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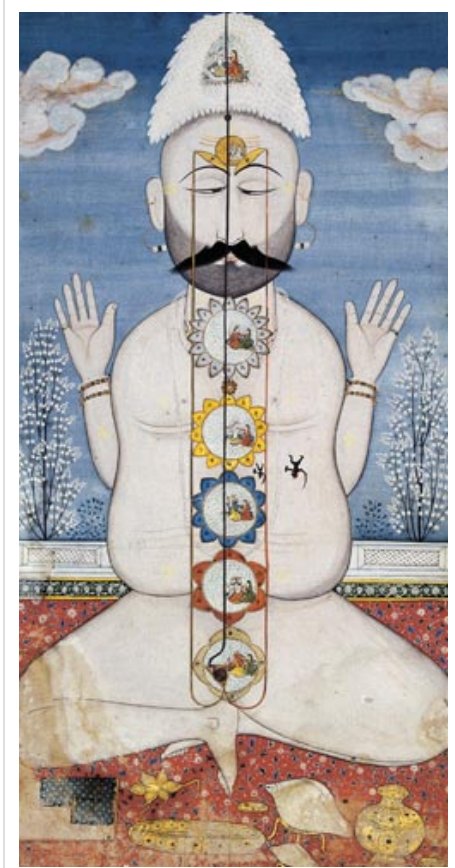
Chakra

Chakra (derived from the Sanskrit *cakram* चक्रं Sanskrit pronunciation: [ˈtʃəkɾə̃], pronounced Hindustani pronunciation: [ˈtʃəkɾə] in Hindi; Pali: *chakka* चक्क, Tamil: சக் கரம், Chinese: 轮, Tibetan: མཚོན་ལོ་མོ་; *khorlo*) is a Sanskrit word that translates as "wheel" or "turning." It is a concept and term originating from Hindu texts and used in Hindu practices.

Chakra is a concept referring to wheel-like vortices which, according to traditional Indian medicine, are believed to exist in the surface of the etheric double of man.^[1] The Chakras are said to be "force centers" or whorls of energy permeating, from a point on the physical body, the layers of the subtle bodies in an ever-increasing fan-shaped formation. Rotating vortices of subtle matter, they are considered the focal points for the reception and transmission of energies.^[2] Different systems posit a varying number of chakras; the most well known system in the West is that of 7 chakras.

It is typical for chakras to be depicted as either flower-like or wheel-like. In the former, a specific number of "petals" are shown around the perimeter of a circle. In the latter, a certain number of spokes divide the circle into segments that make the chakra resemble a wheel (or "chakra"). Each chakra possesses a specific number of segments or petals.

Texts describing the chakras go back as far as the later Upanishads, for example the Yoga Kundalini Upanishad.



Chakras in the human body depicted with their residing deities.

Definitions

Although there are various different interpretations as to what exactly a chakra is, the following features are common in all systems:

- They form part of a subtle energy body, along with the energy channels, or nadis, and the subtle winds, or pranas.
- They are located along a central nadi, Sushumna, which runs either alongside or inside the spine.
- Two other nadis, Ida and Pingala, also run through the chakras, and alongside Sushumna. They occasionally cross Sushumna at the location of the chakras.
- They possess a number of 'petals' or 'spokes'. In some traditions, such as the Tibetan, these spokes branch off into the thousands of nadis that run throughout the human body.
- They are generally associated with a mantra seed-syllable, and often with a variety of colours and deities.

Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda describes a chakra as:^[3]

...[a] powerhouse in the way it generates and stores energy, with the energy from cosmos pulled in more strongly at these points. The main nadis, Ida, Pingala and Shushumna (sympathetic, parasympathetic, and central nervous system) run along the spinal column in a curved path and cross one another several times. At the points of intersection they form strong energy centers known as chakras. In the human body there are three types of energy centers. The lower or animal chakras are located in the region between the toes and the pelvic region indicating our evolutionary origins in the animal kingdom. The human chakras lie along the spinal column. Finally, the higher or divine Chakras are found between the top of the spine and the crown of the head.

Anodea Judith (1996: p. 5) provides a modern interpretation of the chakras:

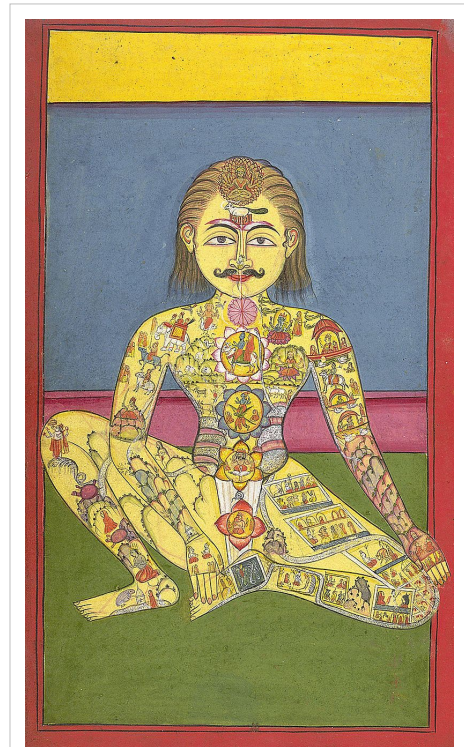
A chakra is believed to be a center of activity that receives, assimilates, and expresses life force energy. The word *chakra* literally translates as *wheel* or *disk* and refers to a spinning sphere of bioenergetic activity emanating from the major nerve ganglia branching forward from the spinal column. Generally, six of these wheels are described, stacked in a column of energy that spans from the base of the spine to the middle of the forehead, the seventh lying beyond the physical world. It is the six major chakras that correlate with basic states of consciousness...

Susan Shumsky (2003, p. 24) states a similar idea:

Each chakra in your spinal column is believed to influence or even govern bodily functions near its region of the spine. Because autopsies do not reveal chakras, most people think they are a fancy of fertile imagination. Yet their existence is well documented in the traditions of the far east...

Chakras, as described above, are energy centers along the spine located at major branchings of the human nervous system, beginning at the base of the spinal column and moving upward to the top of the skull, through which pass 3 major energy channels, Sushumna, Ida and Pingala. Chakras are considered to be a point or nexus of biophysical energy or *prana* of the human body. Shumsky states that "prana is the basic component of your subtle body, your energy field, and the entire chakra system...the key to life and source of energy in the universe."^[4]

The following seven primary chakras are commonly described:



Sapta Chakra, from a Yoga manuscript in Braj Bhasa language with 118 pages (1899).

1. Muladhara (Sanskrit: मूलाधार, Mūlādhāra) Base or Root Chakra (ovaries/prostate)
2. Swadhisthana (Sanskrit: स्वाधिष्ठान, Svādhiṣṭhāna) Sacral Chakra (last bone in spinal cord, the coccyx)
3. Manipura (Sanskrit: मणिपुर, Maṇipūra) Solar Plexus Chakra (navel area)
4. Anahata (Sanskrit: अनाहत, Anāhata) Heart Chakra (heart area)
5. Vishuddha (Sanskrit: वशिद्ध, Viśuddha) Throat Chakra (throat and neck area)
6. Ajna (Sanskrit: आज्ञा, Ājñā) Brow or Third Eye Chakra (pineal gland or third eye)
7. Sahasrara (Sanskrit: सहस्रार, Sahasrāra) Crown Chakra (Top of the head; 'Soft spot' of a newborn)

Chakras



Muladhara



Swadhisthana



Manipura



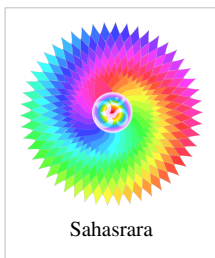
Anahata



Vishuddha



Ajna



Sahasrara

In addition, a number of other chakras are postulated. B.K.S Iyengar ^[5] states that between the navel and the heart are the Manas (mind) and Surya (sun) chakras, and that at the top of the forehead is the Lalata chakra. The Tibetan tantric tradition has the Fire Wheel between the heart and the throat, the Wind Wheel on the forehead, and below the navel, instead of Swadhisthana and Muladhara, they have 3 chakras; the Secret Place Wheel is located 4 fingers below the navel, the Jewel Wheel is located on the sexual organ, and the very tip of the sexual organ is the very last chakra, where the central channel ends. Other traditions, such as the Bihar school of yoga, add Bindu chakra, which exists at the back of the head, and is where the divine nectar or Amrit is stored, place Lalata chakra in the roof of the mouth, and place Hrit chakra below the heart.

Many traditions posit a number of higher chakras in the head, which from lowest to highest are: golata, talu/talana/lalana, ajna, talata/lalata, manas, soma, sahasrara (and sri inside it.)

Models

The study of the Chakras is a central part of many esoteric traditions, as well as to many different therapies and disciplines. In the east, the theory of chakras is a central part of the Hindu and Buddhist tantra, and they play an important role in attaining deep levels of realisation. Yoga, Pranayama, Acupuncture, shiatsu, tai chi and chi kung focus on balancing the energetic nadis or meridians that are an integral part of the chakra system. Within the West, subtle energy is explored through practices such as aromatherapy, mantras, Reiki, hands-on healing, flower essences, radionics, sound therapy, colour/light therapy, and crystal/gem therapy, to name a few. Several models will be explored in the following sub-headings

Hindu Tantra

In Hinduism, the concept of chakras is part of a complex of ideas related to esoteric anatomy. These ideas occur most often in the class of texts that are called Āgamas or Tantras. This is a large body of scripture, most of which is rejected by the traditionalists. The chakras are described in the tantric texts the *Sat-Cakra-Nirupana*, and the *Padaka-Pancaka*,^[6] in which they are described as emanations of consciousness from Brahman, an energy emanating from the spiritual which gradually turns concrete, creating these distinct levels of chakras, and which eventually finds its rest in the Muladhara chakra. They are therefore part of an emanationist theory, like that of the kabbalah in the west, lataif-e-sitta in Sufism or neo-platonism. The energy that was unleashed in creation, called the Kundalini, lies coiled and sleeping at the base of the spine. It is the purpose of the tantric or kundalini forms of yoga to arouse this energy, and cause it to rise back up through the increasingly subtle chakras, until union with God is achieved in the Sahasrara chakra at the crown of the head.

There are many variations on these concepts in the Sanskrit source texts. In earlier texts there are various systems of chakras and nadis, with varying connections between them. Various traditional sources list 5, 6, 7, 8 or even 12 chakras. Over time, one system of 6 or 7 chakras along the body's axis became the dominant model, adopted by most schools of yoga. This particular system may have originated in about the 11th century AD, and rapidly became widely popular.^[7]

The central role of the chakras in this model is the raising of Kundalini, where it pierces the various centers, causing various levels of realisation and resulting in the obtention of various siddhis or occult powers, until reaching the crown of the head, resulting in union with the Divine. The methods on how to raise kundalini are generally secret, but a number of methods have been published, for example the Bihar school of yoga begin with a number of preparatory practices such as asanas and pranayama to purify the nadis, and then a number of practices and meditations specific to each chakra, and finally the raising of the kundalini through special kriyas, which terminate in the vision of ones causal self^[8]

Vajrayana (Buddhist Tantra)

The Tibetan theory of chakras plays an important role in all the Highest Yoga Tantras. They play a pivotal role in all Completion stage practices (as opposed to Generation stage practices), where an attempt is made to bring all the subtle winds of the body into the central channel, to realise the clear light of bliss and emptiness, and to attain the 'illusory body' of a divinity .^[8]

The Tibetan system states that the central channel begins at the point of the third eye, curves up to the crown of the head, and then goes straight down the body to the tip of the sexual organ. The two side channels run parallel to, and without any space in between, the central channel, but they begin at the two nostrils: the lunar channel ends in the sexual organ, and the solar channel in the anus. Along the central channel are positioned 10 chakras, of which usually four or five are expounded as being important. They are located in the following positions:

1. Third eye between the eyebrows
2. The wind wheel on the forehead
3. The crown wheel on the top of the head
4. The throat wheel



Thousand Petalled Crown Chakra, Two Petalled Brow Chakra, Sixteen Petalled Throat Chakra (Nepal, 17th Century)

5. The fire wheel between the throat and the heart
6. The heart wheel
7. The navel wheel
8. The secret place, four fingers below the navel
9. The jewel wheel on the sexual organ, near the end
10. The tip of the sexual organ

The channels run parallel through them, but at the navel, heart, throat and crown the two side channels twist around the central channel. At the navel, throat and crown, there is a twofold knot caused by each side channel twisting once around the central channel. At the heart wheel there is a sixfold knot, where each side channel twists around three times. An important part of completion stage practice involves loosening and undoing these knots.

Within the chakras exist the 'subtle drops'. The white drop exists in the crown, the red drop exists in the navel, and at the heart exists the indestructible red and white drop, which leaves the body at the time of death. In addition, each chakra has a number of 'spokes' or 'petals', which branch off into thousands of subtle channels running to every part of the body, and each contains a Sanskrit syllable.

By visualising a specific chakra, the subtle winds (which follow the mind), enter the central channel. The chakra at which they enter is important in order to realise specific practices, for example, meditating on the syllable 'Ah' in the navel chakra is important for the practice of *tummo*, or inner fire, the basis of the six yogas of Naropa. Meditating on the 'Hum' in the heart chakra is important for realising the Clear Light of bliss and emptiness. Meditating on the throat chakra is important for lucid dreaming and the practices of dream yoga. And meditating on the crown chakra is important for consciousness projection, either to another world, or into another body.

In general, the higher tantras, starting with the *Guhyasamaja* tantra, are very uniform in their descriptions of the chakras, channels and drops. The *Kalachakra* tantra has a slightly different system, which relates the chakras with astrology.

According to contemporary Buddhist teacher Tarthang Tulku, the heart chakra is very important for the feeling of existential fulfillment.

A result of energetic imbalance among the chakras is an almost continuous feeling of dissatisfaction. When the heart chakra is agitated, people lose touch with feelings and sensations, and that breeds the sense of dissatisfaction. That leads to looking outside for fulfillment.

When people live in their heads, feelings are secondary; they are interpretations of mental images that are fed back to the individual. When awareness is focused on memories of past experiences and mental verbalisations, the energy flow to the head chakra increases and the energy flow to the heart chakra lessens. Without nurturing feelings of the heart a subtle form of anxiety arises which results in the self reaching out for experience.

When the throat chakra settles and energy is distributed evenly between the head and the heart chakras, one is able to truly contact one's senses and touch real feelings.^[9]

Chögyal Namkai Norbu Rinpoche teaches a version of the Six Lokas sadhana which works with the chakra system.

The kye-rim (Tibetan) and dzog-rim (Tibetan) stages work with the 'chakra' (Tibetan: *khorlo*).

Bön

Chakras, as pranic centers of the body according to the Himalayan Bönpo tradition, influence the quality of experience, because movement of prana cannot be separated from experience. Each of the six major chakras are linked to experiential qualities of one of the six realms of existence.^[8]

A modern teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, uses a computer analogy: main chakras are like hard drives. Each hard drive has many files. One of the files is always open in each of the chakras, no matter how "closed" that particular chakra may be. What is displayed by the file shapes experience.

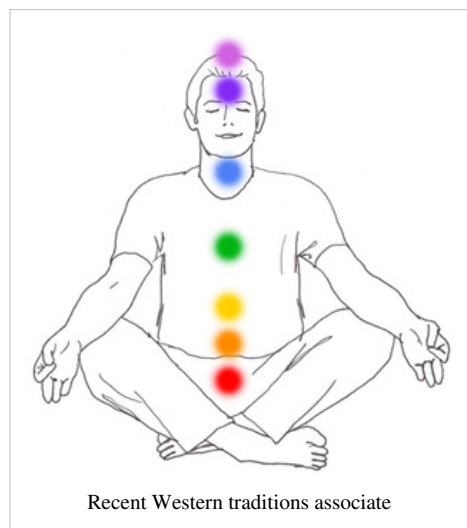
The tsa lung practices such as those embodied in Trul Khor lineages open channels so *lung* (*Lung* is a Tibetan term cognate with prana or qi) may move without obstruction. Yoga opens chakras and evokes positive qualities associated with a particular chakra. In the hard drive analogy, the screen is cleared and a file is called up that contains positive, supportive qualities. A seed syllable (Sanskrit bija) is used both as a password that evokes the positive quality and the armour that sustains the quality.^[8]

Tantric practice is said to eventually transform all experience into bliss. The practice aims to liberate from negative conditioning and leads to control over perception and cognition.^[8]

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaches a version of the Six Lokas sadhana which works with the chakra system.

