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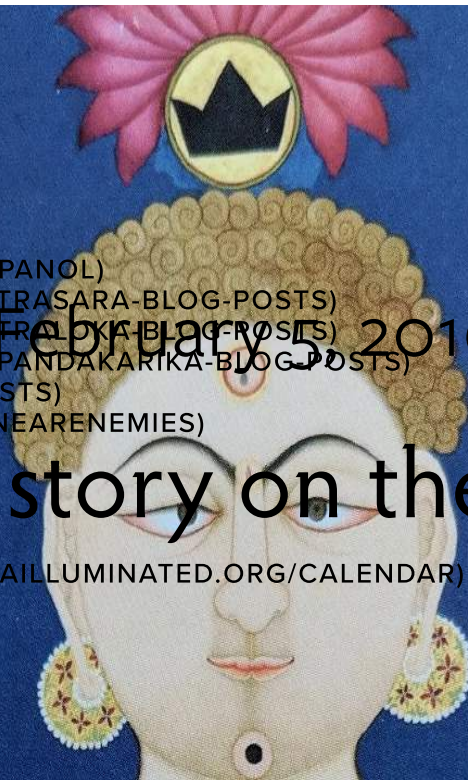
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February 5, 2016

The real story on the Chakras



THE SIX MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE CHAKRAS

Over the past hundred years, the concept of the *chakras*, or subtle energy centers within the body, has seized the Western imagination more than virtually any other teaching from the Yoga tradition. Yet, as with most other concepts deriving from Sanskrit sources, the West (barring a handful of scholars) has almost totally failed to come to grips with what the chakra-concept meant in its original context and how one is supposed to practice with them. This post seeks to rectify that situation to some extent. If you're short on time, you can skip the contextual comments I'm about to make and go straight to the list of the **six fundamental facts** about the chakras that modern yogis don't know.

First off, how do we define 'chakra'? In the Tantrik traditions, from which the concept derives, chakras (Skt. *cakra*) are focal points for meditation within the human body, visualized as structures of energy resembling discs or flowers at those points where a number of *nāḍīs* (channels or meridians) converge. They are conceptual structures yet are phenomenologically based, since they tend to be located where human beings experience emotional and/or spiritual energy, and since the form in which they are visualized reflects visionary experiences had by meditators.

(Above I said that the West has so far failed to understand chakras. Let me clarify that by 'the West' I mean not only Euro-American culture but also the aspects of modern Indian culture that are informed by the Euro-American cultural matrix. Since at this point it is nearly impossible to find a form of yoga in India *not* influenced by Euro-American ideas about it, when I use the term 'Western' I also include most of the teachings on yoga in India today that exist in the English language.)

Okay, I'll give it to you straight: for the most part, Western yoga understands almost nothing about the chakras that the original tradition thought was important about them. You see, if you read a book like Anodea Judith's famous *Wheels of Life* or suchlike, it's important to realize that you are not reading a work of yoga philosophy but of Western occultism, based on three main sources: 1) earlier works of Western occultism that borrow and adapt Sanskrit terms without really understanding them (like Theosophist C.W. Leadbeater's *The Chakras*, 1927); 2) John Woodroffe's flawed 1918 translation of a text on the chakras written in Sanskrit in 1577 (see below for more on this); and 3) 20th-century books by Indian yoga gurus which are themselves mostly based on sources 1) and 2). Books on the chakras based on sound comprehension of the original Sanskrit sources so far exist only in the academic world.

'But does that matter?' yogis ask me. 'I've benefited so much from Anodea Judith's book and others like it, don't take that away from me!' I won't and I can't.

Whatever benefit you've received, from whatever source, is real if you say it is.

I'm just here to tell you two things: first, that when modern Western authors on the chakras imply they are presenting ancient teachings, they're deceiving you—but *they don't know that they are*, because they can't assess the validity of their own source materials (since they don't read Sanskrit). Second, for those who are interested, I'm here to let you know a little bit about what yogic concepts mean in their original context (because I'm a Sanskrit scholar

(<https://hareesh.org/about/>), and a practitioner who happens to prefer the traditional forms). Only you can assess whether that is of any benefit to you. I'm



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not claiming that older is intrinsically better. I'm not trying to imply there's no spiritual value to Western occultism. I'm just approximating the historical truth in simple English words as best I can. So I'll get on with it now: **the six fundamental facts about the chakras that modern yogis don't know.**

1. THERE'S NOT JUST ONE CHAKRA SYSTEM IN THE ORIGINAL TRADITION, THERE ARE MANY.

So many! The theory of the subtle body and its energy centers called *cakras* (or *padmas* (lotuses), *ādāhāras*, *lakṣyas* (focal points), etc.) comes from the tradition of Tantrik Yoga (<https://hareesh.org/blog/2015/8/2/what-is-tantra?rq=what%20is%20tantra>), which flourished from 600-1300 CE, and is still alive today. In mature Tantrik Yoga (after the year 900 or so), *every one* of the many branches of the tradition articulated a different chakra system, and some branches articulated more than one. Five-chakra systems, six-chakra systems, seven, nine, ten, twelve, twenty-one and more chakras are taught, depending on what text and what lineage you're looking at. The seven- (or, technically, 6 + 1) chakra system that Western yogis know about is just one of many, and it became dominant around the 15th century (see point #4 below).

Now, I know what you're thinking—'But which system is right? How many chakras are there really?' And that brings us to our first major misunderstanding. The chakras aren't like organs in the physical body; they aren't fixed facts that we can study like doctors study neural ganglia (with which the chakras were confused in the nineteenth century). The energy body (*sūkshma-sharīra*) is an extraordinarily fluid reality, as we should expect of anything nonphysical and supersensuous. The energy body can present, experientially speaking, with any number of energy centers, depending on the person and the yogic practice they're performing.

Having said that, there are a few centers which are found in all systems: specifically, in the lower belly or sexual center, in the heart, and in or near the crown of the head, since these are three places in the body where humans all over the world experience both emotional and spiritual phenomena. But apart from those three, there's a huge variety in the chakra systems we find in the original literature. One is not more 'right' than another, *except relative to a specific practice*. For example, if you're doing a five-element practice, you use a five-chakra system (see point #6 below). If you're internalizing the energy of six different deities, you use a six-chakra system. Duh, right? But this crucial bit of information has not yet reached Western yoga.

We've only just started down this rabbit hole, Alice. Wanna learn more?

