

# ICR's New Book!

## *Gopi Krishna—A Biography: Kundalini, Consciousness, and Our Evolution to Enlightenment*

The following is an excerpt from the book. It contains sections from the Introduction and from Chapter One. If you are intrigued by what you read – and we, of course, think you will be – it can be ordered from Amazon in Canada, the U.S., and around the world.

### Introduction

Well-done biographies of truly important people of the past are always relevant. But only in rare cases are they relevant to the here and now, to the way we live our lives today; to what we mean to others; to how much inner peace we know.

The life story of Gopi Krishna is, however, relevant in exactly this way. That his story can have such profound spiritual implications is somewhat ironic. For Gopi Krishna was not a spiritual teacher. Time and again he made the statement: “I am not a guru.” He did not take disciples; he did not take followers, and he certainly did not seek them.

And yet, in some ways, he could hardly help but be a spiritual teacher: He was a simple, ordinary human being who had attained enlightenment. He lived in a state of perennial cosmic consciousness—a state that made it possible for him to see through the eyes of the great saints and mystics; a state that made it possible for him to communicate the astounding news that each and every one of us is on an evolutionary path that is leading to this radiant, light-filled state.

Because he was from Kashmir, steeped in the traditions of yoga and Tantra, he wrote about this evolution and transformation of consciousness in terms of the awakening kundalini. In this context, it is important to note that Gopi Krishna never used the terms “full awakening” of kundalini or the “highest” Gopi Krishna 4 state of consciousness, preferring instead to refer to kundalini as being simply awakened or active and to states of consciousness that were simply “higher,” making the point that humanity’s ongoing evolution would lead to currently incomprehensible, ever-expanded levels of divine awareness. Although much of Gopi Krishna’s

writing is from this very Indian perspective, he was emphatic that kundalini is a universal force, known by various names in the world's spiritual traditions.

His writings also make it evident that research into this evolutionary energy could solve the cataclysmic problems facing Mother Earth today. Beyond this, he indicated that the time is ripe for an increasingly widespread awakening of kundalini. Traditionally in yoga, this awakening is seen as one that needs to be carefully nurtured. Gopi Krishna makes it clear that unless science, particularly the medical community, accepted the reality of kundalini awakening and understood the biological basis of this spiritual process, people experiencing this awakening might not receive the care they needed or be misdiagnosed or given erroneous treatments.

Most people who are part of this widespread awakening are having a partial activation of kundalini—in other words, undergoing a process of awakening. Confirmation that all these experiences are being triggered by the same universal force is evidenced by the fact that virtually everyone having them is experiencing, in varying degrees, the classic signs of kundalini awakening reported by the ancient yogis. As the gradual awakening progresses, so do these experiences.

Perhaps the most prominent sign is mystical experience—characterized, as it is in all the world's religions, by the perception of radiant light, love, bliss, and/ or union with the Divine or all of creation. Another is the development of the extrasensory phenomena known as siddhis in yoga and charisms, or spiritual gifts, in Christianity. Yet another is the onset of inspired creativity and genius. While these signs—including the physical sensations noted by the ancient yogis such as fiery heat in the lower back, energy rushing up the spine, or inexplicable vibrations in the genital region—manifest dramatically in some people, others experience them so gradually that they are virtually imperceptible.

As the following chapters show, Gopi Krishna revealed even more about these partial awakenings in his talks and correspondence than he did in his books. One way of understanding this partial, ongoing transformation is to think of the truly enlightened ones, such as a Buddha or a Christ, as living perennially in a state of radiant light, while an experiencer of a partial awakening might have only occasional glimpses of the light. In this same way, a Rumi might write reams of deathless poetry, while most of us today might be gifted with an occasional perfect poem. A further example would be the Old Testament prophets who had prophetic visions, while we might simply have an auspicious dream now and then. Regardless, Gopi

Krishna wanted us to understand that the light in which a Buddha dwells and the light we glimpse is the same light. Gopi Krishna lived in this light, and he wanted us to be able to do the same. Reading between the lines of his two autobiographies, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* and *Living with Kundalini*, we can see that the way he lived his life was a key to attaining this state. Still, he never once praises himself or his actions in these books. A biography, however, can do this and more; it can reveal him to be not only an enlightened sage, but an extraordinarily honest, courageous, and compassionate human being. It can also tell the story of a fascinating life—one filled with drama, defeat, and, sometimes, sweet victory....

