar plexus; *anahata* opposite the heart center; *visuddha* located near the throat; *ajna* located between the eyebrows and back behind; and, finally, *sahasrara* at the crown of the head, which is called in English the thousand petaled lotus, and was the object which our subject had visualized and concentrated upon in meditation for a period that seems to be on the order of 17 years. It is interesting that in later discussion he questions the actuality of the *chakras* and suggests that there was a defect in the knowledge concerning the bio-physical organism that the ancients possessed, and holding that our modern knowledge is more complete. I am disposed to think that he is underestimating the knowledge of those ancients. I rather incline to the view that they indeed knew more about the subtle constitution of man than the modern scientist. However that may be, there is no doubt that here is a testimony that is very convincing to the effect that there does lie in our

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 63-66.

nature, apparently located near the base of the tangible physical spine, a power which can arise and produce enormous effects. Thus, we have here strong supporting evidence of the factuality of this force.

Then we come to the third point and that is that while this force can produce an experience of light that is extreme, an experience of sound, can produce a halo of light around the head, which is referred to in other places of the text, and can produce a sense of heat, and in fact affect variously other senses, yet the experience while on one hand it may be extremely delightful, may also be extremely painful and destructive. This, then, implies that we're dealing with something that should not be taken lightly and confirms a position I reached long ago that the *sadhaka* should not tamper with *Kundalini* unless he is under the immediate direction of a qualified *guru* expert in the field of the *tantric* yoga; and secondly, that especially, one with the psycho-physical constitution of occidental man should especially be careful in avoidance of this particular line of yoga.

While the principle portion of the text of this volume is in the form of narrative description, there is some expository material in which the author develops certain theories. In this zone, I am by no means certain that he is correct. He holds the view that the *Kundalini* is always active in any yogic development; and that view is not maintained by other authorities in the field. Arthur Avalon in his exposition of *The Serpent Power* points out the fact that there are other forms of yoga such as *jnana* yoga that do not involve the *Kundalini* at all. And, in fact, in the whole field of the *Trimarga* that is developed in the *Bhagavad Gita* there does not seem to be necessary the intervention of the *Kundalini*. However, our author does maintain that it is always involved. More than that, that it is involved in the development of genius and even in the development of intelligence of a superior order but somewhat less than the level of genius. It is interesting to note in this connection that Sri Aurobindo has made a somewhat similar statement regarding genius but not connected with the *Kundalini*. He has spoken of genius as "accidental Yoga," a yoga that happened without knowledge of the principle involving a knowing of what was taking place.<sup>3</sup>

In my study of the yoga recommended by Sri Shankaracharya as given in *The System of the Vedanta* by Paul Deussen, there was no *tantric* element; there was no effort to arouse the *Kundalini*. The practice recommended was one of self-analysis and of philosophic orientation. And this is the form of yoga with which I am personally familiar and with which I have worked; and the results which came on August 7, 1936, involved this methodology and there was no sense at that time of a force ascending the spine. There was no dark battle with heat, and so forth, as reported in this case. The experience was wholly delightful. There was the overwhelming delight which one would value so highly that he would say if it cost a thousand lives of suffering in order to attain this, the price would be cheap. I know there is such a delight, but I also know that it carries with it a sense of force, a sense of something that can actually strain the organism, for after the experience of intensive forms of delight there was an experience of subtle fatigue in the organism afterward. But I found that it was possible to reduce the intensity of delight

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<sup>3</sup> Aurobindo Ghose, *The Future Poetry*, vol. 9 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1972), 411: ". . . but genius also is a kind of accidental Yoga, a contact, an opening into an occult Power."



until it reached the point where the organism could endure it without strain. I found that these forces are subject to the will, and that is also indicated by the report of Gopi Krishna. He was able to direct the energy away from *Pingala* at the critical moment by an act of mental will.

Now, the things which I have known in this connection have been reported in *Pathways* and also in the second chapter of *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, and it can be referred to in the latter case to advantage since it is there listed under some 14 headings, and one can judge the value of the consciousness from that. Now, I repeat, there was no sense of a force ascending the spine at that time. There was no strain. There was no disagreeable or painful aspect connected with the whole experience then or later. If *Kundalini* was involved, it operated in such a way that it could not be discerned, and from this description, I find that hard to believe. At any rate, this is a question which I believe should be investigated more fully, and the whole subject as to whether there is Realization without awakening the *Kundalini* or whether all Realization involves the action of *Kundalini* should be investigated further.