2. THE CHAKRA SYSTEMS ARE PRESCRIPTIVE, NOT DESCRIPTIVE.

This might be the most important point. English sources tend to present the chakra system as an existential fact, using descriptive language (like "the *mūlādhāra* chakra is at the base of the spine and it is red" and so on). But in most of the original Sanskrit sources, we are not being taught about the way things are, we are being given a specific yogic practice: we are to visualize a subtle object made of colored light, shaped like a lotus or a spinning wheel, at a specific point in the body, and then activate mantric syllables in it, *for a specific purpose*. When you understand this, point #1 above makes more sense. The texts are prescriptive — they tell what you ought to do to achieve a specific goal by mystical means. When the literal Sanskrit reads, in its elliptical fashion, 'four-petaled red lotus at the base of the body' we are supposed to understand 'The yogī ought to visualize a four-petaled lotus . . .' See point #5 below for more on this.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHAKRAS ARE

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The purpose of the spiritual life (it ain't what ya think). Part One.
(/blog/2015/6/24/the-purpose-of-the-spiritual-)

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHAKRAS ARE COMPLETELY MODERN AND WESTERN.

On countless websites and in countless books, we read that the *mūlādhāra* chakra is associated with survival & safety, that *maṇipūra* chakra is associated with willpower & self-esteem, and so on. The educated yogi should know that all associations of the chakras with psychological states is a modern Western innovation that started with Carl Jung. Perhaps such associations represent experiential realities for some people (though usually not without priming), but we certainly don't find them in the Sanskrit sources. There's only one exception I'm aware of, and that is the 10-chakra system for yogi-musicians (<http://hareesh.org/blog/2015/6/14/10-cakra-system-for-musicians>) that I've done a blog post on. But in that thirteenth-century system, we do *not* find each chakra associated with a specific emotion or psychological state; rather, each *petal* of each lotus-chakra is associated with a distinct emotion or psychological state, and there seems to be no pattern by which we could create a label for the chakra as a whole.

But that's not all. Nearly all the many associations found in Anodea Judith's *Wheels of Life* have no basis in the Indian sources. Each chakra, Judith tells us, is associated with a certain bodily gland, certain bodily malfunctions, certain foods, a certain metal, a mineral, an herb, a planet, a path of yoga, a suit of the tarot, a sephira of Jewish mysticism, and an archangel of Christianity! *None* of these associations are found in the original sources. Judith or her teachers created them based on perceived similarities. That goes also for the essential oils and crystals that other books and websites claim correspond to each chakra. (I should note that Judith does feature some information from an original Sanskrit source [that is, the *Ṣaṭ-cakra-nirūpaṇa*, for which see below] under the label 'Lotus Symbols' for each chakra.)

This is not to say that putting a certain kind of crystal on your belly when you're having self-esteem issues and imagining it purifying your *maṇipūra* chakra might not help you feel better. Maybe it will, depending on the person. While this practice is certainly not traditional, and has not been tested over generations (which is the whole point of tradition, really), god knows there's more on heaven and earth than is dreamt of in my rationalist brain.

But, in my view, people should know when the pedigree of a practice is a few decades, not centuries. If a practice has value, then you don't need to falsify its provenance, right?

Hey there—do you like this post? Do you want learn more? Then please sign up for my email list (<https://www.tantrailluminated.org/newsletter>)! You won't receive many mailings, and we'll never share your email.

4. THE SEVEN-CHAKRA SYSTEM POPULAR TODAY DERIVES NOT FROM AN ANCIENT SCRIPTURE, BUT FROM A TREATISE WRITTEN IN 1577.

The chakra system Western yogis follow is that found in a Sanskrit text written by a guy named Pūrṇānanda Yati. He completed his text (the *Ṣaṭ-cakra-nirūpaṇa* or 'Explanation of the Six Chakras', which is actually chapter six of a larger work) in the year 1577, and it was translated into English exactly 100 years ago, in 1918.

In an earlier version of this post, I called this seven-chakra system 'late and somewhat atypical'. But after a few days, I realized that I was mistaken—a simpler version of the same seven-chakra system is found in a thirteenth-century postscriptural text called the *Śāradā-tilaka*, though that text does plainly

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What is Tantra?: Setting

acknowledge that there are multiple chakra systems (such as systems of 12 or 16 chakras). We also find a more elaborate version of the same system in the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century *Śiva-samhitā*. However, most yogis (both Indian and Western) know the seven-chakra system through Pūrṇānanda's sixteenth-century work, or rather, through the somewhat incoherent and confusing translation of it, done by John Woodroffe in 1918. Still, it's true enough to say that this seven-chakra system has been dominant for the last four or five centuries. But it's also true that the Westernized seven-chakra system you know is based on early-twentieth-century occultists' interpretation of a flawed translation of a nonscriptural source. This by no means invalidates it, but rather serves to problematize its hegemony.

Note that Tantric Buddhism (e.g., of Tibet) often preserves older forms, and indeed the five-chakra system is dominant in that tradition (as well as the more fundamental three-bindu system). For a typical five-chakra system as found in classical Tantra, see page 387 of my book, *Tantra Illuminated* (<https://www.amazon.com/Tantra-Illuminated-Philosophy-Practice-Tradition/dp/0989761304/>).

5. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF A CHAKRA SYSTEM IS TO FUNCTION AS A TEMPLATE FOR NYĀSA — INSTALLATION OF MANTRAS AND DEITIES.

As far as the original authors were concerned, the main purpose of any chakra system was to function as a template for *nyāsa*, which means the installation of mantras and deity-energies at specific points of the subtle body. So, though millions of people are fascinated with the chakras today, almost none of those people are using them for their intended purpose. That's okay. Again, I'm not here to make anyone wrong, just to educate the folks who are interested.

The most outstanding features of the chakra systems in the original sources are these three: 1) that the mystical sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet are distributed across the 'petals' of all the chakras in the system, 2) that each chakra is associated with a specific Great Element (Earth, Water, Fire, Wind, and Space) and 3) that each chakra is associated with a specific Hindu deity or deities. This is because the chakra system is, as I said, primarily a template for *nyāsa*. In *nyāsa* (lit., 'placing'), you visualize a specific mantric syllable in a specific location in a specific chakra in your energy body while silently intoning its sound.

Clearly, this practice is embedded in a culturally-specific context in which the sounds of the Sanskrit language are seen as uniquely powerful vibrations that can form an effective part of a mystical practice that brings about spiritual liberation or worldly benefits through magical means. Invoking the image and energy of a specific deity into a specific chakra is also culturally-specific, though if Western yogis come to understand what those deities stand for, the practice could potentially be meaningful for them as well, though probably never as meaningful as for someone who grew up with those deities as paradigmatic icons emblazoned on their subconscious minds.