Excerpt from Chapter One

### The Roots of Rebirth

Biographies often start with the where, what, and when of the birth of the subject and, then, if the biography is about a saint, mystic, or enlightened person, a marvelous tale is told that foreshadows the infant's illustrious future and extraordinary nature. The story of Gopi Krishna Shivpuri is no different.

Born in late May or early June in 1903 in Gairoo, a tiny village not far from the city of Srinagar in the Himalayan foothills of Kashmir, he fell ill several months later. His throat became swollen and inflamed, and he was not able to take milk from his frantically worried mother, CongMaal Shivpuri. Eventually she fell into an exhausted sleep and dreamed of a holy man of whose miraculous powers she had often heard. In the dream, the holy man gently opens the baby boy's mouth, places a finger on his inflamed throat, and tells her that he will now be able to drink. Awakening from the dream, she took the baby to her breast and found that he could indeed swallow the milk. Able to take nourishment, the baby soon regained his health. CongMaal, convinced of the miraculous nature of this occurrence, pledged that she would one day go on pilgrimage to the holy man and thank him in person for saving her son's life.

When Gopi Krishna was somewhere around six or seven—or at least old enough to remember the journey—CongMaal went on the long-promised pilgrimage. She was accompanied by her brother, who walked along as she and her son rode on a donkey. After being on the road for a day or two, they found the hermitage. The moment they entered the hut, the holy man looked up as if he knew exactly who she was and said, "Did it not succeed? Was he not able to drink?" Upon hearing this evidence of his miraculous powers, she prostrated herself before the

holy man and asked for his blessings on her son. The man took the boy on his lap and stroked his hair. When Gopi Krishna began to fuss, his mother scolded him. In turn, the holy man chastised her, saying, “You must not scold him! He is a Vyasa!” Vyasa, as Gopi Krishna’s mother well knew, was one of the most revered saints and sages of India, and she was convinced the holy man had gifted her with yet another miraculous portent regarding her son’s future.

But what is important about this tale is not whether it is miraculous or true or accurate, it is how Gopi Krishna later handled it. His mother was not reticent about telling the story; it became part of the lore of the village and was eventually passed down to his children and grandchildren. In spite of the story becoming known in this way, he refused to have it told in his first autobiography, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*. According to his longtime secretary, Margaret Kobelt, he explained that he made this decision because he did not want to have “a fairy tale” in his book. Still, he did include the episode in his second autobiography, *Living with Kundalini*. There he stated carefully that he could not vouch in any way for the miraculous part of the story, adding only that he never knew his mother to be anything but meticulously honest. He went on to point out that for much of his life he discounted all stories of the miraculous powers of yogis and other Indian holy men as the vast majority of these tales had been, upon careful examination, shown to be false. In offering the story up, however, he revealed that he was eventually forced to come to the conclusion that there were indeed “more things in heaven and earth” than many of us, like Shakespeare’s Horatio, could even begin to dream of. Still, he cautioned the reader, saying that “a real yogi in touch with the other world, capable of producing genuine physical phenomena at will, is one of the rarest beings on earth.”

The way he handled this episode is an excellent example of the scrupulous honesty and painstaking care he took with everything he said and wrote. It is also significant for another reason: even though he recounts the story in some detail, he completely leaves out the yogi’s pronouncement that the baby was “a Vyasa.”

This omission is a telling clue to the man he was and what he spent his entire life trying to convey. He repeatedly said, “I am not a guru,” “I do not take disciples,” “I do not take followers.” Instead, he urged those who would read his work and hear his words to follow their own hearts and use *viveka*—the yogic term often translated as discernment or, as he once defined it, “the power of discrimination between true and false or right and wrong.”