Western derivative models and interpretations

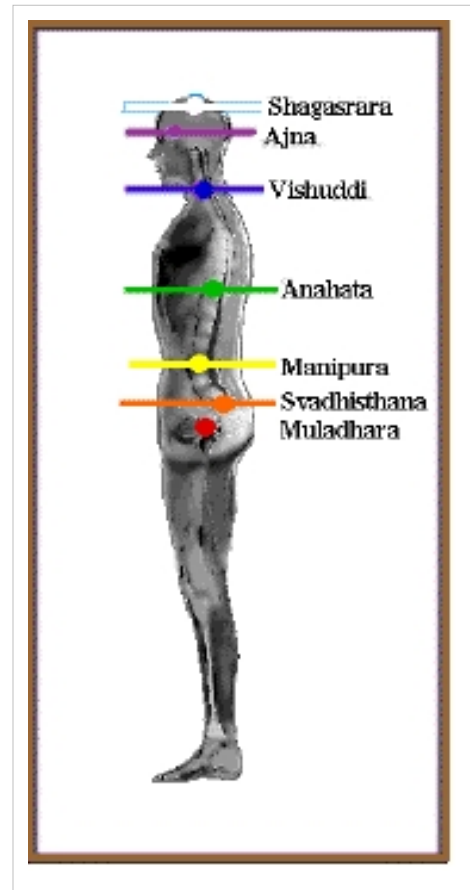
In Western culture, a concept similar to that of prana can be traced back as far as the 18th century's Franz Anton Mesmer that used 'animal magnetism' to cure disease. However it was only in 1927 that the shakta theory of seven main chakras, that has become most popular in the West, was introduced, largely through the translation of two Indian texts: the *Sat-Cakra-Nirupana*, and the *Padaka-Pancaka*, by Sir John Woodroffe, alias Arthur Avalon, in a book titled *The Serpent Power*.^[10] This book is extremely detailed and complex, and later the ideas were developed into the predominant Western view of the chakras by C. W. Leadbeater in his book *The Chakras*. Many of the views which directed Leadbeater's understanding of the chakras were influenced by previous theosophist authors, in particular Johann Georg Gichtel, a disciple of Jakob Böhme, and his book *Theosophia Practica* (1696), in which Gichtel directly refers to inner *force centers*, a concept reminiscent of the chakras.^[11]



Due to the similarities between the Chinese and Indian philosophies, the notion of chakras was quickly amalgamated into Chinese practices such as acupuncture and belief in ki. The confluence of these two distinct healing traditions and their common practitioners' own inventiveness have led to an ever-changing and expanding array of concepts in the western world. According to medical intuitive and author, Caroline Myss, who described chakras in her work *Anatomy of the Spirit* (1996), "Every thought and experience you've ever had in your life gets filtered through these chakra databases. Each event is recorded into your cells...", in effect your biography becomes your biology.^[12]

The chakras are described as being aligned in an ascending column from the base of the spine to the top of the head. In New Age practices, each chakra is often associated with a certain colour. In various traditions chakras are associated with multiple physiological functions, an aspect of consciousness, a classical element, and other distinguishing characteristics. They are visualized as lotuses/flowers with a different number of petals in every chakra.

The chakras are thought to vitalise the physical body and to be associated with interactions of a physical, emotional and mental nature. They are considered loci of life energy or prana, also called shakti, qi (Chinese; *ki* in Japanese), koach-ha-guf^[13] (Hebrew), bios (Greek) & aether (Greek, English), which is thought to flow among them along pathways called nadis. The function of the chakras is to spin and draw in this energy to keep the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health of the body in balance. They are said by some to reflect how the unified consciousness of humanity (the immortal human being or the soul), is divided to manage different aspects of earthly life (body/instinct/vital energy/deeper emotions/communication/having an overview of life/contact to God). The chakras are placed at differing levels of spiritual subtlety, with Sahasrara at the top being concerned with pure consciousness, and Muladhara at the bottom being concerned with matter, which is seen simply as condensed, or gross consciousness.



Rudolf Steiner (one-time Theosophist, and founder of Anthroposophy) says much about the chakras that is unusual, especially that the chakra system is dynamic and evolving and is very different for modern people than it was in ancient times, and will in turn be radically different in future times. In contrast to the traditional eastern teachings, Steiner describes a sequence of development from the top down rather than the bottom up. This is the so called 'Christos Path' which has not always been available to humanity. [This is also revealed by Swami Sivananda in his book on Japa Yoga, Himalaya Press 1978. In which the Swami states that a yogi that practices Japa with only the Om and is successful at Mahasamyama {oneness with the object...in this case a Word being meditated on} becomes a direct disciple of that, the OM, the most Holy of all words/syllables { the same as the word of creation as recognized by the Torah, although this is not professed or quite possibly not even recognized by those of secular authority in either Hebraism or Christianity} thus the yogi achieving this feat needs no Guru or Sat-guru* to achieve any Spiritual goal {*Archetype / Ascended Master i.e. A Krishna, a Rama, a Jesus, a Nanak a Buddha..et al.} and Swami Sivananda mentions that this yogi has a path that is, in all recognizable ways and manners, reverse that of other Yogis or Spiritual aspirants and their paths and those include all Christian ascetics, in that this spiritual aspirant then works through the chakras, mastering them from the crown down. Whereas every other well known path and all major religions start by trying to master the chakras starting with the 'Svadhithana Chakra' {Sex}, these Yogis aren't expected to renounce sex or certain foods, and by virtue of this they do not need to remove themselves from the world of temptations and become monks or recluses. They can stay in the world of men and live what appears to be a normal life that observes whatever local custom{s} there may be. Trevor Ravenscroft also mentions this spiritual goal and achievement in his book, "The Cup Of Destiny", and says that these practices and achievements were known and the most highly regarded and desired by the Templar Knights of old.] He also seems to ignore the Thousand Petalled chakra at the crown of the head and instead cryptically mentions an eight-petalled chakra located between the Ten Petalled and the Six Petalled ones. In his book *How to Know Higher Worlds* Steiner gives clear instructions on how to develop the chakras safely into maturity. These are more like life disciplines than exercises

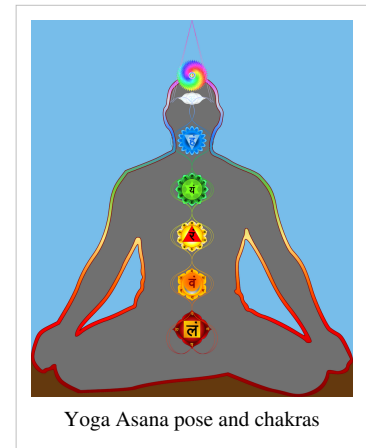
and can take considerable time. He warns that while quicker methods exist, they can be dangerous to one's health, character, or sanity.

New Age writers, such as Anodea Judith in her book *Wheels of Life*, have written about the chakras in great detail, including the reasons for their appearance and functions.

Another unique interpretation of the seven chakras is presented by writer and artist Zachary Selig. In the book *Kundalini Awakening, a Gentle Guide to Chakra Activation and Spiritual Growth*, he presents a unique codex titled "Relaxatia", a solar Kundalini paradigm that is a codex of the human chakra system and the solar light spectrum, designed to activate Kundalini through his colour-coded chakra paintings.^[14]

Additionally, some chakra system models describe one or more Transpersonal chakras above the crown chakra, and an Earth star chakra below the feet. There are also held to be many minor chakras, for example between the major chakras.

Chakras are also used in neurolinguistic programming to connect NLP logical levels with spiritual goals on the crown, intellectual on the forehead and so on.^[15]



Yoga Asana pose and chakras

Endocrine system

The primary importance and level of existence of chakras is posited to be in the psyche. However, there are those who believe that chakras have a physical manifestation as well.^[16] The author Gary Osborn, for instance, has described the chakras as metaphysical counterparts to the endocrine glands,^[17] while Anodea Judith noted a marked similarity between the positions of the two and the roles described for each.^[18] Stephen Sturgess also links the lower six chakras to specific nerve plexuses along the spinal cord as well as glands.^[19] C.W. Leadbeater associated the Anja chakra with the pineal gland,^[20] which is a part of the endocrine system. Edgar Cayce said that the 7 churches of the Book of Revelation are endocrine glands.^[21]

The Spectrum of Light

A recent development in Western practices dating back to the 1940s is to associate each one of the seven chakras to a given colour and a corresponding crystal. For example, the chakra in the forehead is associated with the colour purple, so to cure a headache you would apply a purple stone to the forehead. This idea has proven highly popular and has been integrated by all but a few practitioners.

Mercier introduces the relation of colour energy to the science of the light spectrum;

"As humans, we exist within the 49th Octave of Vibration of the electromagnetic light spectrum. Below this range are barely visible radiant heat, then invisible infrared, television and radiowaves, sound and brain waves; above it is barely visible ultraviolet, then the invisible frequencies of chemicals and perfumes, followed by x-rays, gamma rays, radium rays and unknown cosmic rays.^[22]

Understanding existence and physical form as an interpretation of light energy through the physical eyes will open up greater potential to explore the energetic boundaries of color, form and light that are perceived as immediate reality. Indian Yogic teachings assign to the seven major chakras specific qualities, such as color of influence (from the 7 rays of spectrum light), elements (such as earth, air, water & ether), body sense (such as touch, taste, and smell), and relation to an endocrine gland.^[23]

Description

| Tantric chakras |
|-----------------|
| Sahasrara |
| Ajna |
| Vishuddha |
| Anahata |
| Manipura |
| Swadhisthana |
| Muladhara |
| Bindu |

Seven chakras in particular are described in the Shakta Tantra tradition that was brought over to the West. Below is a description of each of them, with Eastern and Western associations.

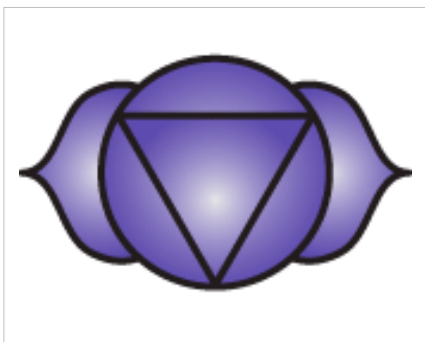
Sahasrara: The Crown Chakra



Sahasrara, which means 1000 petalled lotus, is generally considered to be the chakra of pure consciousness, within which there is neither object nor subject. When the female kundalini Shakti energy rises to this point, it unites with the male Shiva energy, and a state of liberating samadhi is attained. Symbolized by a lotus with one thousand multi-coloured petals, it is located either at the crown of the head, or above the crown of the head. Sahasrara is represented by the colour white and it involves such issues as inner wisdom and the death of the body. Its role may be envisioned somewhat similarly to that of the pituitary gland, which secretes hormones to communicate to the rest of the endocrine system and also connects to the central nervous system via the hypothalamus. According to author Gary Osborn, the thalamus is thought to have a key role in the physical basis of consciousness and is the 'Bridal Chamber' mentioned in the Gnostic scriptures. Sahasrara's inner aspect deals with the release of karma, physical action with meditation, mental action with universal consciousness and unity, and emotional action with "beingness".^[24]

In Tibetan buddhism, the point at the crown of the head is represented by a white circle, with 32 downward pointing petals. It is of primary importance in the performance of phowa, or consciousness projection after death, in order to obtain rebirth in a Pure Land. Within this chakra is contained the White drop, or Bodhicitta, which is the essence of masculine energy.

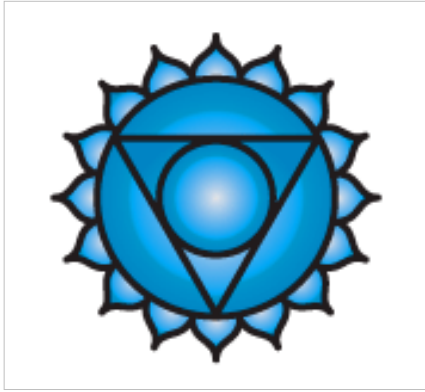
Ajna: The Brow Chakra



Ajna is symbolised by a lotus with two petals, and corresponds to the colors violet, indigo or deep blue. It is at this point that the 2 side nadis Ida and Pingala are said to terminate and merge with the central channel Sushumna, signifying the end of duality. The seed syllable for this chakra is the syllable OM, and the presiding deity is Ardhanarishvara, who is a half male, half female Shiva/Shakti. The Shakti goddess of Ajna is called Hakini. Ajna (along with Bindu), is known as the third eye chakra and is linked to the pineal gland which may inform a model of its envisioning. The pineal gland is a light sensitive gland that produces the hormone melatonin which regulates sleep and waking up. Ajna's key issues involve balancing the higher & lower selves and trusting inner guidance. Ajna's inner aspect relates to the access of intuition. Mentally, Ajna deals with visual consciousness. Emotionally, Ajna deals with clarity on an intuitive level.^[25] (Note: some opine that the pineal and pituitary glands should be exchanged in their relationship to the Crown and Brow chakras, based on the description in Arthur Avalon's book on kundalini called *Serpent Power* or empirical research.)

In Tibetan Buddhism, this point is actually the end of the central channel, since the central channel rises up from the sexual organ to the crown of the head, and then curves over the head and down to the third eye. While the central channel finishes here, the two side channels continue down to the 2 nostrils.

Vishuddha: The Throat Chakra



Vishuddha (also Vishuddhi) is depicted as a silver crescent within a white circle, with 16 light or pale blue, or turquoise petals. The seed mantra is Ham, and the residing deity is Panchavaktra shiva, with 5 heads and 4 arms, and the Shakti is Shakini. Vishuddha may be understood as relating to communication and growth through expression. This chakra is paralleled to the thyroid, a gland that is also in the throat and which produces thyroid hormone, responsible for growth and maturation. Physically, Vishuddha governs communication, emotionally it governs independence, mentally it governs fluent thought, and spiritually, it governs a sense of security.^[26] In Tibetan buddhism, this chakra is red, with 16 upward pointing petals. It plays an important role in Dream Yoga, the art of lucid dreaming.

Anahata: The Heart Chakra



Anahata, or Anahata-puri, or padma-sundara is symbolised by a circular flower with twelve vermilion, or green petals. (See also heartmind). Within it is a yantra of 2 intersecting triangles, forming a star of David, symbolising a union of the male and female. The seed mantra is Yam, the presiding deity is Ishana Rudra Shiva, and the Shakti is Kakini. Anahata is related to the thymus, located in the chest. The thymus is an element of the immune system as well as being part of the endocrine system. It is the site of maturation of the T cells responsible for fending off disease and may be adversely affected by stress. . Anahata is related to the colours green or pink. Key issues involving Anahata involve complex emotions, compassion, tenderness, unconditional love, equilibrium, rejection and well-being. Physically Anahata governs circulation, emotionally it governs unconditional love for the self and others, mentally it governs passion, and spiritually it governs devotion.^[27]

In Tibetan buddhism, this centre is extremely important, as being the home of the indestructible red/white drop, which carries our consciousness to our next lives. It is described as being white, circular, with 8 downward pointing petals, and the seed syllable Hum inside. During mantra recitation in the lower tantras, a flame is imagined inside of the heart, from which the mantra rings out. Within the higher tantras, this chakra is very important for realising the Clear Light.

Manipura: The Solar Plexus Chakra



Manipura or manipuraka is symbolised by a downward pointing triangle with ten petals. The seed syllable is Ram, and the presiding deity is Braddha Rudra, with Lakini as the Shakti.

Manipura is related to the metabolic and digestive systems. Manipura is believed to correspond to Islets of Langerhans,^[28] which are groups of cells in the pancreas, as well as the outer adrenal glands and the adrenal cortex. These play a valuable role in digestion, the conversion of food matter into energy for the body. The colour that corresponds to Manipura is yellow. Key issues governed by Manipura are issues of personal power, fear, anxiety, opinion-formation, introversion, and transition from simple or base emotions to complex. Physically, Manipura governs digestion, mentally it governs personal power, emotionally it governs expansiveness, and spiritually, all matters of growth.^[29]

In Tibetan buddhism, this wheel is represented as a triangle with 64 upward pointing petals. It is the home of the Red drop, or red bodhicitta, which is the essence of feminine energy (as opposed to the Shakta system, where the kundalini energy resides in Muladhara). It contains the seed syllable short-Ah, which is of primary importance in the Tummo inner fire meditation, which is the system by which the energy of the red drop is raised to the white drop in the crown.