The so-called Cause-deities (*karana-devatās*) figure largely in every chakra system. These deities form a fixed sequence: from the lowest chakra to the highest, they are Ganesh, Brahmā, Vishnu, Rudra, Īśvara, Sadāśiva, and Bhairava, with the first and last of these often not appearing, depending on the number of chakras. The last deity in the list of Cause-deities is never the ultimate deity of the given system, for that deity (whoever it is) is enthroned in the *sahasrāra* or thousand-petalled lotus on the crown of the head (which technically is not a chakra, since chakras by definition are entered by Kundalinī in her ascent or descent, whereas

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Chakras by definition are pierced by kuṇḍalīni in her ascent or descent, whereas the sahasrāra is her final destination and home). Therefore, Bhairava (<http://hareesh.org/blog/2015/12/20/the-divine-name-bhairava-tantraaloka-195-100>) (the most esoteric form of Shiva) is only included in the list of Cause-deities when he is transcended by the Goddess, the latter being the ultimate deity in many of these systems.

6. THE SEED-MANTRAS THAT YOU THINK GO WITH THE CHAKRAS ACTUALLY GO WITH THE ELEMENTS THAT HAPPEN TO BE INSTALLED IN THOSE CHAKRAS.

This is simpler than it sounds. You've been told that the seed-mantra (*bīja*) of the *mūlādhāra* chakra is LAM. Well, it's not. Not in any Sanskrit source, not even in Pūrṇānanda's somewhat garbled syncretic account. And the mantra of *svādhiṣṭhāna* chakra is not VAM. Wait, what?

It's simple: LAM (rhymes with 'thumb') is the seed-mantra of the Earth element, which in most chakra visualization practices is installed in the *mūlādhāra*. VAM is the seed-mantra of the Water element, which is installed in *svādhiṣṭhāna* (at least, in the seven-chakra system you know about). And so on: RAM is the syllable for Fire, YAM for Wind, and HAM for Space. (All these *bījas* rhyme with 'thumb'; though I should note that in esoteric Tantrik Yoga, the elemental *bījas* actually have different vowel sounds which are thought to be much more powerful.)

So the main point is that the fundamental mantras associated with the first five chakras on every website you can Google actually **do not belong to those chakras per se, but rather to the five Elements installed in them**. This is important to know if you ever want to install one of those elements in a different place. "Gasp! I can do that?" Totally. In fact, in different Tantrik lineages, we find the Elements installed in very different places. For example, the Saiddhāntika lineage installed Earth in the heart chakra. What do you think might be the effect on your relationships of *always* installing the Wind element in the heart center? (Remember, YAM is the mantra of Air/Wind, not of the *anāhata* chakra, whose intrinsic mantra is actually OM.) D'you ever notice that modern American yogis have really unstable relationships? Could that possibly be connected to repeatedly invoking Wind on the level of the heart? Nahhh.... (I can be funny now because only a small percentage of my readers have made it down this far.) So maybe you want to install some Earth in the heart sometime, cuz grounding is good for your heart. In that case, it's kinda handy to know that LAM is the Earth element mantra, not the *mūlādhāra*-chakra mantra.

Furthermore, most of the geometric figures associated with the chakras today also properly belong to the Elements. Earth is traditionally represented by a (yellow) square, Water by a (silvery) crescent moon, Fire by a downward-pointing (red) triangle, Wind by a hexagram or six-pointed star, and Space by a circle. So when you see those figures inscribed in illustrations of the chakras, you now know that they actually are representations of those respective Elements, not of a geometry inherent in the chakra itself.

This brings me to my last point: even a Sanskrit source can be confused. For example, in Pūrṇānanda's 16th-century text that is the basis of the popular modern chakra system, the five Elements are installed in the first five chakras of a seven-chakra system. But this doesn't really work, because in all the classical systems, Space element is installed at the crown of the head, since that is where the *yogī* experiences an expansive opening into infinite spaciousness. Space is the element that merges into the infinite, so it has to be at or near the crown. I would speculate that Pūrṇānanda placed Space at the throat chakra because he lived at a

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The Divine Names: Deva, Pati, Shiva (Tantraaloka 1.101-5)
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speculate that Pūrṇānanda placed space at the third chakra because he lived at a time of increasing dogmatic adherence to the received tradition without critical reflection (a trend which sadly has continued), and the tradition he received was a Kaula one in which the classical Cause-deities got shoved down to make room for later, higher deities (specifically Bhairava and the Goddess), and the elements were uncritically kept fused to the deities and chakras with which they were previously associated. (Having said that, the fact that Pūrṇānanda was drawing on Kaula sources is not obvious, because instead of enthroning the Goddess at the *sahasrāra* as we would expect in a Kaula seven-chakra system, we find there Paramaśiva, possibly due to the influence of Vedānta. See the questions and answers in the comments section for more on this.)

We've barely scratched the surface of this subject. No, I'm not kidding. It's really complex, as you can gather by taking a look at the scholarly literature, like Dory Heilijgers-Seelen's work, or Gudrun Bühnemann (<https://buhnemann.ls.wisc.edu/home>)'s. It takes uncommon patience and focus to even read such work, let alone produce it. So here's what I hope will be the result of this post: some humility. A few less claims to authority when it comes to really esoteric subjects. Maybe a few less yoga teachers trying to tell their students what the chakras are all about. Heck, I'm humbled by the complexity of the original sources, and that's with fourteen years of Sanskrit under my belt.

This is still mostly uncharted territory. So when it comes to the chakras, don't claim you know. Tell your yoga students that every book on the chakras presents only one possible model. Virtually nothing written in English is really authoritative for practitioners of yoga. So why not hold more gently the beliefs you've acquired about yoga, even while you keep learning? Let's admit we don't fully understand these ancient yoga practices yet; and instead of seeking to be an authority on some oversimplified version of them, you can invite yourself and your students to look more clearly, more honestly, more carefully, and more non-judgmentally at their own inner experience.

After all, everything that every yoga master ever experienced is in you, too.

~ ~ ~

Postscript: This post is getting a wider circulation than I'm used to, and some people who don't know me interpret my wry tone as arrogance or sarcasm. In fact, I'm a real softie at heart. Please read my bio (<http://hareesh.org/about/>) so that you can assess my qualifications to make the statements that I do.

I've given a comprehensive course on this subject! Sign up here (<https://school.embodiedphilosophy.com/programs/collection-chakras-illuminated>).