In insisting that he was not a guru, he was also reminding us that he was nothing more than a very ordinary man—a midlevel clerk in an Indian government bureau—who came to have an extraordinary, profoundly transformative spiritual experience. In emphasizing this ordinariness, he was giving us a great gift. He was telling us that we, too, ordinary folks that we are, could experience this transformation. In fact—and this was at the core of his message—we, as a human race, would experience it. For what he had experienced was the result of an evolutionary process, and it had been triggered by an evolutionary energy that would eventually lead all of humanity to higher states of consciousness.

Although he used both *energy* and *force* to refer to this evolutionary agency in his writings, he cautioned that they were both inadequate words that could not begin to convey the magnitude and intelligence of this cosmic power. Being an individual whose culture was steeped in the tradition of yoga, he used the yogic terms *kundalini* and *kundalini-shakti* to refer to this force. He made it abundantly clear, however, that kundalini was just one name for a universal energy that had been given its own name in virtually every spiritual tradition in the world. By the same token, the expansion and transformation of consciousness he had experienced was what had been written about and experienced, in varying degrees of time and intensity, by Christian mystics, Sufi saints, Buddhist bodhisattvas, enlightened yogis, and the great spiritual masters of every religious tradition.

Gopi Krishna had his first astounding encounter with this transformative, evolutionary energy while meditating in a small room in a humble house in the Gopi Krishna 10 city of Jammu during the Christmas season 1937. As strange as it may seem, he would not have been there, nor would he likely have had this experience at that time, if he had not at the age of seventeen failed his school exams. No one, and certainly not Gopi Krishna himself, had expected this failure. He had always been an exceptionally bright child and had always done well in school. In fact, two years earlier he had passed the usual school exams with distinction.

Although his family was far too poor to have books in their home, when he was about twelve years old he discovered an Urdu translation of *The Arabian Nights* in an aunt's library. Reading it triggered in him what he later called a "burning thirst" for fairy tales and romantic adventure stories. Once he had gone through the books in Urdu in his school's small library, he began reading simple tales in English. Eventually he also began to immerse himself in whatever books he could find on science and philosophy. By the time he was about sixteen years old, he

had become completely obsessed with these books. For the next year, he spent virtually all his time reading them. He undoubtedly gained a great fund of knowledge from these books, but unfortunately, they were not his school textbooks.

With the cockiness typical of a teenager, Gopi Krishna was not at all worried about this. He expected to sail through these exams just as he had the earlier ones. Instead, he failed miserably. The effects of this fiasco were far-reaching, for the marks on these exams were the ones required for acceptance to a university. Although he was deeply ashamed and concerned about the future for himself, he was crushed by the realization of what this would do to his mother. Even though she might—or perhaps might not—have let go of the belief that her son would become “a Vyasa,” she had still pinned all her hopes and expectations on her belief that her exceptionally bright son would go to university, enter a well-paid profession, and lift the family out of its poverty.

Gopi Krishna not only loved his mother, he adored her. He held her in the highest regard and understood both what she had sacrificed for him and what she had endured. She had been married at the age of sixteen to Ganga Ram Shivpuri, a man twenty-two years her senior. Such an age disparity was not particularly uncommon, and in many ways they were well matched. For several years, Ganga Ram’s salary at his government post was enough to support the A family. What was perhaps the most wonderful—and potentially disastrous— aspect of his character was that he had a deep mystical vein. He followed the teachings of the Vedas and other sacred texts to the utmost of his abilities and often sought out yogis and ascetics in order to learn from them.

Throughout his life, he also had flashes of paranormal abilities such as premonitory dreams and telepathy. The most famous family story passed down concerns a journey the family was once making from Srinagar to the city of Jammu by bus. At the foot of one of the mountainous passes, the bus needed to stop for repairs. Time passed until it was too dark and dangerous for the bus to start up the pass. Realizing that their journey would be delayed by hours and they would have to sleep overnight on the bus, the passengers became upset. Suddenly, Gopi Krishna’s father, who had already been asleep, sat up and startled the other passengers by shouting out that it didn’t matter. The bus, he said, would not be able to make it through the mountain pass in any case as there was a dead man on the road. He then went happily back to sleep. The next morning, the bus had not gone too far down the road before it had to stop at a

blockade where police were still trying to determine how a man had come to die and be found lying in the middle of the road.