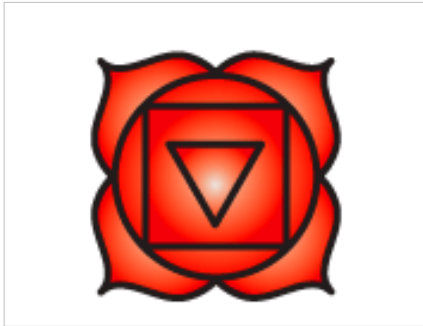
Swadhisthana: The Sacral Chakra



Swadhisthana, Svadisthana or adhishtana is symbolized by a white lotus within which is a crescent moon, with six vermillion, or orange petals. The seed mantra is Vam, and the presiding deity is Bramha, with the Shakti being Rakini (or Chakini). The animal associated is the crocodile of Varuna. The Sacral Chakra is located in the sacrum (hence the name) and is considered to correspond to the testes or the ovaries that produce the various sex hormones involved in the reproductive cycle. Swadisthana is also considered to be related to, more generally, the genitourinary system and the adrenals. The key issues involving Swadisthana are relationships, violence, addictions, basic emotional needs, and pleasure. Physically, Swadisthana governs reproduction, mentally it governs creativity, emotionally it governs joy, and spiritually it governs enthusiasm.^[30]

In Tibetan buddhism, this is known as the Secret Place wheel. Below this point the Shakta tantra and Vajrayana systems diverge somewhat.

Muladhara: The Base Chakra



Muladhara or root chakra is represented as a yellow square, with 4 red petals. The seed syllable is Lam, the deity is Ganesha, and the Shakti is Dakini. The associated animal is the elephant Ganesha. This chakra is where the 3 channels are merged, then separate and begin their upward movement. Inside of this chakra is wrapped up the goddess kundalini three times around a black lingam. It is the seat of the red bindu, the female drop (which in Tibetan vajrayana is located at the navel chakra).

Muladhara is related to instinct, security, survival and also to basic human potentiality. This center is located in the perineum, which is the region between the genital and the anus. Although no endocrine organ is placed here, it is said to relate to the gonads and the adrenal medulla, responsible for the fight-or-flight response when survival is under threat. There is a muscle located in this region that controls ejaculation in the sexual act of the human male. A parallel is charted between the sperm cell and the ovum where the genetic code lies coiled and the kundalini. Muladhara is symbolized by a lotus with four petals and the colour red. Key issues involve sexuality, lust and obsession. Physically, Muladhara governs sexuality, mentally it governs stability, emotionally it governs sensuality, and spiritually it governs a sense of security.^[31]

There is no chakra that exists in this position within Tibetan buddhism. Instead, below the secret place wheel, there are 2 other wheels, the jewel wheel, which is located in the middle of the sex organ, and the wheel located at the tip of the sex organ. These wheels are extremely important for the generation of great bliss, and are involved with tantric consort practices.

Minor chakras

In addition to the 7 major chakras, there are a number of other chakras which have importance within different systems. For example, Woodroffe describes 7 head chakras (including Ajna and Sahasrara) in his other Indian text sources. Lowest to highest they are: Talu/Talana/Lalana, Ajna, Manas, Soma, Brahmarandra, Sri (inside Sahasrara), Sahasrara. In addition, the chakra Hrit known as the wish-fulfilling tree is often included below the heart, which may be the same as a chakra known as Surya located at the solar plexus. Some models also have a series of 7 lower chakras below muladhara that go down the legs.

Hrit chakra or Surya chakra

This chakra is a minor chakra located just below the heart at the solar plexus, and is known as the wish-fulfilling tree. Here, the ability to determine your destiny becomes a reality. It is also known as the Surya chakra.^[32] It supports the actions of Manipura chakra by providing it with the element of heat, and is responsible for absorbing energy from the sun.

In Tibetan buddhism, a similar chakra called the Fire Wheel is included in the scheme, but this is located above the heart and below the throat.

Lalana/Talumula

A chakra known as Lalana is situated in one of two places, either in the roof of the mouth, between Visuddhi and Ajna, or on the forehead, above Ajna. The Lalana chakra on the roof of the mouth is related to Bindu and Vishuddhi. When the nectar amrit trickles down from Bindu, it is stored in lalana. This nectar can fall down to Manipura and be burned up, causing gradual degeneration, or through certain practices it can be passed to Visuddhi and purified, becoming a nectar of immortality.

Manas

A chakra known as Manas (mind) is located either between the navel and the heart, close to Surya, or is located above Ajna on the forehead. The version on the forehead has 6 petals, connected to the 5 sense objects plus the mind. In Tibetan buddhism, the chakra located on the forehead is called the Wind wheel, and has 6 spokes.

Bindu Visarga/Indu/Chandra

Bindu visarga, is located either at the top back of the head, where some Brahmins leave a tuft of hair growing, or in the middle forehead. It is symbolised by a crescent moon. This chakra secretes an ambrosial fluid, amrit, and is the seat of the white bindu (compare with the white bodhicitta drop in the crown chakra in the Vajrayana system).

Brahmarandra/Nirvana

In some systems, Sahasrara is the chakra that is on the crown of the head. However, other systems, such as that expounded by Shri Aurobindo, state that the real Sahasrara is located some way above the top of the head, and that the crown chakra is in fact Brahmarandra, a sort of secondary Sahasrara with 100 white petals.

Shri/Guru

This is a minor chakra located slightly above the top of the head. It is an upward facing 12 petalled lotus, and it is associated with the Guru, that higher force that guides us through our spiritual journey.

Lower chakras

There are said to be a series of 7 chakras below muladhara going down the leg,^[33] corresponding the base animal instincts, and to the Hindu underworld patala. They are called atala, vitala, sutala, talatala, rasatala, mahatala and patala.

Atala

This chakra is located in the hips, it governs fear and lust.

Vitala

Located in the thighs, it governs anger and resentment.

Sutala

Located in the knees, it governs jealousy.

Talatala

Translated as 'under the bottom level', it is located in the calves, and it is a state of prolonged confusion and instinctive wilfulness.

Rasatala

Located in the ankles, it is the centre of selfishness and pure animal nature.

Mahatala

Located in the feet, this is the dark realm 'without conscience', and inner blindness.

Patala

Located in the soles of the feet, this is the realm of malice, murder, torture and hatred, and in Hindu mythology it borders on the realm of Naraka, or Hell.

Others

There are said to be 21 minor chakras which are reflected points of the major chakras.^[34] These 21 are further grouped into 10 bilateral minor chakras that correspond to the foot, hand, knee, elbow, groin, clavicular, navel, shoulder and ear. The spleen may also be classified as a minor chakra by some authorities despite not having an associated coupled minor chakra.

Comparisons with other Esoteric traditions

A number of other mystical traditions talk about subtle energies that flow through the body, and identify specific parts of the body as being subtle centres. There are many similarities between systems, however, none of these traditions developed in isolation; the Indian mystical traditions had contact with the Chinese and Islamic mystical traditions, and they may have mutually influenced one another. Similarly, the Jewish and Islamic mystical traditions shared a great deal in common, especially during the Islamic occupation of Spain, and Jewish mysticism in particular had influence over Christian mysticism.

Qigong, the Dantian

Qigong also relies on a similar model of the human body as an energy system, except that it involves the circulation of qi (ki, chi) energy.^{[35] [36]} The Qi energy, equivalent to the Hindu Prana, flows through the energy channels called meridians, equivalent to the nadis, but 2 other energies are also important, Jing, the sexual energy, and Shen, or spirit energy.

In the principle circuit of qi, called the Microcosmic orbit, energy rises up a main meridian along the spine, but also comes back down the front torso. Throughout its cycle it enters various dantians (elixir fields) which act as furnaces, where the types of energy in the body (jing, qi and shen) are progressively refined.^[37] These Dantians play a very similar role to that of chakras. The number of Dantians varies depending on the system; the navel dantian is the most well-known (it is called the Hara in Japan), but there is usually a Dantian located at the heart and between the eyebrows.^[38] The lower dantian at or below the navel transforms sexual essence, or jing, into qi energy. The middle dantian in the middle of the chest transforms qi energy into shen, or spirit, and the higher dantian at the level of the forehead (or at the top of the head), transforms Shen into wuji, infinite space of void.^[39]

In Japan, the word qi is written ki, and is related to the practice of Reiki, and plays an important role in Japanese martial arts such as Aikido.

Sufism, the Lataif

Many Sufi orders make use of Lata'if, subtle centres in the body which are between 4 or 7 in number, and relate to ever more subtle levels of intimacy with Allah. But although some Lataif correspond in position to the chakras, there are also some big differences in position and meaning.

One 6 lata'if system positions the Nafs, or lower self, below the navel, the Qalb, or heart, in the left of the chest, the Ruh, or spirit, to the right of the chest, the Sirr, or secret, in the solar plexus, the Khafi, or latent subtlety, in the position of the third eye, and the Akhfa, or most arcane, at the top of the head. They are frequently associated with a colour, as well as a particular prophet.

Unlike the Indian and Chinese system, the emphasis is not upon these subtle centres performing a kind of inner alchemy upon the energies of the body, such as kundalini awakening, and they are not considered like organs for the subtle body; instead, they represent more abstract, philosophical concepts, representing ever greater degrees of closeness to Allah.

Christianity, Hesychasm

A completely separate contemplative movement within the Eastern Orthodox church is Hesychasm, a form of Christian meditation. Comparisons have been made between the Hesychastic centres of prayer and the position of the chakras.^[40] Particular emphasis is placed upon the heart area. However, there is no talk about these centres as having any sort of metaphysical existence. Far more than in any of the cases discussed above, the centres are simply places to focus the concentration during prayer.

Other mystical traditions exist within Christianity. The Renaissance saw the birth of 'Christian Kabbalah', which had its roots in Jewish kabbalah.

Etymology

Bhattacharyya's review of Tantric history says that the word *chakra* is used to mean several different things in the Sanskrit sources:^[41]

1. "Circle," used in a variety of senses, symbolizing endless rotation of shakti.
2. A circle of people. In rituals there are different *cakra-sādhanā* in which adherents assemble and perform rites. According to the *Niruttaratantra*, chakras in the sense of assemblies are of 5 types.
3. The term chakra also is used to denote yantras or mystic diagrams, variously known as *trikoṇa-cakra*, *aṣṭakoṇa-cakra*, etc.
4. Different "nerve plexus within the body."

In Buddhist literature the Sanskrit term *cakra* (Pali *cakka*) is used in a different sense of "circle," referring to a Buddhist conception of the 4 circles or states of existence in which gods or men may find themselves.^[42]

The linguist Jorma Koivulehto wrote (2001) of the annual Finnish *Kekri* celebration having loaned the word from early Indo-Aryan.^[43] Indo-European cognates include Greek *kuklos*, Lithuanian *kaklas*, Tocharian B *kokale* and English "wheel."^[44]

Cognates of "chakra" still exist in modern Asian languages as well. In Malay, "cakera" means "disc," e.g. "cakera padat" = "compact disc."

Notes

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- [7] Flood, op. cit., p. 99.
- [8] Swami Satyananda Saraswati, *Kundalini Tantra*.
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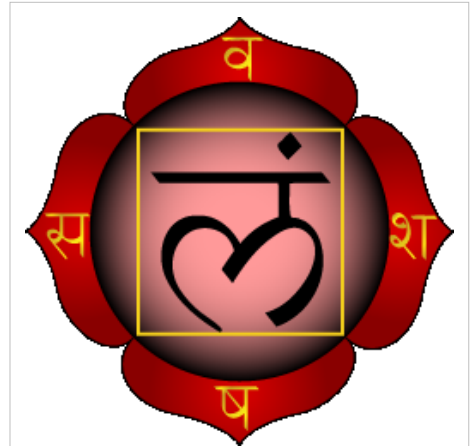
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External links

- Sites related to chakra (<http://search.dmoz.org/cgi-bin/search?search=chakra>) at the Open Directory Project

Muladhara

Muladhara (Sanskrit: मूलाधार, Mūlādhāra), meaning "root place" is the first of the main seven chakras according to Hindu Tantrism. It may be represented as red, although its root square form is usually colored yellow.



Muladhara chakra is shown as having four petals, bearing the Sanskrit letters *va*, *scha*, *sha*, and *sa*. The seed sound in the center is *lam*. The tattwa of Earth is shown (here in outline) as a yellow square.

Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Description

Location

Muladhara is said to be located at the base of the spine in the vicinity of the coccygeal plexus beneath the sacrum ^[1], while it's kshetram, or superficial activation point, is located on the perineum ^[2].

Appearance

Muladhara is described as a yellow, square lotus, surrounded by 8 shining spears on the sides and corners, and with 4 red petals. The deity of this region is Indra, who is yellow in colour, 4-armed, holding a vajra and blue lotus in his hands, and mounted upon the white elephant Airawata, who has seven trunks, denoting the seven elements vital to physical functioning. Occasionally, instead of Indra, the deity is Ganesha, with coral orange skin, wearing a lemon yellow dhoti with a green silk scarf draped around his shoulders. In his 3 of his hands he holds a ladu, a lotus flower, a hatchet, and the fourth is raised in the mudra of dispelling fear.

Seed mantra

The seed mantra syllable is 'Lam'. Within the bindu, or point that forms a part of the letter, just above it, is Brahma, who is deep red, with 4 faces and 4 arms, and holding a staff, a sacred vase of nectar, a rosary and making the gesture of dispelling fear (alternatively instead of the staff and rosary he is holding a lotus flower and the sacred scriptures). He is seated on a swan. His Shakti is a goddess called Dakini. She is seated on a red lotus, and is shining red or white, a beautiful face with 3 eyes, with 4 arms, holding a trident, a skulled staff, a swan, and a drinking vessel (instead of a swan and drinking vessel, she sometimes is holding a sword and a shield).

Seat of Kundalini

In the centre of the square, below the seed syllable, is a deep red inverted triangle. Within this resides/sleeps the kundalini shakti, the great spiritual potential, waiting to be aroused and brought back up to the source from which it originated, Brahman. She is represented as a snake wrapped 3 and a half times around a smokey grey lingam.

Petals

The 4 petals are red, with the sanskrit syllables Va, Scha, Sha and Sa written in gold upon them, representing 4 vrittis of greatest joy, natural pleasure, delight in controlling passion, and blissfulness in concentration, or alternatively; dharma (psycho-spiritual longing), artha (psychic longing), kama (physical longing) and moksha (longing for spiritual liberation). [3]

Additional

Muladhara is the base from which the three main psychic channels or nadis emerge: the Ida, Pingala and Sushumna [4]. It is also believed that Muladhara is a subtle abode of the Hindu God, Ganapati. And in the highest revered prayer for Ganapati, the Ganapati Atharvashirsha, it is mentioned that 'one who worships Lord Ganapati would easily grasp the concept and realize Brahman.

Function

Muladhara is considered the 'root' or 'foundation' chakra, and is the transcendental basis of physical nature. It is also the seat of kundalini awakening, which begins its ascent here. Alternatively it is called the seat of the 'red bindu', or subtle drop, which is caused to rise up to the 'white bindu' in the head in order to unite the female and masculine energies of Shakti and Shiva.

It is associated with the element of earth, and the sense of smell, and the action of excretion.

Through concentration on muladhara, one is said to attain various siddhis or occult powers; one is said to become a Lord of Speech and king among men, with the luster of 10 million suns, and adept in all kinds of learning. He is ever free of disease, and his inmost spirit is full of gladness.

Association with the body

The location of Muladhara is at the base of the spine, and it is associated as well with the perineum, close to the anus. Being associated with the sense of smell, it is associated with the nose, and being associated with excretion, it is associated with the anus.

Practices

In kundalini yoga, there are various yogic practices held to incite the energy in Muladhara including: asanas (such as Garudasana, Shashankasana and Siddhasana); nosetip gazing, or Nasikagra Drishti; specific pranayamas; and most importantly the practice of mula bandha the contraction of the perineum, which awakens kundalini, and is also important for the retention of semen.

Comparisons with other systems

When compared to the other important Tantric system of Vajrayana in Tibet, the Muladhara chakra finds no parallel in the same place, unlike the other 6 chakras. Instead, the Tibetan system positions 2 chakras on the sexual organ, the jewel wheel in the middle, near the tip, and the tip of the sexual organ itself. These chakras are extremely important for the generation of great bliss, and play an important role in Highest tantra sexual practices. In the Tibetan system, the red drop, called the red bodhicitta, is not located here, but instead at the navel wheel. ^[5]

In the Sufi system of Lataif, there are 2 'lower' Lataif. One is the nafs, which is just below the navel. The nafs incorporates all the elements of man's 'lower self'. The other similar lataif is called the qalab, or mould, which appears in 7 lataif systems, and corresponds to the physical body, but this is sometimes located at the top of the head ^[6] Qalab is usually further divided into the 4 elements.

In the Kabbalah, the lowest Sephiroth is known as Malkuth, and performs the same transcendental role as the basis of physical nature. It is associated with the sexual organ, in close contact with Yesod ^[7].