~ ~ ~

Join me at Tantra Illuminated (<https://tantrailluminated.org/>) for more teachings!



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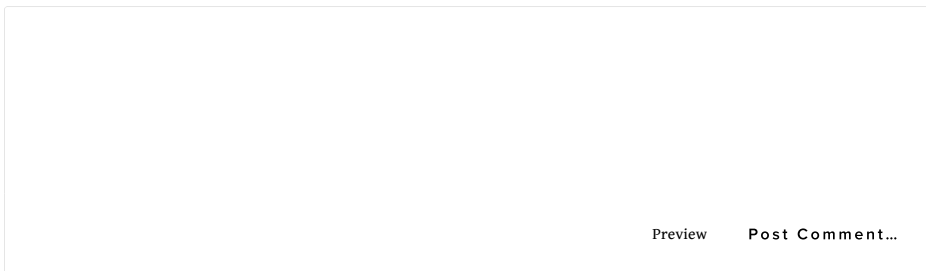
A 17th-century image of several chakras from Nepāl.

Tagged: [cakra](/blog/tag/cakra) (</blog/tag/cakra>), [chakra](/blog/tag/chakra) (</blog/tag/chakra>), [mantra](/blog/tag/mantra) (</blog/tag/mantra>)

♥ 820 Likes ↻ Share

COMMENTS (484)

Newest First



Morgan 10 hours ago · 0 Likes

You are not reading this by accident. This is your sign that everything is going to be alright. The universe is making a way for you right now. Would you like to be a member of the Illuminati, it is good to see the light and brilliance for the whole world to see, and everything in the world is managed by the system "The New World Order" What are your dreams and your goals, is be a famous artist, dancer, writer, politician, pastor, footballer, etc.

Email:lordship899d1@gmail.com

WhatsApp:+1 (659) 213-6561

recognition-sutra-1

The creative power of awareness
 (/blog/2016/3/22/recognition-sutra-2)

The Recognition Sutras: the story of a miracle
 (/blog/2016/3/25/the-recognition-sutras-story-of-a-miracle)

April 2016 (/blog?month=04-2016)

Reality is a co-creation
 (/blog/2016/4/5/reality-is-co-created-recognition-sutra-3)

You are the universe
 (/blog/2016/4/22/you-are-the-universe-recognition-sutra-4)

May 2016 (/blog?month=05-2016)

The true nature of the mind
 (/blog/2016/5/12/the-true-nature-of-the-mind-recognition-sutra-5)

The dangers of duality
 (/blog/2016/5/25/the-dangers-of-duality-recognition-sutra-6)

June 2016 (/blog?month=06-2016)

When things fall apart
 (/blog/2016/6/13/when-things-fall-apart)

How the one becomes many
 (/blog/2016/6/25/how-the-one-becomes-many-recognition-sutra-7)

July 2016 (/blog?month=07-2016)

God is an Actor
 (/blog/2016/7/12/rqrmsyimusvd7b12jj)

Yoga philosophy, race, and 'colorblindness'
 (/blog/2016/7/14/yoga-philosophy-race-and-colorblindness)



Katie A month ago · 0 Likes

thank you for sharing this information, I am one of those who read "Wheels of Life" a long while ago and loved it but also thought / felt something was missing. finding this article confirmed this for me and peaked my interest to understand even further than before.

you're much appreciated.



Carly A month ago · 0 Likes

Who took the jam out of your donught!! <<she smirks>> Very good read, very insightful and liberating! Thank you for your work!



Darlene Listro 2 months ago · 0 Likes

Thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge on this topic. I found ut very informative.



corinne 2 months ago · 0 Likes

great article, thank you🙏



Linda 3 months ago · 0 Likes

What about swami Satyananda the write about the chakras



Rosie Warburton 4 months ago · 0 Likes

I love this article. Thank you so much. I thought I knew something about the chakra system many years ago... until I heard my nada yoga teacher, Shyam Bhatnagar, begin talking/teaching about the chakras, various mantras associated with them, colors associated with them (not the pretty little rainbow! re: Anodea Judith, etc.), microchakras and on and on and realized I knew nothing about the chakra system- lol! I come to this through my interest as a Sanskrit student and I understand a little better what Shyamji was doing when he prescribed particular mantras through your explanation of "installing" particular sounds, vibrational qualities, elements and deities into different chakras and microchakras. Thank you again.



Michael 6 months ago · 0 Likes

Fantastic info on "closer truths" I think you very gently set the record

How yoga can turn a jerk into an even bigger jerk (/blog/2016/7/25/does-the-practice-of-yoga-automatically-make-you-a-better-person)

August 2016 (/blog?month=08-2016)

Remake/remodel: four points on the reinvention of the guru-disciple relationship in the West (/blog/2016/8/16/remakeremodel-four-points-on-the-reinvention-of-the-guru-disciple-relationship-in-the-west)

What 'spiritual awakening' really means (/blog/2016/8/16/what-spiritual-awakening-really-means)

September 2016 (/blog?month=09-2016)

Paradigms of Bhakti: the South Indian Poet-Saints (/blog/2016/9/15/paradigms-of-bhakti)

How to Be Happy (/blog/2016/9/15/2wwrhbck8j86dcm4)

October 2016 (/blog?month=10-2016)

Will the real Vijñāana-bhairava please stand up? (/blog/2016/10/6/will-the-real-vijaana-bhairava-please-stand-up)

How to know that You are God (/blog/2016/10/10/how-to-know-that-you-are-god)

November 2016 (/blog?month=11-2016)

Patañjali's yoga and its

straight as far as how muddy the waters truly are in modern beliefs. Yet centered in the forgiveness to those subscribing to our modern day practices. Nice job



GS 6 months ago · 0 Likes

My humble apologies, now I have read the whole article and realize its true purpose, as I commented regarding 9 and 12 chakra systems. I learned from an unknown western 'master' regarding this subject, something I have been attempting to confirm through the study of Hinduism and the yogas. What confounds myself is exactly as you have written, that maybe the true understanding of what an actual chakra is, is lost in the west, modern India, and my own teacher. I know this goes against your belief, but if there is such a thing as a 'Master', guru, swami, then I am compelled to think they would know exactly how many chakras there are and how they function, written in practical basic detail of how this is accomplished. Maybe in your books?! I want to study Sanskrit, but I may not have the time or patience, but I realize that Sanskrit is part of the key to knowing chakras and more. As I now understand, it is those very great special masters, who created Sanskrit, understood language and how that has a powerful effect on the physical, mental, and spiritual bodies. I come from a philosophy that spoken and written words or language constitute thought, and ultimately mind. There can be no thought without language, they are inseparable and are the same thing. This is not an invention but from ancient sources. Beyond Sanskrit and Hinduism, several ancient cultures demonstrate a relationship of alphabets/language/name, numbers, mind, and chakra/consciousness. Probably taken from the original Indian (Sanskrit?) masters, whoever they were. It seems, this is why and how mantras were developed utilizing these relationships. Now, just like your article I have probably lost most people reading this response. Usually, the moment I mention Mind I am deleted, we will see what you do.