Although Gopi Krishna had a natural human curiosity about his father's paranormal abilities, which are called *siddhis* in the yogic tradition, he had an intuitive sense that he should not place too much importance on them. What was far more significant, he later came to realize, was his father's noble character and his scrupulous attention to the virtues such as honesty, compassion, and lack of greed that are taught in the eightfold path of yoga. One example of this comes from a time when the family thought that they had won a lottery so large that it would vastly improve their difficult lives. Before they learned that they had not actually won, Ganga Ram had already made it clear that, in spite of their straitened circumstances, they must give all the money to the poor the moment they received it, for it had not been honorably earned. These noble traits of his father's proved to be a double-edged sword. Even though his virtue was greatly admired, it often contributed to the family's hardship. His righteousness was so widely known that a line of the poor and destitute could be found along his pathway home on the first Monday of every month—payday at the government offices where he worked. Each of these poor people would have a tale to tell him about why they needed help, and by the time he reached home, most of the money CongMaal was anxiously waiting for would have been given away. Later, Gopi Krishna's mother confided to him that only about a quarter of her husband's pay was usually left by the time he got home. This was not enough. By the time she had been married ten years, CongMaal was the mother of two boys and two girls. With the little money she was given on payday, she had to feed the whole family and run the household. And she did have to run everything: by this point, every moment that Ganga Ram was not at work was spent absorbed in his spiritual pursuits, and he had turned over all the worldly responsibilities to her.

Soon, her situation was to become even more difficult. When Gopi Krishna was about two years old, his five-year-old brother became ill and died, and Ganga Ram became overwhelmed with grief. As Gopi Krishna later wrote, the tragedy disturbed the already-delicate balance of his father's mind. Before long he quit his government job and began to completely isolate himself, leaving his twenty eight-year-old wife with not only complete responsibility for the survival of the family but no regular income to accomplish it with. The only money coming in was a small amount of rental income from a number of market stalls that Ganga Ram had once purchased. Gopi Krishna's memories of the next fifteen years reveal that his mother doted on

him. From the time he was very young, he was susceptible to any variations in his diet, and no matter how poor they were she made sure he got enough food and milk. He recounts that she would sometimes consume nothing more than the water the rice was cooked in so that the others could eat the grain. Even when the family was at its very poorest, she managed to send a container of milk with him to school each day. He was also aware that she made great sacrifices so that he would have the clothes he needed to wear to school and the books he had to have for his classes. Even though the clothes were of such poor quality that he was bullied and the books were dilapidated, at least he had them. He was able to get an education, and it was all due to her sacrifice. Imagine, then, how he felt when he had to tell her he had failed his exams and it had all been for nothing.

This failure and his humiliation stunned him. The moment he realized the full impact of what he had done and how it had affected the person he loved most in the world, he determined to never let anything like this happen again. In *Living with Kundalini*, he wrote, “Realizing that by my lack of self-control I had betrayed the trust reposed in me, I determined to make up for the lost opportunity in other ways. At no other time in my life should I be guilty of the same offense again.” He then sought to curb this “vagrant element” in his nature, regulate his conduct, and search out the best way to do this. The ultimate result of this decision was that he took up meditation and did it with an unflinching resolve. For the next seventeen years, he rose virtually every morning to meditate, even in the freezing cold winter months. For many years these sessions lasted for as long as three hours. His dedication to this practice was so resolute, in fact, that he even left his bewildered bride in the predawn hours after their wedding night to sit on his rooftop and meditate.

References to Gopi Krishna’s life and often his own words, like those above, make it seem as if a straightforward cause and effect was in play: his lack of self-discipline had caused him to let down those he loved most in the world, and so he had taken up the discipline of meditation to ensure that such a thing would never happen again. But this raises a very important question: Why, after crushing his mother’s hopes for prosperity, didn’t he take up one of the many other paths that could have led more directly to their financial security? He was, after all, known to be an exceptionally bright young man.

A number of factors from his earlier life provide a possible explanation for his taking the direction he did. During his childhood....

To explore the fascinating story of Gopi Krishna's life and discover more about what it means for your own evolutionary and spiritually transformative journey, you can order the book on Amazon: *Gopi Krishna—A Biography* by Teri Degler