Alternative names

- **Tantra:** Adhara, Brahma Padma, Bhumi Chakra, Chaturdala, Chatuhpatra, Muladhara, Mooladhara, Mula Chakra, Mula Padma
- **Vedas (late Upanishads):** Adhara, Brahma, Muladhara, Mulakanda
- **Puranic:** Adhara, Muladhara

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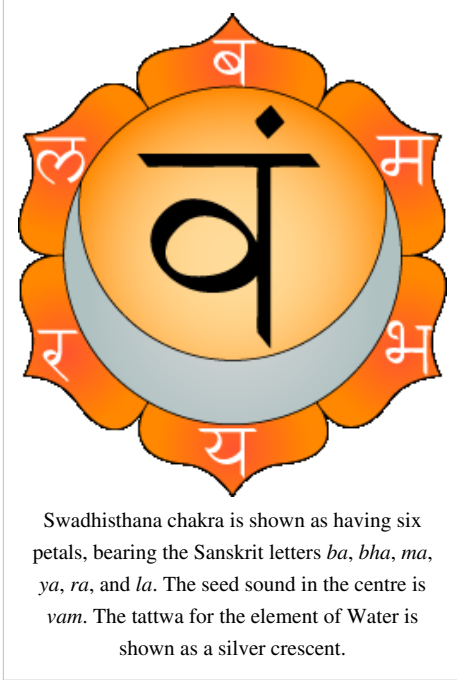
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External links

- Description of Muladhara Chakra from Kheper.net (<http://www.kheper.net/topics/chakras/Muladhara.htm>)

Swadhisthana



Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Swadhisthana (Sanskrit: स्वाधिष्ठान, Svādhiṣṭhāna) called 'One's own abode' is the second primary chakra according to Hindu Tantrism.

Description

Location

Swadhisthana is positioned at the tailbone, two finger-widths above Muladhara. It has six petals which match the vrittis of affection, pitilessness, feeling of all-destructiveness, delusion, disdain and suspicion. Its corresponding point in the front of the body (i.e. its kshetram) is at the pubic bone.

Appearance

Swadhisthana is described as a black lotus, with 6 vermillion coloured petals. Inside of this lotus is a white crescent moon, formed by two different sized inner circles, one inside of the other. The crescent moon is the water region, whose deity is Varuna, white in colour, four-armed, holding a noose and seated on a crocodile. The two inner circles also have petals, the larger one has 8 outward facing petals, and the smaller one has 8 inward facing petals.

Seed Mantra

The seed mantra, located in the innermost circle, is a moon-white Vam. Within the bindu, or dot, above the mantra is the deity Vishnu. He is shining dark blue, wearing a yellow dhoti, and holds a conch, a mace, a wheel and a lotus. He wears the shriwatsa mark, and the koustabha gem, and is seated either on a pink lotus, or on the divine eagle Garuda. His Shakti is the goddess Rakini (or Chakini). She is dark black, dressed in a red or white sari, seated on a red lotus, and she is either one faced and two armed, holding a sword and a shield, or two faced and 4 armed, holding either a trident, lotus, drum and vajra, or an arrow, skull, drum and axe.

Petals

The 6 petals are vermillion, and have the following syllables written on them in the colour of lightning; bam, bham, mam, yam, ram and lam. They represent the vrittis of affection, pitilessness, feeling of all-destructiveness, delusion, disdain and suspicion.

Function

Swadhisthana is associated with the unconscious, and with emotion. It is closely related to Muladhara in that Swadhisthana is where the different samskaras (potential karmas), lie dormant, and Muladhara is where these samskaras find expression. It is associated with the element of water, the sense of taste, and the action of reproduction.

Swadhisthana contains unconscious desires, especially sexual desire, and it is said ^[1] that to raise the kundalini shakti (energy of consciousness) above Swadhisthana is extremely difficult for this reason. Many saints have had to face the sexual temptations associated with this chakra.

Through meditation on Swadhisthana, the following siddhis or occult powers are said to be obtained. One is freed from all his enemies, and becomes a lord among yogis. His words flow like nectar in well-reasoned discourse. One gains loss of fear of water, awareness of astral entities, and the ability to taste anything desired for oneself or others.

Association with the body

The location of Svadhisthana is just in front of the spine, in the sacral region, and its kshetram or activation point is in the pubic region. Being connected with the sense of taste, it is associated with the tongue, and being connected with reproduction, it is associated with the genitals.

It is often associated with the endocrine organs of the testes or ovaries in men and women. These produce the hormones testosterone or estrogen, which are important factors in sexual behaviour. These are also the locations the spermatozoa or eggs are stored with their latent genetic information, like the latent samskaras that lie dormant within Svadhisthana.

Practices

Practices in kundalini yoga for controlling and balancing the energy in Svadhisthana chakra include vajroli mudra (contraction of the genitals), ashvini mudra (contraction of the anus) and various asanas and pranayamas.

Comparisons with other systems

The equivalent chakra in the Vajrayana highest tantra systems of Tibet is called the Secret Place, four fingers below the navel. It is red in colour, with 32 downward pointing spokes. Meditation on this point produces great bliss. ^[2]

In the Sufi system of Lataif, there is an energy centre called the nafs, which is just below the navel. The nafs incorporates all the elements of man's 'lower self', which must be tamed in order to attain closeness to Allah.

Western occultists make the kabbalistic association of Svadhisthana with the Sephirah Yesod. Yesod is also associated with the sexual organs. Its function in the tree of life is to gather the different energies that have been created in the descent down the tree and to distribute them to Malkuth, the material world, where the energy can find physical expression.

Alternative names

- **Tantra:** Adhishthana, Bhima, Shatpatra, Skaddala Padma, Swadhishtana, Wari Chakra
- **Vedas (late Upanishads):** Medhra, Swadhishtana
- **Puranic:** Swadhishtana

References

[1] Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Kundalini Tantra

[2] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Tantric Grounds and Paths

External links

- Svadhisthana - The Seat of Life by Anodea Judith (<http://www.llewellynencyclopedia.com/article/253>)

Manipura



Manipura chakra is shown as having ten petals, bearing the Sanskrit letters *dda*, *ddha*, *nna*, *ta*, *tha*, *da*, *dha*, *na*, *pa*, and *pha*. Note that the letters *ddha* and *pha* are incorrect in the diagram (see Devanagari#Consonants). The seed sound in the centre is *ram*. The tattwa for the element of Fire is shown (here in outline) as a red triangle.

Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Manipura (Sanskrit: मणिपुर, Maṇipūra), called "city of jewels", is the third primary chakra according to Hindu tradition.

Description

Location

Manipura is located at the spine directly behind either the navel or the solar plexus, depending on the system, while its kshetram or superficial activation point is located directly on the navel (or solar plexus).

Appearance

Manipura is represented by a downward pointing red triangle, the fire region, within a bright yellow circle, with 10 dark-blue or black petals, like heavily laden rain clouds. The triangle has a t-shaped swastika on each of its sides. The fire region is represented by the god Vahni, who is shining red, with 4 arms, holding a rosary and a spear, and making the gestures of granting boons and dispelling fear. He is seated on a ram, the animal that represents this chakra.

Seed Mantra

The seed mantra is the syllable 'Ram'. Within the bindu or dot above this mantra resides the deity Rudra, who is red or white, with 3 eyes, of ancient aspect with a silver beard, and smeared with white ashes. He makes the gestures of granting boons and dispelling fear. He is either seated upon a tiger skin, or upon a bull. His Shakti is the goddess Lakini. She is black or dark-blue vermillion, with 3 faces with 3 eyes each, and four-armed, holding a thunderbolt, the arrow shot from the bow of Kama, fire, and making the gesture of granting boons and dispelling fear. She is seated upon a red lotus.

Petals

The ten petals are dark-blue or black, like heavily laden rainclouds, with the syllables dda, ddha, nna, ta, tha, da, dha, na, pa, and pha upon them in a dark-blue colour. They correspond to the vrittis of spiritual ignorance, thirst, jealousy, treachery, shame, fear, disgust, delusion, foolishness and sadness.

Function

Manipura is considered the centre of dynamism, energy, willpower and achievement (Itcha shakti.), which radiates prana throughout the entire human body. It is associated with the power of fire, and digestion. It is also associated with the sense of sight, and the action of movement. Manipura is "the center of etheric-psyche intuition: a vague or non-specific, sensual sense of knowing; a vague sense of size, shape, and intent of being."^[1] As such, some psychics recommend "listening" to it since it may help in making better decisions in one's life on many different levels.^[2]

Through meditating on Manipura, one is said to attain the siddhi, or occult power, to create and destroy the world.

Association with the body

The position of Manipura is stated as being either behind the navel or the solar plexus. Sometimes, when it is located at the navel, a secondary chakra called Surya (sun) chakra is located at the solar plexus, whose role is to absorb and assimilate prana from the sun. Being related to the sense of sight, it is associated with the eyes, and being associated with movement, it is associated with the feet. In the endocrine system, Manipura is said to be associated with the pancreas, and the outer adrenal glands; the adrenal cortex. These glands create important hormones involved in digestion, converting food into energy for the body, in the same way that Manipura radiates prana throughout the body.

Practices

In kundalini yoga, different practices for arousing and balancing the energies of Manipura include various asanas which work on that part of the body, pranayama, Uddiyana bandha (exhaling and pulling back and up of the abdomen and diaphragm respectively) and agnisara kriya (practicing jalandhara bandha, and moving the abdomen in and out), as well as the practice of Nauli (stomach churning), and a pranayama called the union of prana and apana, where the lower and higher winds are made to unite together.

Comparisons with other systems

In the Vajrayana Highest Tantra traditions, the navel wheel is extremely important as being the seat of the 'red drop'. It is triangular, red, with 64 petals or channels that extend upwards. Inside of it is the short syllable 'Ah'. Meditation on this syllable is the key component of the practice of Tummo, or inner heat, where the subtle winds are made to enter the central channel, and rise up to the top of the channel, in an experience akin to that of 'raising the kundalini' in Hindu terminology, melting the subtle white drop in the crown, and causing the experience of great bliss. This practice is considered the first and most important of the 6 yogas of Naropa.^[3]

In Chinese qigong, there exists 3 Dantians, act as furnaces to convert different energies in the body. The lower Dantian exists in the region of the stomach. It's function is to convert sexual jing energy into Qi energy (a concept similar to Indian Prana).

Within the system of the Sufi Lataif-e-sitta, there are a number of Lataif on the torso, but they are not distributed vertically, like chakras, but have some to the left and some to the right. The nafs, or lower self, is a centre situated below the navel.

Western occultists make different kabbalistic associations with Manipura. For some, it relates to the sephira of Hod and Netzach, Netzach being that quality of energy to overcome different obstacles, and Hod being the tendency to control and break down energy into different forms, the two being contending and balancing forces, like the forces of anabolism and catabolism in the human body. Hod and Netzach are associated with the left and right legs and feet of the body ^[4].

Alternative names

- **Tantra:** Dashachchada, Dashadala Padma, Dashapatra, Dashapatrambuja, Manipura, Manipuraka, Nabhipadma, Nabhipankaja
- **Vedas (late Upanishads):** Manipura, Manipuraka, Nabhi Chakra
- **Puranic:** Manipura, Nabhi Chakra

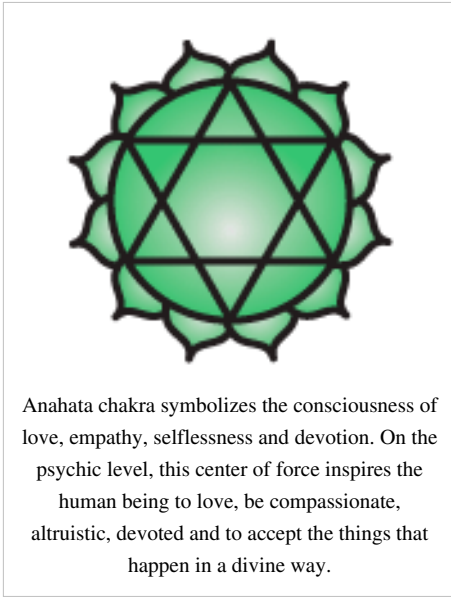
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- [4] Leonara Leet. The universal kabbalah

External links

- Description of Manipura Chakra from Kheper.net (<http://www.kheper.net/topics/chakras/Manipura.htm>)
- Manipura - The Power Chakra by Anodea Judith (<http://www.llewellynencyclopedia.com/article/254>)

Anahata



Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Anahata (Sanskrit: अनाहत, Anāhata) is the fourth primary chakra according to the Hindu Yogic and Tantric (Shakta) traditions.

In Sanskrit the word *anahata* - means *unhurt, un-struck and unbeaten*. *Anahata Nad* refers to the Vedic concept of *unstruck sound*, the sound of the celestial realm.

Description

Location

The Anahata chakra is positioned in the central channel behind the spine at the heart region, with its kshetram or superficial activation site actually in the heart region between the two breasts.^[1]

Appearance

Anahata is represented by a smoke grey lotus flower, with 12 vermillion petals. Inside of it is a smoke-coloured region that is made from the intersection of 2 triangles, creating a shatkona. The Shatkona is a symbol used in Hindu yantra that represents the union of both the male and feminine form. More specifically it is supposed to represent Purusha (the supreme being), and Prakriti (mother nature, or causal matter). Often this is represented as Shiva - Shakti. The deity of this region is Vayu, who is smoke coloured, four-armed, holding a kusha and riding upon an antelope, the animal of this chakra.

Seed mantra

The seed syllable is the mantra 'Yam', dark-grey in colour. Within the bindu or dot above the syllable resides the deity Isha (Lord in an all pervading form), who is either shining white or blue in colour, with either 1 or 5 faces, 3 eyes on each face, with either 2, 4 or 10 arms, clad in a tiger skin, holding a trident and a drum, or making gestures of granting boons and dispelling fear. His shakti is Kakini, who is shining yellow or rose in colour. She has a number of variations, having either 1, 3 or 6 faces, 2 or 4 arms, and holding a variety of implements, occasionally a sword, shield, skull and trident. She is seated on a red lotus.

Petals

The twelve petals are vermillion coloured, and upon them are inscribed the syllables kam, kham, gam, gham, ngam, cham, chham, jam, jham, nyam, tam and tham in sanskrit. They match the vrittis of lust, fraud, indecision, repentance, hope, anxiety, longing, impartiality, arrogance, incompetence, discrimination and defiance.

Function

Anahata is considered the seat of the Jivatman, and Para Shakti. In the Upanishads, this is described as being like a tiny flame that resided inside the heart. Anahata is so called because it is in this place that sages hear that sound (Anahata – Shabda) which comes without the striking of any two things together.” [2]. It is associated with the element of air, the sense of touch, and with actions of the hands.

Anahata is associated with the ability to make decisions outside of the realm of karma. In Manipura and below, man is bound by the laws of karma, and the fate he has in store for him. In Anahata, one is making decisions, 'following your heart', based upon one's higher self, and not from the unfulfilled emotions and desires of lower nature.

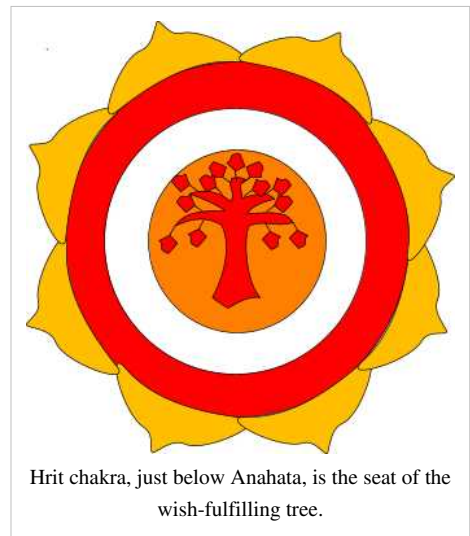
It is also associated with love and compassion, charity to others, and forms of psychic healing.

Meditation on this chakra is said to bring about the following siddhis, or occult powers; he becomes a lord of speech; he is dearer than the dearest to women; his senses are completely under control; and he can enter at will into another's body.

Hrit/Hridaya/Surya Chakra - The wish-fulfilling tree

Immediately below Anahata at the solar plexus, or sometimes located slightly to the left hand side of the body, is a minor chakra known as Hrit, or Hridaya (heart), with 8 petals. It contains 3 consecutive regions, a vermillion sun region, within which is a white moon region, within which is a deep-red fire region, and within this is the red wish-fulfilling tree, kalpa taru, which symbolizes the ability to manifest whatever you wish to happen in the world.

Hrit chakra is occasionally identified as Surya (Sun) chakra [3], which again is situated below the heart, and sometimes slightly to the left. It's role is to absorb energy from the sun, and to provide heat to the body and other chakras, in particular to Manipura, to which it provides the Agni or fire element.



Hrit chakra, just below Anahata, is the seat of the wish-fulfilling tree.