Sanskrit seems to demonstrate how the universal qualities of the abstract or higher or what I would call Universal Consciousness specifically perpetuate through language, as well through name, what we understand in the west as numerology, but that is as far as it goes. The most important is not the consonants, but specifically the vowel sounds, possibly where Aum/Om took shape. This can be taken to a more universal concept in that all language whether a mantra or just a word has the same effect on people, negative or positive. For many in the spiritual world Hindu or other, have at best, a very vague notion of what mind is, and there may lie the problem. For example, the name Christopher which has a certain number or quantity based on an organized alphabet, which has its relevant quality and relevant chakra. Your spoken name and that thought of "Christopher" has had an effect on your mind and spirit, just like a mantra. When you were named at birth you were given a mantra for life. Although, a name created without this understanding, like Hareesh, a very different quality. I believe the Sanskrit masters understood how language has a universal quality, and it's relevant effect on the chakras and your body, mind, and spirit. Ancient texts in general have a tendency to be mistranslated, edited, and destroyed, which may explain, as you have stated, through the lense of personal and cultural phenomena, emergence of different chakra systems. As I have been taught, these universal qualities perpetuate the chakras based on their

tantrik reinvention
(/blog/2016/11/5/how-to-cheat-death-the-tantrik-reinterpretation-of-patajalis-ashtanga-yoga)

December 2016

(/blog?month=12-2016)

The most intimate part of you
(/blog/2016/12/6/the-most-intimate-part-of-you)

January 2017

(/blog?month=01-2017)

Becoming Undivided
(/blog/2017/1/3/becoming-undivided)

The liberating power of your sadness
(/blog/2017/1/25/the-surprising-purpose-of-sadness)

February 2017

(/blog?month=02-2017)

The truth about 'where things are heading'
(/blog/2017/2/12/the-truth-about-where-things-are-headed)

March 2017

(/blog?month=03-2017)

The only real limitation is self-limitation
(/blog/2017/3/28/the-only-real-limitation-is-self-limitation)

April 2017 (/blog?month=04-2017)

Finding the spacious ground within
(/blog/2017/4/1/finding-the-spacious-ground-within)

these universal qualities perpetuate the chakras based on their numerological position. The first chakra has the 1 quality, 2nd chakras has the two quality, etc, which resembles how you speak in terms of deities and elements, symbols representative of those universal qualities.

Eastern teachings have complex layers of symbols in text and story, camouflaging definite principles through which spirituality is understood and attained. I am not denying that everyone's spiritual journey is unique unto themselves, but not as I see in western and modern Indian culture where every yogi, guru, swami has a different take. Where I am at a loss - I have been taught a system that is devoid of mantras, while, in the same breath, I have attempted to demonstrate the power of language. And here I am, on your web page. Maybe back to learning Sanskrit and maybe a read of your book on Tantra and Chakras.



Shad 2 months ago · 0 Likes

Hey man if you're interested in learning about it/the true basics check Sri Ms videos on Chakradharana he's the real deal and completely credible his masters, master was non other than Mahavatar Babji ! From all my searching him and Michael Singer are up there as modern beings who are realised (although they'll never claim to be)

https://youtu.be/M4kAO_n0LfM?si=PwlbA7lAW2XsNyFN
<https://www.youtube.com/live/WwYoAniKf44?si=jTBd2XWQyd4YZ4kb>



GS 6 months ago · 0 Likes

Very insightful. I am just wondering what are some of the most earliest descriptions of chakras, specifically Patanjali. I have been taught, as it exists in Hinduism, that there are 9 chakras with three super centres above called the Trikuti or Guru centres, which is shown in the Patanjali yoga sutras. Of course this is all very distorted in modern day and throughout India/Asia and especially western thinking. Any thoughts you have?



Alex 7 months ago · 0 Likes

This is extremely enlightening and I am very appreciative for it. Thank you so much!



Suzy 11 months ago · 0 Likes

Thanks so much for this. I've often thought that the chakra systems as they're presented just don't make sense personally, and the idea of one size fits all has never worked anywhere in any context as far as I know! This has helped me realise that we need to trust the 'something bigger than ourselves' that we find in our practice. Because a book says it is or isn't so is not enough. But you do need a good grounding to then go on to be able to hold theory and dogma more lightly, acknowledge and honour the sources and wisdom to take this esoteric experience forward into the context of

And then there is a turn .
.. (/blog/2017/4/1/and-then-there-is-a-turn-)

The Fire Within
(/blog/2017/4/26/the-fire-within)

Attaining Your Innate Power
(/blog/2017/4/28/attaining-your-innate-power)

May 2017 (/blog?month=05-2017)

Embodied Liberation: the goal of Tantrik Yoga
(/blog/2017/5/13/embodied-liberation-the-goal-of-tantrik-yoga)

Expanding the Center
(/blog/2017/5/30/expanding-the-center)

June 2017 (/blog?month=06-2017)

Tantrik Shaiva Philosophy in Context
(/blog/2017/6/8/tantrik-shaiva-philosophy-in-context)

July 2017 (/blog?month=07-2017)

On the Importance of Truth in the Spiritual Life
(/blog/2017/7/22/near-enemy-1-everything-happens-for-a-reason)

August 2017 (/blog?month=08-2017)

Near Enemy #5: Listen to your heart
(/blog/2017/8/15/near-enemy-3-listen-to-your-heart)

September 2017 (/blog?month=09-2017)

Near Enemy #12:

and modern, to take the collective experience for what it is and the context of modernity. As I believe the Buddha said, 'not always so'. I'm finding I understand this more and more the longer I'm on this good earth!



