

ॐ yoga awakening the serpent power by Lila Conway

According to the philosophy of Kundalini Yoga, this entire universe is a manifestation of pure consciousness. Everything that exists within the Universe (the macrocosm), exists within us as individuals (the microcosm). The Sufi tradition very eloquently states: "Man is a small Universe, and the Universe is a great man."

In the creation of this divine universe, pure consciousness is divided into two aspects or poles, otherwise known as Siva and Shakti. Just as you can't separate heat from fire, or the light from the sun, it is also impossible to separate Siva from Shakti.

Siva is masculine and static, representing the unmanifested consciousness. Shakti is feminine, creative and energetic. From the goddess Shakti, all forms of life are born and she is therefore known as the Mother of the Universe. Shakti is the dynamic power of Siva, through which he manifests the worlds; their objects and beings. Siva initiates creation through his will, but uses the energy of Shakti to create. During creation, Siva remains dormant in the background, simply witnessing Shakti's dynamic force as she moves and manifests creation.

Both Siva and Shakti reside within us, the



microcosms of this great Universe. Shakti, within a human being is known as Kundalini. Her dormant potential energy rests coiled like a snake at the base of the spine. In order to have cosmic consciousness, yogis awaken the Kundalini Shakti through various practices such as asana, pranayama, mudras, chanting and meditation.

Under the strict guidance of a guru and after long continuous practice, the energy channels within the subtle body are slowly purified. The awakening of Kundalini should never be forced otherwise there can be negative reactions. A good teacher will slowly introduce a student to various practices and will only give them when the student is ready and the time is right. When Kundalini Shakti awakens, she begins her ascent through the psychic energy centres, the chakras, that lie along the spine. Kundalini Shakti moves through seven main energy centres and at the seventh, the Sahasrara chakra at the top of the head, she is united with Siva, pure consciousness.

This union is the aim of Kundalini yoga. When Siva and Shakti are united, the yogi attains liberation, Self realisation, complete perfection and he or she is no longer bound or limited by time and space. There is no more duality. There is only oneness. The yogi is immersed in the ocean of bliss, sat-chit-ananda (existence, knowledge, bliss absolute).

Hari Om Tat Sat



Bhujangasana - The Cobra

"By the practice of this posture the serpent-goddess (the Kundalini Shakti) awakens"
Gheranda Samhita



In Bhujangasana, the head and trunk arch gracefully up, like a cobra with its hood raised. The spine receives a powerful backward stretch, toning the spinal nerves, relieving backache and keeping the spine supple and healthy.

Practice Tips: Perform the asana slowly, visualising the smooth supple movement of a snake as you slowly stretch your spine up and backward, vertebra by vertebra. Keep your shoulders down, elbows tucked into the body and face relaxed.

- ॐ Lie on your stomach with your legs straight, feet together and toes pointing back.
- ॐ Place your palms on the floor, directly underneath the shoulders with fingertips facing forward in line with the tops of the shoulders. The elbows should be bent and close to the side of the body.

- ॐ Rest your forehead on the floor.
- ॐ Inhale as you slowly slide your chin forward and use your hands to help you raise your head, neck and chest off the floor. Keep the pubic bone and legs on the floor.
- ॐ Use your back muscles to raise your chest as high as possible without squeezing the shoulders up towards the ears.
- ॐ Arch your back as much as you can and gently tilt the head back so the neck is in line with the curvature of your spine. Feel your entire back bending from the neck to the base of the spine.
- ॐ Hold for a few breaths or as long as comfortable.
- ॐ To return to the starting position, lower first the chest, shoulders and finally the forehead to the floor.
- ॐ Repeat 2 or 3 times and gradually increase the holding time in the final position.

Caution: Respect your body's limitations and inner wisdom, practice only what feels comfortable

For more details on Lila's yoga classes and retreats, visit:
www.yogaprema.org