Associations with the body

Anahata is located near the region of the heart. Because of its association with touch, it is associated with the skin, and because of its association with actions of the hands, it is associated with the hands. In the endocrine system, Anahata is associated with the thymus gland, located in the chest. This gland produces white blood cells, that combat disease, and bring equilibrium to the body. The functioning of the thymus is greatest before puberty and is impaired by the appearance of sex hormones in the blood stream from puberty onwards.[citation needed]

Practices

In kundalini yoga, anahata is awoken and balanced through practices including asanas, pranayamas, and the practice of ajapa japa (repetition of a sacred mantra). It is purified through the process of bhakti (devotion).

Comparisons with other Systems

Tibetan Buddhism

The heart wheel in Tibetan Buddhism is the location of the indestructible red and white drop. At the time of death, all the subtle winds of the body dissolve and enter into this drop, which then leaves the body into the Bardo, intermediate stage, and then into rebirth. The heart wheel in this model is circular, white, and has 8 petals or channels that reach downwards. These channels divide into 3, the mind wheel, speech wheel, and body wheel, and go to 24 places in the body, after which they divide into 3 again, and then into 1000, producing 72000 channels which spread out throughout the whole body.^[4]

The heart wheel is very important within meditation. In the lower tantras, mantra recitation is done from the heart. At first, a mantra is recited verbally, then mentally, and then inside of the heart a tiny moon disc and a flame is imagined, from which the sound of the mantra is heard ringing out. In the higher tantras, the yogi attempts to dissolve the winds and drops into the central channel at the level of the heart in order to experience the Clear Light; this is one of the practices of the 6 yogas of Naropa.

In the Tibetan scheme of chakras there is also included a chakra known as the Fire Wheel. It's position is not, however, the same as the Hrit/Surya chakra, but is instead above the heart and below the throat.

Kabbalah

On the kabbalistic tree of life, the central sephirah, Tiphereth, is associated with the heart region.^[5] Christian kabbalists in particular associate this sephirah with love, healing and Jesus Christ.

Sufism

The Sufis manage a system of Lataif-e-sitta, that are positioned at various points on the body, and at the level of the heart there are 3 positioned horizontally. To the left of the chest is the Qalb, or heart, the Ruh, on the right hand side of the chest, and the Sirr, or secret, of the innermost heart, between the two of them.^[6]

The Qalb is called the heart of the mystic, which is caught between the downward pull of the lower nafs, and the upward pull of the spirit of Allah, and thus it can be blackened by sin. It may be purified by recitation of the names of God.

The Ruh is the centre of the spirit, the breath of Allah, and when awoken it counteracts the negative pull of the nafs.

The Sirr is the secret or innermost heart, called the heart of the heart, where Allah manifests his mystery to himself.

QiGong

In QiGong the middle Dantian is located in this region. This Dantian is one of the three furnaces that transform energy in the body. The middle Dantian transforms the qi energy into shen, or spirit energy.

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- [5] Dion Fortune. The Mystical Qabalah
- [6] Abu Bakr Siraj ad Din Cook. The Subtle Centres of the Heart

External links

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- Description of Anahata Chakra from Kheper.net (<http://www.kheper.net/topics/chakras/Anahata.htm>)
- Anahata - The Heart Chakra by Anodea Judith (<http://www.llewellynencyclopedia.com/article/255>)
- A fiction novel named Heart Chakra because the story is about love and compassion (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heart_Chakra:_A_story_of_one_man's_persuit_of_happiness.)

Vishuddha



Vishuddha chakra symbolizes the pure consciousness, and creativity. Aether is the element associated with it. On a psychic level, it governs expression, inspiration in speech, eloquence, and perception of the archetypal models.

Tantric chakras

| |
|--------------|
| Sahasrara |
| Ajna |
| Vishuddha |
| Anahata |
| Manipura |
| Swadhisthana |
| Muladhara |
| Bindu |

Vishuddha (Sanskrit: वसुद्ध, Viśuddha) also known as **Vishuddhi**, is the fifth primary chakra according to Hindu tradition.

Description

Location

Vishuddha is positioned at the neck region near the spine, with its ksehtram or superficial activation point in the pit of the throat.

Appearance

This chakra is white with 16 purple or smoke coloured petals, and within the pericarp is a sky-blue downward pointing triangle, within which is a circular region which is white like the full-moon, representing the element of akasha or ether. This region is represented by the deity Ambara, who is white in colour, with four arms, holding a noose and a goad, making the gestures of granting boons and dispelling fear, and seated upon a white elephant.

Seed Mantra

The bija mantra (seed sound) is the syllable हं **ham**, and is written in white upon the chakra. In the bindu or point above the mantra resides the deity Sadashiva, who has 5 faces and 10 arms. The right side of his body is a white Shiva, and the left half of the body is a golden Shakti. He is holding a trident, chisel, sword, vajra, fire, a great snake, a bell, a goad, and a noose, and is making the gesture of dispelling fear. He is clad in a tiger skin. His Shakti is Shakini, who is shining white, with five faces, three eyes each, and four armed, with a bow and arrow, noose, and goad, and seated on a red lotus.

Petals

Vishuddha has sixteen purple petals upon which are written the 16 Sanskrit vowels in golden;

अ a आ ā इ i ई ī उ u ऊ ū ऋ ṛ ॠ ṛī
 ॡ ॠ ॡ ॠ ए e ऐ ai ओ o औ au अः ḥ अं ṁ

NB: Some vowels listed above do not strictly correspond to the grammatical definition of a Sanskrit vowel, specifically ॡ, अः ḥ, and अं ṁ. See Sanskrit Phonology for details.

The petals correspond to the vrittis of the mantra Ong [Aum], the Sama-mantras, the mantra Hung, the mantra Phat, the mantra Washat, the mantra Swadha, the mantra Swaha, the mantra Namak, the nectar Amrita, and then the seven musical tones.

Function

Vishuddha chakra is known as the purification centre. Here the nectar amrit that drips down from the Bindu chakra, and is split into a pure form and a poison. In its more abstract form, it is associated with higher discrimination, and it is associated with creativity and self-expression. When Vishuddha is closed, we undergo decay and death. When it is open, negative experience is transformed into wisdom and learning. The success and failure in one's life depends upon the state of this chakra (polluted/clean). Guilty feeling is the most prominent reason for this chakra; to block the Kundalini Energy moving upwards. It is associated with the element Akasha, or ether, and the sense of hearing, as well as the action of speaking. Meditation upon this chakra is said to bring about the following siddhis or occult powers; vision of the three periods, past, present and future; freedom from disease and old age; destruction of dangers; and the ability to move the three worlds.

Lalana Chakra

Closely related to Vishuddha is a minor chakra, located in the roof of the mouth, called Lalana. It has 12 red or white petals, that correspond to the vrittis of respect, contentment, offense, self-control, pride, affection, sorrow, depression, purity, dissatisfaction, honor and anxiety. Inside is a red circular moon region. This acts as a reservoir for the nectar amrit. When vishuddha is inactive, this nectar is allowed to run downwards into Manipura, where it is consumed, resulting in physical degeneration. Through practices such as khechari mudra, however, the nectar can be made to enter Vishuddha, where it is purified, and becomes a nectar of immortality.

Associations with the body

This chakra is located in the neck and throat. Due to its association with hearing, it is related to the ears, and due to its association with speaking, it is associated with the mouth. Vishuddha is often associated with the thyroid gland in the human endocrine system. This gland is in the neck, and produces hormones essential for growth and maturation.

Practices

In Kundalini yoga, Vishuddha can be opened and balanced through practices including asanas (such as shoulder-stand), pranayama, Jalandhara Bandha (throat lock), and Khecarī mudrā. This chakra can be cleaned/opened by meditation and also by practicing singing or playing instrumental music.

Comparisons with other systems

The throat wheel is an important centre in the Highest Yoga traditions of Vajrayana. It is circular, red, with 16 upward pointing petals or channels. It is of particular importance for the practice of Dream Yoga. Correctly meditating upon it before going to sleep should produce lucid dreams, within which one can continue to practice yoga. ^[1]

Western occultists make various differing kabbalistic associations with Vishuddha. Some associate it with the hidden sephirah Da'at, where 'wisdom' and 'understanding' are balanced in the supernal realm by the aspect of 'knowledge', a tangible idea, which is then expressed, leading to the act of the creation, others associate it with the sephirah Chesed and Geburah, mercy and strength, which are sephirah intimately associated with morality, and the concept that both expansion, as expressed by Chesed, and limitation, as expressed by Geburah, are necessary for the creation of individual beings. In terms of ethics, this is expressed by the yamas and niyamas (do's and do not's) of yoga.

In the system of the Sufi Lataif-e-sitta there are no Lataif in the throat, but there are three in the region of the heart which are arranged horizontally and not vertically. They are the Qalb, or heart, which is the battleground between the lower forces of the Nafs and the higher forces of the Ruh, or spirit; the Ruh which is said by some to be situated on the right hand side of the chest; and SIRR, or secret, between them both in the middle of the chest.

In Taoism, the position of lalana chakra in the roof of the mouth corresponds with a point known as 'The Heavenly Pool'.

Alternative names

- **Tantra:** Akasha, Dwyashtapatrambuja, Kantha, Kanthadesha, Kanthambhoja, Kanthambuja, Kanthapadma, Kanthapankaja, Nirmala-Padma, Shodasha, Shodasha-Dala, Shodasha-Patra, Shodashara, Shodashollasa-Dala, Vishuddha, Vishuddhi
- **Vedas (late Upanishads):** Kantha Chakra, Vishuddha, Vishuddhi
- **Puranic:** Vishuddha, Vishuddhi

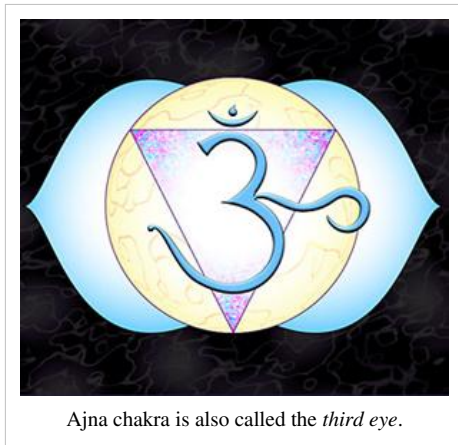
References

[1] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Tantric Grounds and Paths

External links

- Vishuddhi Chakra position within the Subtle System (<http://www.sahajayoga.ca/Meditation/vishuddhichakra.htm>)
- Description of Vishuddha Chakra from Kheper.net (<http://www.kheper.net/topics/chakras/Vishuddha.htm>)
- Vishuddha - The Throat Chakra by Anodea Judith (<http://www.llewellynencyclopedia.com/article/256>)

Ajna



Ajna chakra is also called the *third eye*.

Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Ajna (Sanskrit: आज्ञा, *Ājñā*, Sanskrit pronunciation: [aːjɳa], meaning 'command' or 'summoning') is the sixth primary chakra according to Hindu tradition.

Description

Location

The Ajna chakra is positioned in the brain, directly behind the eyebrow centre, while its ksetram or superficial activation site is at the eyebrow region, in the position of the 'third eye'.^[1]

Appearance

Ajna is white in colour, with 2 white petals. Inside of the pericarp is the Shakti Hakini, who is moon white, with 6 faces, and 6 arms, holding a book, a skull, a drum, a rosary, and making the gestures of granting boons and dispelling fears.^[2] Above her is a downward pointing triangle, within which is a moon-white lingum. In some systems the deity Ardhanarishvara a hermaphrodite form of Shiva-Shakti, symbolising the primordial duality of subject and object, resides within the lingum. Above the triangle is another smaller triangle, within which is the bija mantra Aum.

Seed mantra

The seed syllable is Aum, or "Pranava Om", the supreme sound ^[3].

Petals

Ajna has two white petals, said to represent the psychic channels, Ida and Pingala, which meet here with the central Sushumna nadi (channel) before rising to the crown chakra, Sahasrara. Written upon them in white are the letters 'Ham' on the left petal, and 'ksham' on the right petal, representing Shiva and Shakti, respectively. These petals also represent the manifest and unmanifest mind, and are said by some to represent the pineal and pituitary glands.

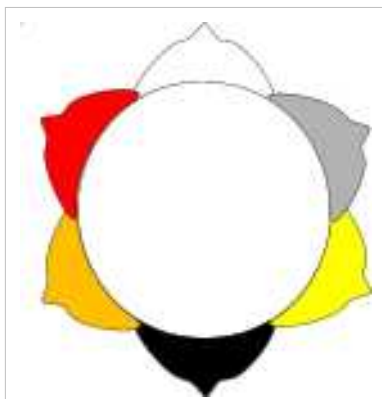
Function

Ajna translates as 'command', and is considered as the eye of intuition. When something is seen in the mind's eye, or in a dream, it is being 'seen' by Ajna. It is a bridge that links gurus with disciples, allowing mind communication to occur between two people. The sense organ and action organ associated with Ajna is the mind in both cases.

Hindus believe that spiritual energy from the external environments enter their body through this gateway and hence take utmost precaution in protecting it with spiritually positive protecting forces. The various religious marks one sees on the foreheads of men and women belonging to the Hindu faith (like holy ash, namam, vermilion etc.) are thus the blessed spiritual prasadam of their respective form of the Hindu gods.

Meditation upon Ajna supposedly grants the following siddhis or occult powers; to quickly enter another's body at will; to become omniscient; he realizes unity with Brahman; and he has the ability to create, preserve and destroy the 3 worlds.

Manas Chakra



Manas chakra is responsible for sending sense perceptions to the higher chakras. The petals change colour depending on the sense

Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Directly above Ajna is a minor chakra known as Manas, or mind. It possesses 6 petals, one for each of the 5 senses, and one for sleep. These petals are normally white, but assume the colour of the senses when activated by them, and they are black during sleep. It's function is to send sense perceptions to the higher chakras.

Association with the body

Ajna is associated with the third eye on the forehead. It is sometimes associated with the pineal gland, and sometimes with the pituitary gland. The pineal gland is actually related to a real, light sensitive 'third eye' (Parietal eye) found in some lizards, amphibians and fish, and regulates the circadian rhythms, while the Pituitary Gland is considered as the master gland of all endocrine glands, whose secretions control all the other endocrine glands.



The parietal eye (very small grey oval between the regular eyes) of a juvenile bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*)

Practices

In kundalini yoga, different practices are said to stimulate the Ajna chakra, including Trataka (steady gazing), Shambhavi Mudra (gazing at the space between the eyebrows), and some forms of Pranayama (breath exercises).

Comparisons with other systems

In Tibetan buddhism, this chakra is at the end of the central channel, which in their system runs up the body to the top of the head, and then over and down to the forehead, where it terminates. The 2 side channels then continue onwards towards the 2 nostrils, and end there. This centre is frequently depicted in artwork as the 'third eye', and is used in various meditations. ^[4]

There is also a forehead centre above the third eye, which corresponds to the position of Manas, known as the Wind Wheel, which is one of the 10 chakras in the Mahayoga tantra traditions.

In Qigong, the highest Dantian is located in this position. This is one of 3 'furnaces' that converts the different sorts of energy in the body. In this Dantian, the spiritual shen energy is converted into wuji, the infinite space of void ^[5]

Within the system of Lataif-e-sitta there exists a Lataif known as Khafi, or arcane subtlety, in this same position, and is related to mystical intuition.

In the Kabbalah, there are 2 sephiroth located on the 6th level, associated with the left and right eye. They are called Chokmah, wisdom, and Binah, understanding, and it is at these points that the 2 side pillars of mercy and severity terminate, while the central pillar carries on rising to kether, the crown. ^[6]

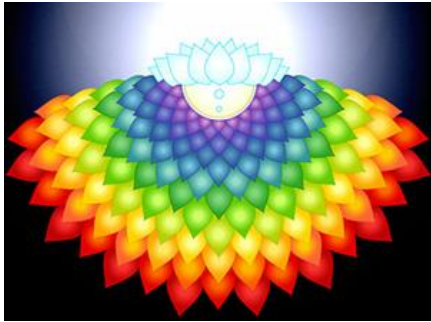
Alternative names

- In Tantra: Ajita-Patra, Ajna, Ajna-Pura, Ajna-Puri, Ajnamhuja, Ajnapankaja, Bhru-Madhya, Bhru-Madhya-Chakra, Bhru-Madhyaga-Padma, Bhru-Mandala, Bhru-Mula, Bhru-Saroruha, Dwidala, Dwidala-Kamala, Dwidalambuja, Dwipatra, Jnana-Padma, Netra-Padma, Netra-Patra, Shiva-Padma, Triweni-Kamala
- In the Vedas, Upanishads: Ajna, Baindawa-Sthana, Bhru Chakra, Bhruyugamadyabila, Dwidala
- In the Puranas: Ajna, Dwidala, Trirasna

References

- [1] Sawmi Satyananda Saraswati. Kundalini Tantra
- [2] Shyam Sundar Goswani. Layayoga - an advanced method of concentration
- [3] ¹ page 268, *Kundalini Yoga for the West*, Swami Sivananda Radha, Copyright 1978, Shambala Publications, Inc.
- [4] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Tantric Grounds and Paths
- [5] Andy James. The Spiritual Legacy of Shaolin Temple
- [6] Dion Fortune. The Mystical Qabalah

Sahasrara



Sahasrara, placed above the head crown, with 1000 petals. In Hindu literature, it is known "the supreme center of contact with God".