Dhruva A year ago · 0 Likes

I will try to write to you in english not being an english native, so here it goes: Yes, there is so much out there that has no connection to a recognized source of tantrik tradition, yes. But nevertheless the general (deviated from the source texts) consensus is passing the test of time, at least for 60 years now. It seems to work for million of therapists, psychologists and even modern practitioners. I am not a fan of chakras, so no psychological need to hold that position from my part, I have just noticed (and anyone interested) how at least, head, chest, and pelvis are real obvious evident containers of sensations, movement and more, same goes for the physical heart. So call it bindus, or chakras or containers they are what they are now. And because these observations are clearly being sustained by millions over 60 years in the new age era, we can noticed them now and directly, not trough texts and not trough new age, directly feel your pelvis haha. and this direct observations are inevitably the ground for which the future of "tradition proving thought time" will sustain, at least as a principle factual thing going on now. No need to be a tradition, because reality will just be, as it is happening now. I understand your point for the article, I think is informative, but not truly convinced me for less validation to whatever has been jointed x new age information to traditional information. (Anodea Judith for example) has 100% space and existence validity to notice and express whatever connection she has come trough her work (not a fan of her neither), we all will see if there is VALUE, NOT REASON OR VALID CONNECTION for her work. It is just a question of putting it to practice from a sincere open place. I think your work is fantastic, has a lot of value and its place in the world. My personal input is that there is no need for those subtle pointers of taking credit or devalue. I think the day you come to write and express exactly the same thing, making the same point with no hint of lack of acceptance for reality (really that is what it is), reality for you will be at complete peace. I am talking about acceptance, not agreement. There is no reason for anybody...



mima A year ago · 0 Likes

I understood what chakra means after I understood the Thoegal Meditation and the rainbowbody



Nina Raffaele A year ago · 0 Likes

Dearest scholar, I appreciate the teachings on this subject and read through most of it. I work with vibrational medicine and would like to know the proper words to sing and I simply not finding them here. I suppose you want to pique interest for your course, could you at least provide som of them, for example for opening the heart and third eye? I cannot invest years of study and that being said I want to use the proper incantations and not use the

Negative energy
(/blog/2017/9/7/near-enemy-4-negative-energy)

October 2017
(/blog?month=10-2017)

Near Enemy #6: Love yourself
(/blog/2017/10/27/near-enemy-5-love-yourself)

November 2017
(/blog?month=11-2017)

Near Enemy #10: You create your own reality
(/blog/2017/11/22/near-enemy-6-you-create-your-own-reality)

January 2018
(/blog?month=01-2018)

Near Enemy #3: I want to be my best self
(/blog/2018/1/31/near-enemy-7-i-want-to-be-my-best-self)

February 2018
(/blog?month=02-2018)

Near Enemy #2: Speaking your truth
(/blog/2018/2/28/near-enemy-8-speaking-your-truth)

March 2018
(/blog?month=03-2018)

The Blossoming of Innate Awareness
(/blog/2018/3/9/the-blossoming-of-your-awareness)

What distinguishes Tantra?
(/blog/2018/3/18/what-distinguishes-and-



Mirjam A year ago · 0 Likes

Dear boy, you are simply the best. In our culture based on only material values, new age is a huge segment of economy. Personally I find it dangerous for the people to adopt, in a superficial way, something from other cultures and spiritual teachings. It leads them only to confusion and even more sorrow. Therefore it is so very very important, that people like you, who have a deeper insight, make things clear. Thank you very much. And go on with your work. It is so important



Julie Mulek A year ago · 0 Likes

I've been working so hard to help my heart chakra open. In fact I just did a guided breath work and I felt great after, yet I still felt like something is physically blocking my heart. I've felt it open before in a truly surrendering experience so I know what it feels like, yet it closed again. I just said the work LAM (tried hard to rhyme with thumb) and in an instant the pain in my heart is gone. Almost like magic. You have me so intrigued with all of this information. What I've come to learn is that I know nothing and the more I realize I know nothing I come to some deep understandings of something. I'm not sure I'll ever fully understand this and that's okay, but I love your openness on how the western world has come so far from the original source, although I have to say that even getting more people aware of chakras being real in us is quite a movement. I look forward to learning more about this. Thank you.



Jin A year ago · 0 Likes

I love it when a post gets to the core of the subject... thanks



Rks A year ago · 0 Likes

Mind boggling. Now the question is if someone wants to learn it, is there any valid book to learn the real form and depth of chakras and to activate them.



SR010 A year ago · 0 Likes

Thanks for this. I always was sceptical somehow, now I understand why. This makes so much sense! Keep up the good work, which I will now be following)



anne A year ago · 0 Likes

Thank you for this article and all the obvious research you've done over the

[April 2018 \(/blog?month=04-2018\)](#)

[How Tantrik Ritual Works \(TA 1 cont'd\) \(/blog/2018/4/6/how-tantrik-ritual-works-ta-1-contd\)](#)

[May 2018 \(/blog?month=05-2018\)](#)

[Near Enemy #4: Be in the present moment \(/blog/2018/5/31/near-enemy-9-be-in-the-present-moment\)](#)

[July 2018 \(/blog?month=07-2018\)](#)

[The Essence of Tantra: Introduction \(/blog/2018/7/10/the-essence-of-tantra-introduction\)](#)

[Whatever god you worship, you're really worshipping Awareness \(TA 1 cont'd\) \(/blog/2018/4/17/whatever-god-you-worship-youre-really-worshipping-awareness-ta-1-contd\)](#)

[August 2018 \(/blog?month=08-2018\)](#)

[The Modes of Realization \(Tantrasaara chapter 1\) \(/blog/2018/8/4/the-modes-of-realization-tantrasaara-chapter-1\)](#)

[September 2018 \(/blog?month=09-2018\)](#)

[The nature of awareness \(Tantraloka 1 cont'd\) \(/blog/2018/9/10/the-nature-of-awareness-ta-1-contd\)](#)

[The Pathless Path \(Tantrasaara Chapter 2\)](#)

Thank you for this article and all the obvious research you've done over the years to produce it. My question to the search engine was "How many chakras are there?" Your answer, as I understand it, is: as many as I need, in whatever place or places I need, and I can install any chakra with an energy/emotion/need/desire represented by a deity/avatar/symbol/platonic solid(?) for the purposes of resolution/solution, and that the principal focus for any chakra is meditation for breakthrough/insight/peace &c. I know you won't correct me if I've misunderstood and I know that I've waaay oversimplified but I hope I've interpreted your post mostly properly to start continue my journey of a thousand miles ... And I very much enjoyed your wit and humor. It was most appropriate. I don't know how to post a "like" but consider this post "liked". :)



Saar Markovitch A year ago · 0 Likes

Thank you for this great article!



