

The Mystery of the Feathered Serpent Inside You

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Since ancient times the serpent has been a potent symbol for primal life force energy or chi. The snake, dragon, winged and feathered serpent have appeared in a multitude of cultures and were understood as sacred before they were equated with evil. They were associated with eternal life, wealth, intelligence, sexuality, fire, light and power.

But what is the deeper meaning? The snake is structurally just a head and spine, and it moves in the sinuous wavelike motion of the wave or spiral, which is a basic movement of life force energy. In Eastern traditions, the life force or Kundalini energy resides at the base of the spine in the sacrum, or sacred bone, awaiting to be awakened. Many yogic practices are designed to activate and free this energy.

Kundalini was the name of an ancient Hindu Goddess, a female fiery serpent which lies coiled and asleep, representing the human inner soul or Shakti energy. When she does awaken and rises up the spine to the head, she merges with the Shiva or male energy. The upper chakras or energy centers are activated and deeper states of awareness and bliss are experienced. It is often experienced as moving in a rhythmic, wavelike spiraling motion. The snake is a spiritual metaphor for this energy movement in our bodies. (See <http://www.crystalinks.com/kundalini.html>).

And what about the image of the winged serpent? Does our spine have wings at the top, or is this only a metaphor for how the spirit can soar once this energy

is freed and awakened? We find these images in the caduceus, a double snake winding around a central column with wings at the top, which is used to symbolize the healing power of the medical profession. It was an ancient symbol related to the Greek staff of Hermes which had great healing powers. (See <http://www.crystalinks.com/caduceus.html>). This also recalls the structure of a DNA helix, and so is symbolic of physical reality and manifested form.

In Mayan tradition, Kukulcan is the deity who appears as the feathered serpent, and was thought to be the savior or bringer of light. This deity is also known as Quetzalcoatl ("feathered serpent") in Aztec tradition. Feathers represent the ascension of human consciousness to higher source. Hindu and Egyptian traditions describe a central column of energy in our spine, with two spiraling side channels that wind around it. Rising upward, each chakra has progressively more petals until the 6th chakra, between the eyebrows, which is depicted as having only two petals, like wings. The 7th chakra has 1000 petals. Why would the 6th only have two?

At the top of the spine is a relatively unknown bone called the sphenoid bone, which is one of the many bones that form the skull. This bone is the anterior base of the skull, in the very center of the head. It is the area where the nerves leave the brain to connect with the spinal column and the lower spine. This bone also cradles the pituitary gland, is close to the ears and has the nerves of the eyes passing through it. The pituitary controls the functions of all other endocrine glands and is associated with the 6th chakra or third eye.

The sphenoid is the sacred bone at the top of the spine, equally as potent as

the sacrum at the bottom. It is strongly related to the 6th and 7th chakras, relating to wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. It is from the center of this bone, at the back of the upper pallet, that mystics experience the sweet taste of amrita, or the nectar of divine bliss and immortality, which flows down from the crown chakra when one enters very deep states of meditation. (For a wonderful look at the sphenoid and all the skull bones, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc5lRj3OJhE>).

The sphenoid also supports part of the central core of the brain stem, which is the most ancient and smallest part of the brain, and is called (significantly) the reptilian brain. This part of the brain regulates the breathing, heartbeat, fight or flight mechanisms, mating and survival. It is preverbal, instinctual and ritualistic and is similar to the brains of reptiles and birds. The basic emotions of love, hate, lust, fear and contentment come from this primitive part of our selves. Anyone who has contacted these powerful emotions knows how compelling they are, and how they can overcome rational thought. Small wonder that this wild, serpent-like, primal part of ourselves has become feared and demonized.

The interesting thing about the sphenoid bone is that it happens to be shaped roughly like a butterfly or bird, with two wings. When a person is healthy and normal, there is a very subtle pulsing and flexing of the cranial bones known as the cranial pulse. The sphenoid bone has a very tiny, but important and perceptible, pulsing that resembles the flexing of wings forward and backward. (For an animated view of this, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeZ2sv1rSZI>).

This pulse has been noticed for a long time by Osteopaths and cranial-sacral body workers, but is still debated in the traditional medical community. It begins pulsing through the experience of a normal vaginal birth process. It can become blocked through trauma and tension, and can be engaged with and encouraged to flow by sensitive body workers.

What happens when strong electrical impulses are freed to flow up a healthy and open spine, and reach the deeper reptilian brain at the base of the skull, allowing the bones around it to flex and flow? Perhaps this would stimulate the optic nerves, our hormonal system and the upper chakras, bringing "light" and expansion to the primitive areas of our being, and be experienced as an uplifting sense of being "saved" from being controlled by our more base impulses.

This strong, ancient symbol of the winged serpent can be seen as an analogy for an actual physical process happening within the physiology of our bodies, as well as an accurate description of the process of awakening to more expanded states of consciousness. Consider taking some time to meditate on your sphenoid bone, which can be contacted directly with your fingers only at the temples just in front of the ear, where the upper part of the ear meets the head. Place your fingers there and breathe, and feel for the subtle pulses and energies contained by this hidden bone, which holds the seats of our awakened perceptions.

Breathe spirals up from the base of your spine, and fly!

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