Tantric chakras

Sahasrara
Ajna
Vishuddha
Anahata
Manipura
Swadhisthana
Muladhara

Bindu

Sahasrara (Sanskrit: सहस्रर, Sahasrāra) is the seventh primary chakra according to Hindu tradition.

Description

Location

Sahasrara is either located at the top of the head in that one area, or a little way above it (see Sahasrara system of minor chakras below).

Appearance

Sahasrara is described with 1,000 multi-coloured petals which are arranged in 20 layers each of them with 50 petals. The pericarp is golden, and inside of it is a circular moon region, inside of which is an downward pointing triangle.

Function

Sahasrara chakra symbolizes detachment from illusion; an essential element in obtaining supramental higher consciousness of the truth that one is all and all is one.

Often referred as *thousand-petaled lotus*, it is said to be the most subtle chakra in the system, relating to pure consciousness, and it is from this chakra that all the other chakras emanate. When a yogi is able to raise his or her kundalini, energy of consciousness, up to this point, the state of Samādhi, or union with God, is experienced.

Meditating on this point is said to bring about the siddhis, or occult powers, of transforming into the divine, and being able to do whatever one wishes.

Sahasrara system of minor chakras

In some schemes of chakras, there are actually several chakras that are all closely related at the top of the head. Rising from Ajna, we have the Manas chakra on the forehead, which is closely associated with Ajna. Above Manas there are Bindu Visarga at the back of the head, Mahanada, Nirvana, which is located on the crown, Guru, and then Sahasrara proper, located above the crown.

Bindu Visarga

Bindu Visarga is located at the back of the head, in a place where many Brahmins keep a tuft of hair. It is symbolised by a crescent moon on a moonlit night, with a point or **bindu** above it. This is the white bindu, with which yogis try to unite the red bindu below, and it is the source of the divine nectar or amrit which falls down to vishuddhi for distribution throughout the entire bodily system. This white drop is considered the essence of sperm, while the red bindu is considered the essence of the menstrual fluid.

This chakra is sometimes known as the Indu, Chandra or Soma chakra. In other descriptions, it is located on the forehead, white, with 16 petals, corresponding to the vrittis of mercy, gentleness, patience, non-attachment, control, excellent- qualities, joyous mood, deep spiritual love, humility, reflection, restfulness, seriousness, effort, controlled emotion, magnanimity and concentration.

Mahanada

The name of this chakra is 'Great sound', and it is in the shape of a plough. It represents the primal sound from which emanates all of creation.

Nirvana

This chakra is located on the crown of the head. It is white in colour and possesses 100 white petals. It marks the end of the sushumna central channel. It is responsible for different levels of concentration, dharana, dhyana and savikalpa samadhi.

Guru

The guru chakra is located above the head, just below Sahasrara proper. It is white, with 12 white petals, upon which is written the guru mantra, Ha Sa Kha Freng Ha Sa Ksha Ma La Wa Ra Yung. It contains a circular moon region, within which is a downward pointing triangle containing a jewelled altar with the crescent moon below and circular bindu above. Inside the bindu is the seat, upon which are the gurus footstools, upon which are the Gurus feet. This position is considered very important in Tibetan Tantric practices of deity yoga, where the guru or deity is often visualised above the crown, and then bestowing blessings below (for example in the Vajrasattva purification meditation).

Higher levels

Within Sahasrara, there are yet more levels of subtlety ^[1]. Within the triangle begin a series of ever higher levels of consciousness; ama-kala, the first ring of visarga, nirvana-kala, nirvana shakti, which contains the second ring of visarga. From here, kundalini becomes shankhini, with 3 and a half coils. The first coil of shankhini wraps around supreme bindu, the second coil of shankhini wraps around the supreme nada, the third coil of shankhini wraps around shakti, and the half-coil of shankhini enters into sakala shiva, beyond which is parama shiva.

Ama-kala

Ama-kala is the experience of samprajnata samadhi.

Visarga

This is symbolised by two dots, one of which is inside ama-kala, and the other of which is below supreme bindu, which represents the transition from samprajnata samadhi to the oneness of asamprajnata samadhi.

Nirvana-kala

Here kundalini absorbs even the experience of samadhi, through the power of supreme control (nirodhika fire).

Nirvana-shakti

Here kundalini passes into the supreme void, which is the experience of asamprajnata or nirvikalpa samadhi, and becomes shankhini. Kundalini then wraps around and absorbs the supreme bindu, which is the void, the supreme nada, and shakti, and then unites with and absorbs shiva, before finally being absorbed into paramashiva, which is the final stage of nirvikalpa samadhi.

Association with the body

Sahasrara is related to the crown of the head. It is sometimes related to the pineal gland and sometimes to the pituitary gland.

Comparisons with other systems

The crown wheel is important within the Highest Yoga traditions of Buddhist Vajrayana. It is triangular, with 32 petals or channels that point downwards, and within it resides the white drop or white bodhicitta. Through meditation, the yogi attempts to unite this drop with the red bodhicitta in the navel, and to experience the union of emptiness and bliss.^[2] It is very important in the Tantric practice of Phowa, or consciousness transference. At the time of death, a yogi can direct his consciousness up the central channel and out of this wheel in order to be reborn in a Pure Land, where they can carry on their tantric practices, or they can transfer their consciousness into another body or a corpse, in order to extend their lives.



Sahasrara used as roof-architecture in a Temple in Tamil Nadu

In the West, it has been noted by many (such as Charles Ponce' in his book *Kabbalah*.) that Sahasrara expresses a similar archetypal idea to that of Kether in the kabbalistic tree of life, which also rests at the head of the tree, and represents pure consciousness and union with God.

Within the Sufi system of Lataif-e-sitta there is a Lataif called Akfha, the 'most arcane subtlety', which is located on the crown. It is the point of unity where beatific visions of Allah are directly revealed.

Alternative names

- In Tantra: Adhomukha Mahapadma, Amlana Padma, Dashashatadala Padma, Pankaja, Sahasrabja, Sahasrachchada Panikaja, Sahasradala, Sahasradala Adhomukha Padma, Sahasradala Padma, Sahasrapatra,

Sahasrara, Sahasrara Ambuja, Sahasrara Mahapadma, Sahasrara Padma, Sahasrara Saroraha, Shiras Padma, Shuddha Padma, Wyoma, Wyomambhoja

- In the Vedas and late Upanishads: Akasha Chakra, Kapalasamputa, Sahasradala, Sahasrara, Sahasrara Kamala (Pankaja or Padma), Sthana, Wyoma, Wyomambuja
- In the Puranas: Parama, Sahasradala, Sahasraparna Padma, Sahasrapatra, Sahasrara, Sahasrara Kamala (Parikaja or Padma), Shantyatita, Shantyatita Pada
- In the Agni Yoga teaching, the Brahmarandhra is often referred to as "the bell" (Russian: колокол).^[3]

References

- [1] Susan Shumsky. Exploring Chakras:Awaken your untapped energy
 [2] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Tantric Grounds and Paths
 [3] *Leaves of Morya's Garden II (Illumination)* 2.4.7 (134 in Russian text).

External links

- Sahasrara Chakra position within the Subtle System (<http://www.sahajayoga.ca/Meditation/sahasrachakra.htm>)
- Description of Sahasrara Chakra from Kheper.net (<http://www.kheper.net/topics/chakras/Sahasrara.htm>)

Ahamkara

Ahaṃkāra (अहंकार), a Sanskrit term that originated in Vedic philosophy over 3,000 years ago, and was later incorporated into Hindu philosophy.

In the Uttara Mimamsa or vedanta branch of Hindu philosophy, even though it is not discussed in great detail in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says to Arjun that ahamkara must be removed - in other words, it should be subordinated to the lord. The reason for this is that the Self is not (cannot be) present when one is in a state of ahamkara.

Definition

Ahaṃkāra (अहंकार) is a Sanskrit term that is related to the ego and egoism - that is, the identification or attachment of one's ego. The term "ahamkara" comes from an approximately 3,000 year-old Vedic philosophy, where Ahaṃ refers to the concept of the Self or "I" and kāra refers to the concept of "any created thing" or "to do". Ahamkara is one of the four parts of the antahkarana (inner organ) described in Hindu philosophy. The other three parts are Buddhi, Citta and Manas.

Philosophical implications

To have an understanding of this term means that we have a powerful tool for understanding the nature and behaviour of ourselves and of others. The Vedic philosophy taught that when one's mind was in a state of ahamkara, one was in a state of subjective illusion, where the mind had bound up the concept of one's self with a created thing. The created thing is usually a phenomenon which can be thought of as external to the self. It could be a tangible, concrete (material) thing - e.g., a motor car - or an intangible thing - e.g., such as a concept or idea (as in, for example, the concept of the fight for peace). The ego is involved in constructing the illusion.

Examples of ahaṃkāra in action:

- Consider how an otherwise sensible young man might feel that his new sports car was a reflection of his true self and this would encourage him to race his car recklessly against another person's car.
- Similarly, consider how someone who believed in the fight for peace, and who ordinarily might behave in a non-violent manner, might come to blows with someone who threatened or challenged his notions of peace.

In both cases, the mind has created a state of illusion, but it seems very real to the person in that state, and objectivity and reality are obscured. This deeply illusory state is what can often cause people to do the strangest, oddest things, sometimes evil, and often quite out of character. All humans could - and usually do at some time or other in their lives - suffer from this.

- Consider how an otherwise apparently nice, normal family man in the military - Rudolf Höss, could also happily undertake the role as the Commandant of the Auschwitz death camp in Nazi Germany. Höss' autobiography, written whilst he was awaiting execution after the trial for war crimes, indicates that was unable to see that he had been doing anything other than just doing his job to the best of his ability.^[1]

Ahaṁkāra and spiritual development

- Ahaṁkāra is the instrument of Ahaṁ (the Spirit), the principle of individuation, acting as an independent conscious entity within the impure reality - yet, it does not have consciousness of its own.
- It is a receptacle of Cit śakti, its consciousness being a small spark from Cit, the universal consciousness.
- manifests itself by assuming authorship of all the actions of buddhi, manas, the senses and organs of action.
- It is believed to exist in the sphere of duality, in a state of identification with the physical body, its needs and desires.
- It is related to *Vak tattva*, one of The 36 tattvas in Vedic and Hindu religious philosophy.
- In ahaṁkāra, a state of *rajas guna* (agitation) predominates. This is because it identifies only with a small part of the creation (the body) and rejects everything else as "not me"; it becomes subject to a series of afflictions such as: pride, egoism, competitiveness, hate and jealousy.

Though ahaṁkāra is generally a state of illusion, once in that state, *Vak tattva* (one of the 36 tattvas) can appear. When it does, then, for the first time, individual will, determination, a sense of morality and ethics come into play - which is the first step on the path to spiritual development/enlightenment. Without a sufficiently harmonious and powerful ahaṁkāra (personality), it is thought to be impossible to exert the level of effort necessary to accede to a higher spiritual level.

The position of ahaṁkāra and buddhi are sometimes presented in reversed order because, as the principle of "I-ness", ahaṁkāra is allowed control over the manas (sensorial mind) and buddhi (superior intellect, intuition). Yet, buddhi is a superior tattva, and ahaṁkāra is thus only able to be in a superior position to buddhi from a functional point of view. From an absolute point of view, ahaṁkāra is created by buddhi and thus subordinate to it.

Example of *vak tattva* in ahaṁkāra:

Following on from the Höss example above, there is evidence that Höss was able to eventually consciously shatter the illusion and begin his own path to spiritual development when, four days before he was hanged, he sent a message to the state prosecutor, including these comments:

"My conscience compels me to make the following declaration. In the solitude of my prison cell I have come to the bitter recognition that I have sinned gravely against humanity. As Commandant of Auschwitz I was responsible for carrying out part of the cruel plans of the "Third Reich" for human destruction. In so doing I have inflicted terrible wounds on humanity. I caused unspeakable suffering for the Polish people in particular. I am to pay for this with my life. May the Lord God forgive one day what I have done."^[2]

References

- [1] Autobiography by Rudolph Höss, *Kommandant in Auschwitz; autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*, published in 1958 worldcat.org (<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/2766879>), and later published as *Death Dealer: the Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz* (among other editions).
- [2] John Jay Hughes lecture, *A Mass Murderer Repents: The Case of Rudolf Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz* (Archbishop Gerety Lecture at Seton Hall University, March 25, 1998). Theology.shu.edu (<http://theology.shu.edu/lectures/massmurder.htm>)

Aura

Aura or **aura** may refer to:

Science and medicine

- Aura (symptom), a symptom experienced before a migraine or seizure
- Aura (satellite), a satellite in the NASA Earth Observing System series
- 1488 Aura, a main-belt asteroid
- Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy
- Autonomous robot architecture (AuRA)
- Halo (optical phenomenon), also known as an aura

Geography

- Aura (woreda), administrative division in Ethiopia
- Aura, Finland
- Aura River, Finland
- Aura an der Saale, Bavaria, Germany
- Aura Abbey, Benedictine monastery at Aura an der Saale
- Aura im Sinngrund, Bavaria, Germany
- Aura, Michigan, USA
- Aura (at College Park), a condominium undergoing construction in Toronto, Ontario

Music

- Aura Lewis, South African born singer also known simply as 'Aura'
- *Aura* (CMX album)
- Aura a 1990s Techno group-Signed to Infectious Records in 1995
- *Aura* (Asia album)
- *Aura* (Miles Davis album)
- *Aura* (The Mission album)
- AURA (United Artists for African Rap), West African rappers promoting Children's Rights
- Aurra, a 1980s soul group

Fiction

- Aura (mythology), Greek goddess of the breeze and the fresh, cool air
 - Aura (.hack), a character in the *.hack* franchise
 - *Aura* (Fuentes), novel by Carlos Fuentes
 - Princess Aura, a character from *Flash Gordon*
 - Aura (Seiken Densetsu), an elemental spirit in the *Seiken Densetsu* series
-

Computing

- Avaya Aura, an internet protocol communications system produced by Avaya
- TVPaint, an animation software package also distributed as Newtek Aura
- *Aura: Fate of the Ages*, a computer game published by The Adventure Company

Products and brands

- Aura (cheese), a Finnish blue mold cheese
- Aura, a brand name of Bowers & Wilkins
- Aura (cell phone) a cellular phone manufactured by Motorola
- Saturn Aura, an automobile
- Aura (Social Network), a Social Network

Aviation

- AURA UAV, an UCAV being developed by India

Other

- Aura (Jat), a tribal group in Pakistan
 - Aurá language
 - Finnish Maiden, personification of Finland sometimes known as Aura
 - Aura (paranormal), a field of luminous multicolored radiation around a person or object
-

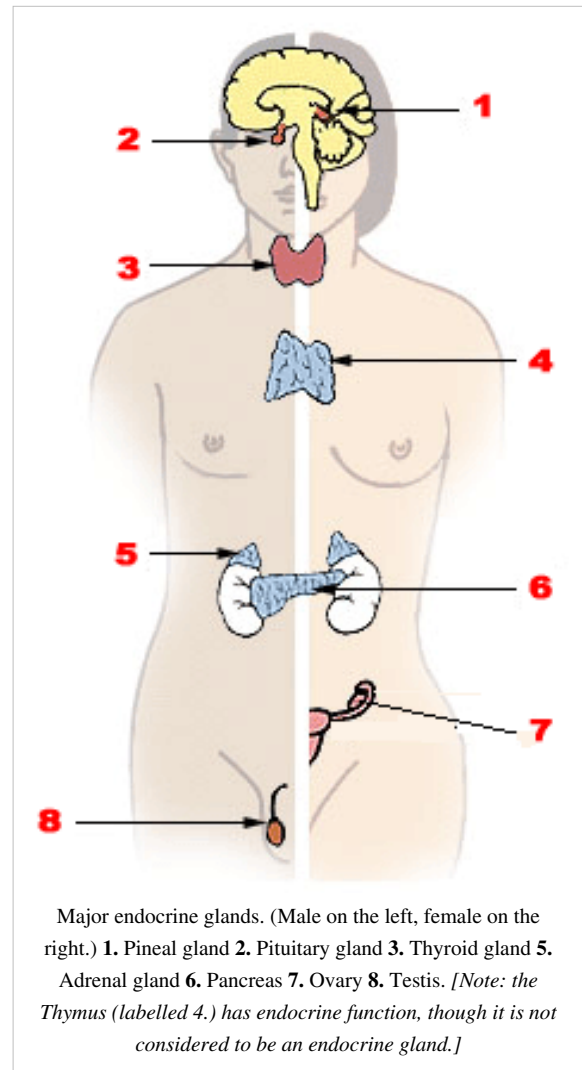
Endocrine system

In physiology, the **endocrine system** is a system of glands, each of which secretes a type of hormone into the bloodstream to regulate the body. It derives from the Greek words *endo* (Greek *ένδο*) meaning inside, within, and *crinis* (Greek *κρηνής*) for secrete. The endocrine system is an information signal system like the nervous system. Hormones are substances (chemical mediators) released from endocrine tissue into the bloodstream that attach to target tissue and allow communication among cells. Hormones regulate many functions of an organism, including mood, growth and development, tissue function, and metabolism. The field of study that deals with disorders of endocrine glands is endocrinology, a branch of internal medicine.