JuneMA A year ago · 0 Likes

Glad I found your article. Well written so that a layman, such as myself, could understand (most of) it without being condescending. I didn't detect any arrogance, at all. Rather a genuine respect for other's views. I learned a great deal - highest compliment one person can give another. Deepest gratitude for the dedication which speaks so obviously in your work.



Zsofi Barrofsa A year ago · 0 Likes

But how come the author never replied to anyone who commented? This looks like a scholarly article but it's not. Besides some links, there are no references. Sorry everyone, to me this is not a reliable source.



anne A year ago · 1 Like

imho, I'm not sure how anyone could corroborate the author's scholarship or any references, unless they could read Sanskrit. I'd have to rely on Google Translate or AI. Knowing the origin of modern sources is enough for me to explore other sources. I'm not looking for a guru to follow. I'm looking for a way to access internal knowledge and connexion on a deeper level than other sources have led me. Just my two pennies.



Clara Luz Munguia 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Muy interesante! Creo que tal vez se debería estudiar los orígenes del kundalini ya que este se basa en los chacras. Saludos.

(/blog/2018/9/23/the-direct-path-tantrasaara-chapter-2)

October 2018

(/blog?month=10-2018)

TANTRALOKA 29: The kula-yaga, or secret sexual ritual of original Tantra (part 1 of 12) (/blog/2018/10/29/tantraaloka-29-the-secret-sexual-ritual-of-original-tantra)

January 2019

(/blog?month=01-2019)

The Divine Method (Tantrasaara Chapter Three, Part 1) (/blog/2019/1/5/the-divine-method-tantrasaara-chapter-three)

February 2019

(/blog?month=02-2019)

The Empowered Method (Tantrasaara Chapter Four, Part 1) (/blog/2019/1/5/the-empowered-method-tantrasaara-chapter-four)

The Embodied Method (Tantrasaara Chapter Five, Part 1) (/blog/2019/2/9/the-embodied-method-tantrasaara-chapter-five-part-1)

March 2019

(/blog?month=03-2019)

The Mystical Meaning of Sanskrit (Tantrasaara Chapter Three, Part 2) (/blog/2019/1/5/the-divine-method-tantrasaara-chapter-three-2lebj)



Claire Zanetto 2 years ago · 1 Like

Thanks for this. I will stick with your conclusion and idea to be humble and admit we really don't know enough yet about the chakras to teach around them. Suits me fine 🍷



Ryan 2 years ago · 0 Likes

I just happened to be up late at night wondering what the true history of the chakras were and where they originated and fell across this gem! Although I didn't understand about half of the things you were explaining, I found it all so interesting and I believe you still did a great job of explaining this to someone who doesn't know about it but would love some enlightening! I also enjoy the voice you carry within your writing, personally it helped me follow along and I got to laugh which is always fun lol. Thank you for your knowledge and I hope to read more of your work!



Monika 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Wonderful! Liberating!
Thank you



Robyn 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Good day Christopher!
I hope this email finds you well :) I came across your article that was linked with a Youtube video..... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1F7aRPnx2Y&ab_channel=TetKamiNight
This person along with a few others; Tony Sayer's https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVt7neWoeYo&ab_channel=TonySayers and a Shamanic practitioner, Laura who's Youtube channel also promotes removal of the chakra system as in their experience via the New Age movement, that these chakra's have been hijacked by malevolent entities/deities with an overlay to control humans and siphon our energy. That to function as a sovereign being and be in full control of your overall system, that it's essential to remove this chakra "overlay". Are you privy to any such information over the years of your studies? Also, I'm curious why do our chakra's need any deities invoked at all? Why not just align & invoke prime source creator within each, can you speak to this as well?
Kind regards,
Robyn



M 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Would love some citations/credit to the work that Christopher Tompkins has done on this tonic. Is nothing written here sourced from him? There's more

April 2019 (/blog?month=04-2019)

The Ways to Liberation (Tantraloka 1 cont'd) (/blog/2019/4/2/the-ways-to-liberation-tantraloka-1-contd)

Why Yoga Doesn't Work . . . and Why it Does (Tantrasaara Chapter Four, Part 2) (/blog/2019/4/20/why-yoga-doesnt-work-and-why-it-does-tantrasaara-chapter-four-part-2)

May 2019 (/blog?month=05-2019)

How a Nondual Tantrika Practices (Tantrasaara Chapter Four, Part 3) (/blog/2019/5/14/how-a-nondual-tantrika-practices-tantrasaara-chapter-four-part-3)

Elevating the Prana (Tantrasaara Chapter Five, Part 2) (/blog/2019/5/29/elevating-the-prana-a-key-practice-of-tantrik-yoga-tantrasaara-chapter-five-part-2)

June 2019 (/blog?month=06-2019)

How Awareness Expresses (Tantrasaara Chapter Three, Part 3) (/blog/2019/6/21/how-awareness-expresses-tantrasaara-chapter-three-part-3)

July 2019 (/blog?month=07-2019)

The Aspects of the Goddess (Tantrasaara Chapter Four, Part 4) (/blog/2019/7/31/the-aspects-of-the-goddess-tantrasaara-chapter-four-part-4)

August 2019

there too... the bija sounds LAM, VAM etc. aren't the ones described in the texts for the elements, as the vowel changes too.



Sheryl 2 years ago · 0 Likes

NAMASKAR HAREESH!! I am presently studying the chakra course with you on Embodied philosophy, and have "Tantra Illuminated" on my desk... I have been a student of canonical philosophy for a number of years, while my practice has been tantric, mantra, meditation, pranayama, asana, puja.. Grateful for your guidance.



Samantha 2 years ago · 0 Likes

I think some may be shocked to learn that MUCH of what yoga teachers are often taught, as facts and authority based in historic texts, is tosh (or in the vicinity of tosh). The lineage of asana alone splits off in so many directions. All we can do is explore, together, with the crumbs we have, humbly piecing together our experiences as we go.

I'm not a scholar. I don't think there's enough time, nowadays, to be a scholar and a facilitator. But I'm also not professing to be an expert in my "classes". That takes the weight off. Humility is a friend of the unsure.

Thank you for the illuminating post. Let's spread it around.



Victoria Cassidy 2 years ago · 0 Likes

First let me say that I'm so excited to read about someone who has studied Sanscrit! I have an inner drive to study it, but I'm not really sure where to turn to learn it. Despite your belief that few may read past a certain point, I did read all the way to the end. You had me at Sanscrit. I've never really followed what others say about the chakra locations as I've felt more than the 'standard' (description) when paying attention to the senses brought to me from my body. I have always felt there was more than what was commonly listed. I also lead from the heart when sensing the world around me and can only speak to where I feel energy directed based on my response to things in life. I don't believe in one size fits all and while there may be a baseline for each, I believe they are somewhat fluid in their locations, not locked into place so to speak. I'm getting the image of a spine that is not in correct alignment and how muscles pull in different directions to compensate for that misalignment. I'm assuming that I'm being told that the chakras work in somewhat the same manner. I'm going to stop right here before I go too far and write a manuscript LOL



Jamie 2 years ago · 0 Likes

This was excellent. I really appreciate you shedding light on this, especially as I am (or rather, was) in the process of using chakras to illustrate a point.

(/blog?month=08-2019)

Cherishing your own radiant beauty (Tantrasaara Chapter Four, Part 5) (/blog/2019/8/10/cherishing-your-own-radiant-beauty-tantrasaara-chapter-four-part-5)

September 2019 (/blog?month=09-2019)

The Rite of the Phonemes (Tantrasaara Chapter Five, Part 3) (/blog/2019/9/30/tantrasara-chapter-five-part-3)

October 2019 (/blog?month=10-2019)

The Stanzas on Pulsation (Spanda-karika), First Flow (/blog/2018/6/28/the-stanzas-on-pulsation-spanda-karika-t5e9c)

November 2019 (/blog?month=11-2019)

The Stanzas on Pulsation (Spanda-karika), Second Flow (/blog/2019/11/4/the-stanzas-on-pulsation-spanda-karika-second-flow)

January 2020 (/blog?month=01-2020)

The Stanzas on Pulsation (Spanda-karika), Third Flow (/blog/2020/1/30/the-stanzas-on-pulsation-spanda-karika-third-flow)

Now I will have to rethink the entire premise. Keep up the good work. It does make a difference.



Tonnie White 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Thank you very much for your information. I will proceed with humility. So much I didn't know!



Emile Olivier 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Thanks for bringing some sense and authority to bear on this matter!



Eddie 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Good stuff Thanks for the information!
Not surprised at all either not in the slightest bit.



Helen Slater 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Makes sense, like the invitation for individual experiences of the chakra system



Joseph Lofthouse 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Thank you! The western chakra system never worked for me. Now I understand why. It was trying to force me into a pre-determined path, rather than fulfilling my particular needs on a particular day.



Aguy 2 years ago · 0 Likes

I don't know anything about chakras, but I like this scholarship and truth seeking mindset. Well done !



Nenslo 2 years ago · 0 Likes

It is also interesting to note that it was the Alchemist Isaac Newton who standardized (created) the seven elements color spectrum, another merging of Western occultism into the chakra system.



Adriana 2 years ago · 0 Likes

February 2020
(/blog?month=02-2020)

Near Enemy #1: Follow your bliss
(/blog/2020/2/29/near-enemy-12-follow-your-bliss)

March 2020
(/blog?month=03-2020)

Near Enemy #13: "Energy healing"
(/blog/2020/3/12/near-enemy-13-energy-healing)

April 2020 (/blog?month=04-2020)

The Teachings of the Lord of Wisdom
(Jnaneshwar's discourse on yogic meditation)
(/blog/2020/4/30/the-teachings-of-the-lord-of-wisdom-jnaneshwar-discourse-on-meditation)

May 2020 (/blog?month=05-2020)

An Introduction to the Goddess Paraa . . . and A Little Light on Our Essence-nature
(/blog/2020/5/31/an-introduction-to-the-goddess-par-and-a-little-light-on-our-essence-nature)

June 2020 (/blog?month=06-2020)

The Principles of Reality and the Seed-Mantra of Goddess Parā
(/blog/2020/6/30/the-principles-of-reality-and-the-seed-mantra-of-goddess-par)

September 2020
(/blog?month=09-

Thank you for the greatly informative article!

I am interested to subscribe to the course but the link is not working. Hope there is a way I can still subscribe.

Namaste



Paigec 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Thanks for this. I'm new to both Yoga and Meditation and trying to learn as much as I can to simply have a healthier mind, body, and spirit.

I also worry about cultural appropriation. I hope by learning more I'm appreciating the practice with good intentions and honoring those who brought it to be.



Louise 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Thank you. I do not resonate with the modern chakra system either. I hate actively looking for something that supports my opinion. We can all "find" research that supports the way we think. But I know I am in the minority opinion when i say i do no resonate with the modern chakra system and it is refreshing to read the article



Marged 3 years ago · 0 Likes

Exactly, I was thinking about how Sharangadeva described the 7 chakra system in his Sangitaratnakara and actually related it to the 7 music notes!



CaAtherine 3 years ago · 0 Likes

Thank you for an informative post! You've inspired me to delve further.



Yinwithlotus 3 years ago · 0 Likes

I need to tell you for the longest time, I didnt get the modern chakra system and theory that are in most yoga teacher training. I am so glad i finally found your blog!



Kay 3 years ago · 0 Likes

I have signed up and look forward to learning more. I have questions too! I have long held a belief that translations of ancient texts has missed some aspects which were never meant to be "lost" or sort of titled to become perhaps more palatable for individuals getting introduced to concepts unfamiliar. This I theorize leads to disconnection rather than union. thank you for sharing.

2020)

Near Enemy #14: I am my own guru
(/blog/2020/9/30/near-enemy-14-i-am-my-own-guru)

November 2020

(/blog?month=11-2020)

Near Enemy #15: All paths lead to the same goal
(/blog/2020/11/30/near-enemy-15-all-paths-lead-to-the-same-goal)

January 2021

(/blog?month=01-2021)

The Descent of Power (Tantrasara Chapter 11)
(/blog/2021/1/6/the-descent-of-power-tantrasara-chapter-11)

April 2021 (/blog?month=04-2021)

The Secret Teachings of the Yoginis
(/blog/2021/3/29/the-secret-teachings-of-the-yogins)

June 2021 (/blog?month=06-2021)

How is 'God' a Near Enemy of the Truth?
(/blog/2021/6/5/near-enemy-16-god)

December 2021

(/blog?month=12-2021)

How to Recognize that You are God (IPK 1.1.1-5)
(/blog/2021/12/26/how-to-recognize-that-you-are-god-ipk-111-5)

January 2022



David 3 years ago · 0 Likes

It's such a privilege to be able to take in your expertise on the subject of chakras from a knowledge of primary sources. Thank you for sharing.



David Barry 3 years ago · 0 Likes

Very brilliant account. There are many interpretations of many traditions. It helps if we can be guided to the most authentic. Taoism has the same problems with often contradictory information given by different "Masters"!

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