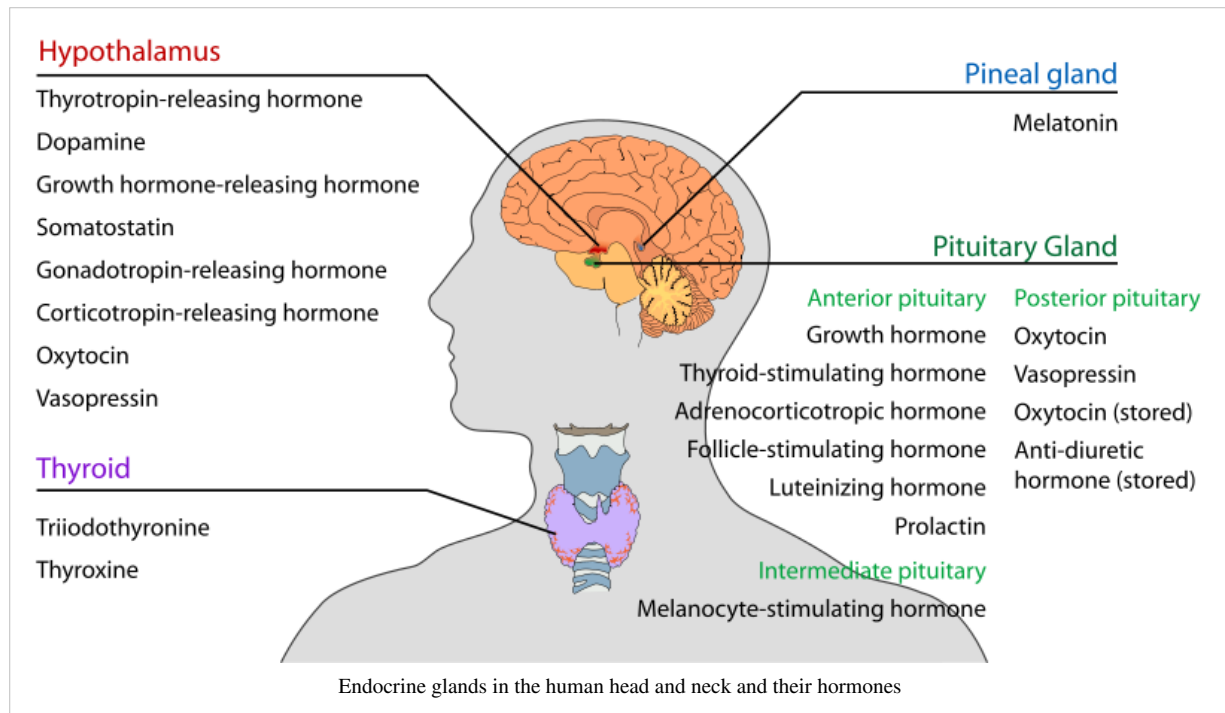
The endocrine system is made up of a series of ductless glands that produce chemicals called hormones. A number of glands that signal each other in sequence is usually referred to as an axis, for example, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. Typical endocrine glands are the pituitary, thyroid, and adrenal glands. Features of endocrine glands are, in general, their ductless nature, their vascularity, and usually the presence of intracellular vacuoles or granules storing their hormones. In contrast, exocrine glands, such as salivary glands, sweat glands, and glands within the gastrointestinal tract, tend to be much less vascular and have ducts or a hollow lumen.

In addition to the specialised endocrine organs mentioned above, many other organs that are part of other body systems, such as the kidney, liver, heart and gonads, have secondary endocrine functions. For example the kidney secretes endocrine hormones such as erythropoietin and renin.

Endocrine organs and secreted hormones



Central nervous system



Hypothalamus

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | Produced by | Effect |
|--|-------------------|--|---|
| Thyrotropin-releasing hormone (Prolactin-releasing hormone) | TRH, TRF, or PRH | Parvocellular neurosecretory neurons | Stimulate thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) released from anterior pituitary (primarily) Stimulate prolactin release from anterior pituitary |
| Dopamine (Prolactin-inhibiting hormone) | DA or PIH | Dopamine neurons of the arcuate nucleus | Inhibit prolactin released from anterior pituitary |
| Growth hormone-releasing hormone | GHRH | Neuroendocrine neurons of the Arcuate nucleus | Stimulate Growth hormone (GH) release from anterior pituitary |
| Somatostatin (growth hormone-inhibiting hormone) | SS, GHIH, or SRIF | Neuroendocrine cells of the Periventricular nucleus | Inhibit Growth hormone (GH) release from anterior pituitary Inhibit thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) release from anterior pituitary |
| Gonadotropin-releasing hormone | GnRH or LHRH | Neuroendocrine cells of the Preoptic area | Stimulate follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) release from anterior pituitary Stimulate luteinizing hormone (LH) release from anterior pituitary |
| Corticotropin-releasing hormone | CRH or CRF | Parvocellular neurosecretory neurons or the Paraventricular Nucleus | Stimulate adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) release from anterior pituitary |
| Oxytocin | OT or OXT | Magnocellular neurosecretory neurons of the Supraoptic Nucleus and Paraventricular Nucleus | Uterine contraction Lactation (letdown reflex) |
| Vasopressin (antidiuretic hormone) | ADH or AVP or VP | Parvocellular neurosecretory neurons, Magnocellular neurosecretory neurons of the Paraventricular Nucleus and Supraoptic Nucleus | Increases water permeability in the distal convoluted tubule and collecting duct of nephrons, thus promoting water reabsorption and increasing blood volume |

Pineal body (epiphysis)

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|------------------|--------------|---|
| Melatonin | Pinealocytes | Antioxidant Monitors the circadian rhythm including inducement of drowsiness and lowering of the core body temperature |

Pituitary Gland (hypophysis)**Anterior pituitary lobe (adenohypophysis)**

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|--|--------------|---------------|--|
| Growth hormone (somatotropin) | GH | Somatotrophs | Stimulates growth and cell reproduction Stimulates Insulin-like growth factor 1 release from liver |
| Thyroid-stimulating hormone (thyrotropin) | TSH | Thyrotrophs | Stimulates thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3) synthesis and release from thyroid gland Stimulates iodine absorption by thyroid gland |
| Adrenocorticotropic hormone (corticotropin) | ACTH | Corticotrophs | Stimulates corticosteroid (glucocorticoid and mineralcorticoid) and androgen synthesis and release from adrenocortical cells |
| Beta-endorphin | - | Corticotrophs | Inhibits perception of pain |
| Follicle-stimulating hormone | FSH | Gonadotrophs | In females: Stimulates maturation of ovarian follicles in ovary In males: Stimulates maturation of seminiferous tubules In males: Stimulates spermatogenesis In males: Stimulates production of androgen-binding protein from Sertoli cells of the testes |
| Luteinizing hormone | LH | Gonadotrophs | In females: Stimulates ovulation In females: Stimulates formation of corpus luteum In males: Stimulates testosterone synthesis from Leydig cells (interstitial cells) |
| Prolactin | PRL | Lactotrophs | Stimulates milk synthesis and release from mammary glands Mediates sexual gratification |

Posterior pituitary lobe (neurohypophysis)

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|---|--------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Oxytocin | | Magnocellular neurosecretory cells | Uterine contraction Lactation (letdown reflex) |
| Vasopressin (antidiuretic hormone) | ADH or AVP | Parvocellular neurosecretory neurons | Increases water permeability in the distal convoluted tubule and collecting duct of nephrons, thus promoting water reabsorption and increasing blood volume |

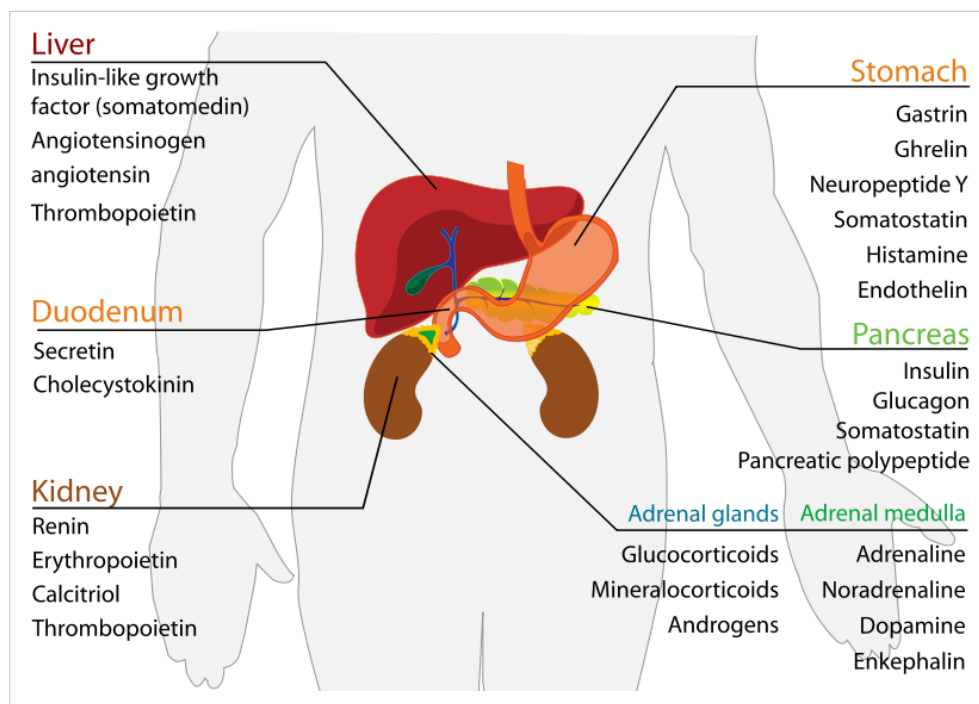
Oxytocin and anti-diuretic hormone are not secreted in the posterior lobe, merely stored.

Intermediate pituitary lobe (pars intermedia)

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Melanocyte-stimulating hormone | MSH | Melanotropes | Stimulates melanin synthesis and release from skin/hair melanocytes |

Thyroid

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--|
| Triiodothyronine | T3 | Thyroid epithelial cell | (More potent form of thyroid hormone) Stimulates body oxygen and energy consumption, thereby increasing the basal metabolic rate Stimulates RNA polymerase I and II, thereby promoting protein synthesis |
| Thyroxine (tetraiodothyronine) | T4 | Thyroid epithelial cells | (Less active form of thyroid hormone) (Acts as a prohormone to triiodothyronine) Stimulates body oxygen and energy consumption, thereby increasing the basal metabolic rate Stimulates RNA polymerase I and II, thereby promoting protein synthesis |
| Calcitonin | | Parafollicular cells | Stimulates osteoblasts and thus bone construction Inhibits Ca^{2+} release from bone, thereby reducing blood Ca^{2+} |

Alimentary system

Stomach

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------|---|
| Gastrin (Primarily) | | G cells | Secretion of gastric acid by parietal cells |
| Ghrelin | | P/D1 cells | Stimulate appetite, secretion of growth hormone from anterior pituitary gland |
| Neuropeptide Y | NPY | | increased food intake and decreased physical activity |
| Somatostatin | | D cells | Suppress release of gastrin, cholecystokinin (CCK), secretin, motilin, vasoactive intestinal peptide (VIP), gastric inhibitory polypeptide (GIP), enteroglucagon Lowers rate of gastric emptying Reduces smooth muscle contractions and blood flow within the intestine. ^[1] |
| Histamine | | ECL cells | stimulate gastric acid secretion |
| Endothelin | | X cells | Smooth muscle contraction of stomach ^[2] |

Duodenum

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|------------------------|------------|---|
| Secretin | S cells | Secretion of bicarbonate from liver, pancreas and duodenal Brunner's glands Enhances effects of cholecystokinin Stops production of gastric juice |
| Cholecystokinin | I cells | Release of digestive enzymes from pancreas Release of bile from gallbladder hunger suppressant |

Liver

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|--|--------------|-------------|---|
| Insulin-like growth factor (or somatomedin) (Primarily) | IGF | Hepatocytes | insulin-like effects regulate cell growth and development |
| Angiotensinogen and angiotensin | | Hepatocytes | vasoconstriction release of aldosterone from adrenal cortex dipsogen. |
| Thrombopoietin | | Hepatocytes | stimulates megakaryocytes to produce platelets ^[3] |

Pancreas

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Insulin (Primarily) | β Islet cells | Intake of glucose, glycogenesis and glycolysis in liver and muscle from blood intake of lipids and synthesis of triglycerides in adipocytes Other anabolic effects |
| Glucagon (Also Primarily) | α Islet cells | glycogenolysis and gluconeogenesis in liver increases blood glucose level |
| Somatostatin | δ Islet cells | Inhibit release of insulin ^[4] Inhibit release of glucagon ^[4] Suppress the exocrine secretory action of pancreas. |
| Pancreatic polypeptide | PP cells | Self regulate the pancreas secretion activities and effect the hepatic glycogen levels. |

Kidney

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Renin (Primarily) | Juxtaglomerular cells | Activates the renin-angiotensin system by producing angiotensin I of angiotensinogen |
| Erythropoietin (EPO) | Extraglomerular mesangial cells | Stimulate erythrocyte production |
| Calcitriol (1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D₃) | | Active form of vitamin D ₃ Increase absorption of calcium and phosphate from gastrointestinal tract and kidneys inhibit release of PTH |
| Thrombopoietin | | stimulates megakaryocytes to produce platelets ^[3] |

Adrenal glands

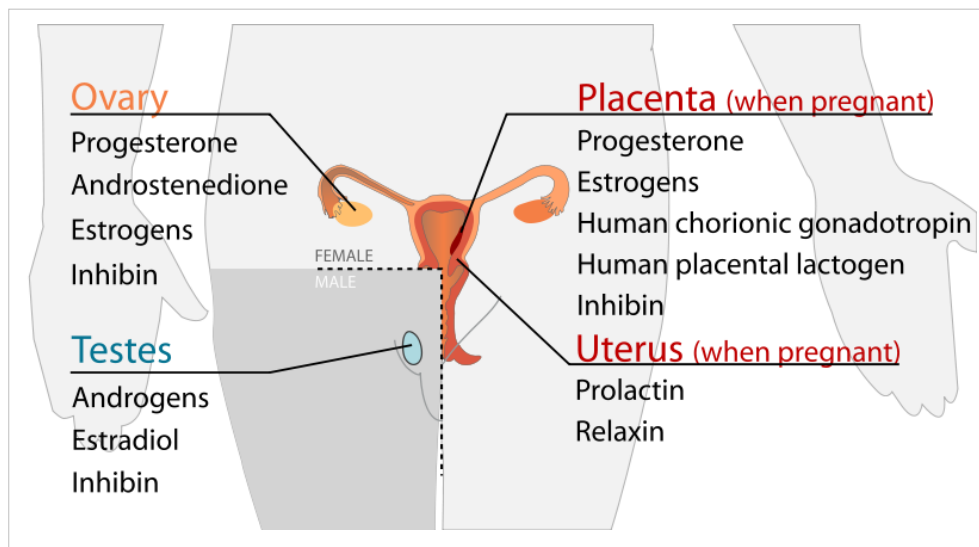
Adrenal cortex

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|--|---|---|
| Glucocorticoids (chiefly cortisol) | zona fasciculata and zona reticularis cells | Stimulates gluconeogenesis Stimulates fat breakdown in adipose tissue Inhibits protein synthesis Inhibits glucose uptake in muscle and adipose tissue Inhibits immunological responses (immunosuppressive) Inhibits inflammatory responses (anti-inflammatory) |
| Mineralocorticoids (chiefly aldosterone) | Zona glomerulosa cells | Stimulates active sodium reabsorption in kidneys Stimulates passive water reabsorption in kidneys, thus increasing blood volume and blood pressure Stimulates potassium and H ⁺ secretion into nephron of kidney and subsequent excretion |
| Androgens (including DHEA and testosterone) | Zona fasciculata and Zona reticularis cells | In males: Relatively small effect compared to androgens from testes In females: masculinizing effects (ie. excessive facial hair) |

Adrenal medulla

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|---|------------------|---|
| Adrenaline (epinephrine) (Primarily) | Chromaffin cells | Fight-or-flight response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost the supply of oxygen and glucose to the brain and muscles (by increasing heart rate and stroke volume, vasodilation, increasing catalysis of glycogen in liver, breakdown of lipids in fat cells) • Dilate the pupils • Suppress non-emergency bodily processes (e.g., digestion) • Suppress immune system |
| Noradrenaline (norepinephrine) | Chromaffin cells | Fight-or-flight response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost the supply of oxygen and glucose to the brain and muscles (by increasing heart rate and stroke volume, vasoconstriction and increased blood pressure, breakdown of lipids in fat cells) • Increase skeletal muscle readiness. |
| Dopamine | Chromaffin cells | Increase heart rate and blood pressure |
| Enkephalin | Chromaffin cells | Regulate pain |

Reproductive



Testes

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|---|---------------|---|
| Androgens (chiefly testosterone) | Leydig cells | Anabolic: growth of muscle mass and strength, increased bone density, growth and strength, Virilizing: maturation of sex organs, formation of scrotum, deepening of voice, growth of beard and axillary hair. |
| Estradiol | Sertoli cells | Prevent apoptosis of germ cells ^[5] |
| Inhibin | Sertoli cells | Inhibit production of FSH |

Ovarian follicle / Corpus luteum

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Progesterone | Granulosa cells, theca cells | <p>Support pregnancy^[6] :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert endometrium to secretory stage • Make cervical mucus permeable to sperm. • Inhibit immune response, e.g., towards the human embryo • Decrease uterine smooth muscle contractility^[6] • Inhibit lactation • Inhibit onset of labor. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise epidermal growth factor-1 levels • Increase core temperature during ovulation^[7] • Reduce spasm and relax smooth muscle (widen bronchi and regulate mucus) <p>Anti-inflammatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce gall-bladder activity^[8] • Normalize blood clotting and vascular tone, zinc and copper levels, cell oxygen levels, and use of fat stores for energy • Assist in thyroid function and bone growth by osteoblasts • Increase resilience in bone, teeth, gums, joint, tendon, ligament, and skin • Promote healing by regulating collagen • Provide nerve function and healing by regulating myelin • Prevent endometrial cancer by regulating effects of estrogen |
| Androstenedione | Theca cells | Substrate for estrogen |

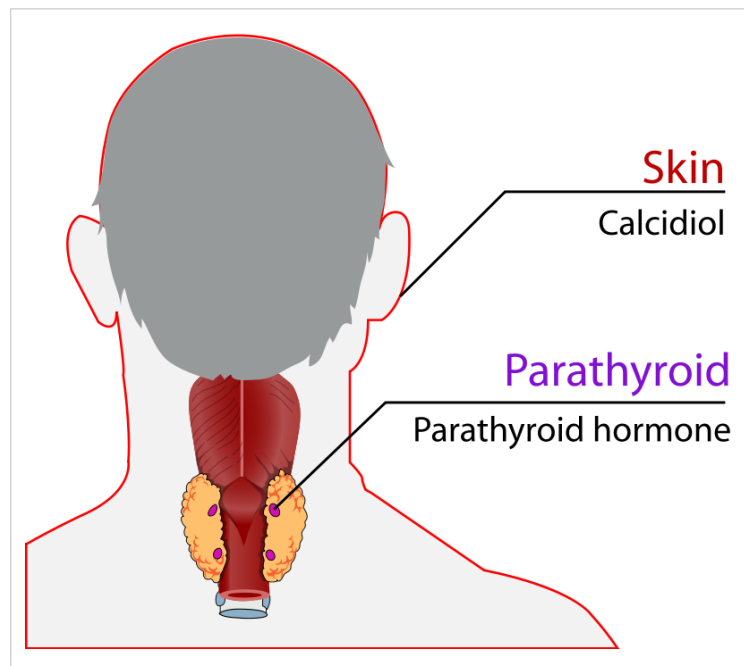
| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Estrogens (mainly estradiol) | Granulosa cells | <p>Structural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote formation of female secondary sex characteristics Accelerate height growth Accelerate metabolism (burn fat) Reduce muscle mass Stimulate endometrial growth Increase uterine growth Maintain blood vessels and skin Reduce bone resorption, increase bone formation <p>Protein synthesis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase hepatic production of binding proteins <p>Coagulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase circulating level of factors 2, 7, 9, 10, antithrombin III, plasminogen Increase platelet adhesiveness Increase HDL, triglyceride, height growth Decrease LDL, fat deposition <p>Fluid balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulate salt (sodium) and water retention Increase growth hormone Increase cortisol, SHBG <p>Gastrointestinal tract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce bowel motility Increase cholesterol in bile <p>Melanin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase pheomelanin, reduce eumelanin <p>Cancer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support hormone-sensitive breast cancers^[9] (Suppression of production in the body of estrogen is a treatment for these cancers.) <p>Lung function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote lung function by supporting alveoli.^[10] |
| Inhibin | Granulosa cells | Inhibit production of FSH from anterior pituitary |

Placenta (when pregnant)

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|--|--------------|---------------------|---|
| Progesterone (Primarily) | | | Support pregnancy ^[6] : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhibit immune response, towards the fetus. Decrease uterine smooth muscle contractility^[6] Inhibit lactation Inhibit onset of labor. Support fetal production of adrenal mineralo- and glucosteroids. Other effects on mother similar to ovarian follicle-progesterone |
| Estrogens (mainly Estriol) (Also Primarily) | | | Effects on mother similar to ovarian follicle estrogen |
| Human chorionic gonadotropin | HCG | Syncytiotrophoblast | promote maintenance of corpus luteum during beginning of pregnancy Inhibit immune response, towards the human embryo. |
| Human placental lactogen | HPL | Syncytiotrophoblast | increase production of insulin and IGF-1 increase insulin resistance and carbohydrate intolerance |
| Inhibin | | Fetal Trophoblasts | suppress FSH |

Uterus (when pregnant)

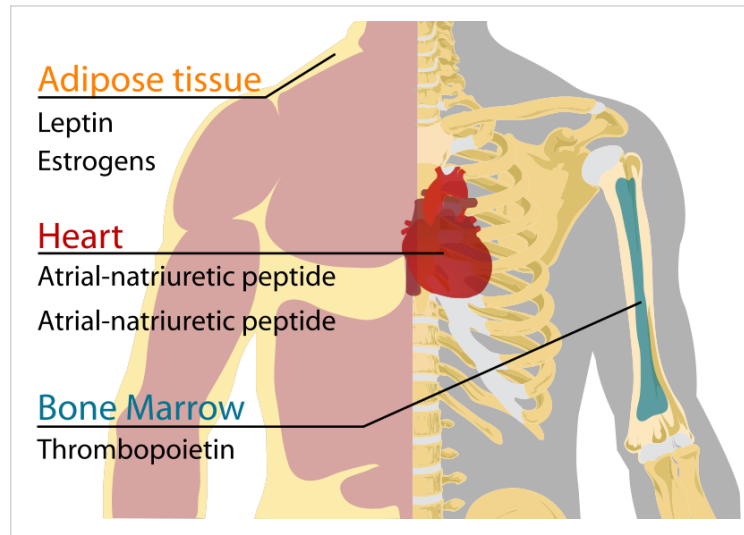
| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Prolactin | PRL | Decidual cells | milk production in mammary glands |
| Relaxin | | Decidual cells | Unclear in humans and animals |

Calcium regulation**Parathyroid**

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--|
| Parathyroid hormone | PTH | Parathyroid chief cell | <p>Calcium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulates Ca^{2+} release from bone, thereby increasing blood Ca^{2+} • Stimulates osteoclasts, thus breaking down bone • Stimulates Ca^{2+} reabsorption in kidney • Stimulates activated vitamin D production in kidney <p>Phosphate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulates $\text{PO}_4^{=}$ release from bones, thereby increasing blood $\text{PO}_4^{=}$ • Inhibits $\text{PO}_4^{=}$ reabsorption in kidney, so more $\text{PO}_4^{=}$ is excreted • Overall, small net drop in serum $\text{PO}_4^{=}$ |

Skin

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|---|------------|---|
| Calcidiol (25-hydroxyvitamin D ₃) | | Inactive form of vitamin D ₃ |

Miscellaneous**Heart**

| Secreted hormone | Abbreviation | From cells | Effect |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--|
| Atrial-natriuretic peptide | ANP | Cardiac myocytes | Reduce blood pressure by: reducing systemic vascular resistance, reducing blood water, sodium and fats |
| Brain natriuretic peptide | BNP | Cardiac myocytes | (To a lesser degree than ANP) reduce blood pressure by: reducing systemic vascular resistance, reducing blood water, sodium and fats |

Bone Marrow

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---|
| Thrombopoietin | liver and kidney cells | stimulates megakaryocytes to produce platelets ^[3] |

Adipose tissue

| Secreted hormone | From cells | Effect |
|--|------------|--|
| Leptin (Primarily) | Adipocytes | decrease of appetite and increase of metabolism. |
| Estrogens ^[11] (mainly Estrone) | Adipocytes | |

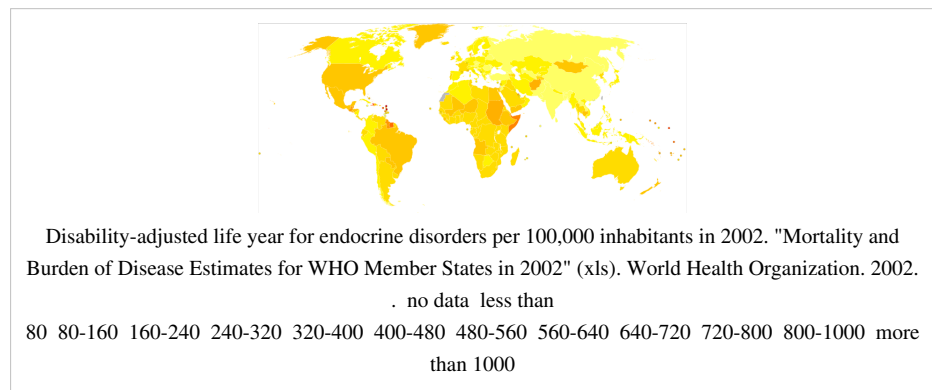
Major endocrine systems

The human endocrine system consists of several integrated systems that operate via feedback loops. Several important feedback systems are mediated via the hypothalamus and pituitary.^[12]

- TRH - TSH - T3/T4
- GnRH - LH/FSH - sex hormones
- CRH - ACTH - cortisol
- Renin - angiotensin - aldosterone

Diseases

Diseases of the endocrine system are common,^[14] including conditions such as diabetes mellitus, thyroid disease, and obesity. Endocrine disease is characterized by dysregulated hormone release (a productive pituitary adenoma), inappropriate response to



signaling (hypothyroidism), lack of a gland (diabetes mellitus type 1, diminished erythropoiesis in chronic renal failure), or structural enlargement in a critical site such as the testis (toxic multinodular goitre). Hypofunction of endocrine glands can occur as a result of loss of reserve, hyposecretion, agenesis, atrophy, or active destruction. Hyperfunction can occur as a result of hypersecretion, loss of suppression, hyperplastic or neoplastic change, or hyperstimulation.

Endocrinopathies are classified as primary, secondary, or tertiary. Primary endocrine disease inhibits the action of downstream glands. Secondary endocrine disease is indicative of a problem with the pituitary gland. Tertiary endocrine disease is associated with dysfunction of the hypothalamus and its releasing hormones.

As the thyroid, and hormones have been implicated in signaling distant tissues to proliferate, for example, the estrogen receptor has been shown to be involved in certain breast cancers. Endocrine, paracrine, and autocrine signaling have all been implicated in proliferation, one of the required steps of oncogenesis.^[15]

Other types of signaling

The typical mode of cell signaling in the endocrine system is endocrine signaling. However, there are also other modes, i.e., paracrine, autocrine, and neuroendocrine signaling.^[16] Purely neurocrine signaling between neurons, on the other hand, belongs completely to the nervous system.

Autocrine

Autocrine signaling is a form of signaling in which a cell secretes a hormone or chemical messenger (called the autocrine agent) that binds to autocrine receptors on the same cell, leading to changes in the cells.

Paracrine

Paracrine signaling is a form of cell signaling in which the target cell is near the signal-releasing cell.

Juxtacrine

juxtacrine signaling is a type of intercellular communication that is transmitted via oligosaccharide, lipid, or protein components of a cell membrane, and may affect either the emitting cell or the immediately adjacent cells.

It occurs between adjacent cells that possess broad patches of closely opposed plasma membrane linked by transmembrane channels known as connexons. The gap between the cells can usually be between only 2 and 4 nm.

Unlike other types of cell signaling (such as paracrine and endocrine), juxtacrine signaling requires physical contact between the two cells involved.

Juxtacrine signaling has been observed for some growth factors, cytokine and chemokine cellular signals

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Hindu tantra

Tantra (Sanskrit: तन्त्र "loom, warp"; hence "principle, system, doctrine", from the two root words *tanoti* "stretch, extend", and *trayati* "liberation"), anglicised **tantricism** or **tantrism** or **tantram**, is an esoteric current of Hinduism.

The word Tantra also applies to any of the scriptures (called "Tantras") commonly identified with the worship of Shakti.^[1] Tantra deals primarily with spiritual practices and ritual forms of worship, which aim at liberation from ignorance and rebirth,^[1] the universe being regarded as the divine play of *Shakti* and *Shiva*.^[1]

Tantrism originated in the early centuries CE and developed into a fully articulated tradition by the end of the Gupta period. It has influenced the Hindu, Sikh, Bön, Buddhist, and Jain religious traditions.

Along with Buddhism, Tantra in its various forms has spread to East Asia and Southeast Asia.^[2] Despite reluctance to support a rigorous definition of tantra, David Gordon White offers the following definition:

Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the Godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.^[3]

Overview

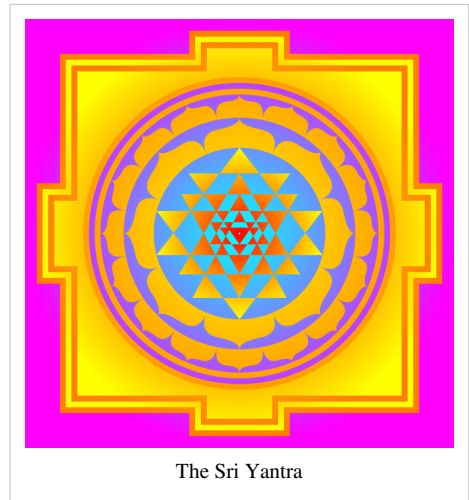
There are a number of different definitions of tantra from various viewpoints, not all of them necessarily consistent. Robert Brown notes that the term *tantrism* is a construction of Western scholarship and that:

It is not a concept that comes from within the religious system itself, although it is generally recognized internally as different from the Vedic tradition. This immediately makes it suspect as an independent category.^[4]

Rather than a single coherent system, Tantra is an accumulation of practices and ideas which is characterized by the use of ritual, by the use of the mundane to access the supra-mundane, and by the identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm.^[5] The Tantric practitioner seeks to use the *prana* (divine power) that flows through the universe (including one's own body) to attain purposeful goals. These goals may be spiritual, material or both.^[6] Most practitioners of tantra consider mystical experience imperative. Some versions of Tantra require the guidance of a guru.^[7]

In the process of working with energy, the *Tantrika*, or tantric practitioner, has various tools at hand. These include *yoga*, to actuate processes that will "yoke" the practitioner to the divine. Also important are visualizations of deity, and verbalisation or evocation through *mantras*, which may be construed as seeing, listening internally, and singing power into a stronger state within the individual, resulting in an ever-increasing awareness of cosmic vibration through daily practice. Identification with and internalisation of the divine is enacted, through a total identification with deity, such that the aspirant "becomes" the *Ishta-deva* or meditational deity.^[8]

Tantrism is a quest for spiritual perfection and magical power. Its purpose is to achieve complete control of oneself, and of all the forces of nature, in order to attain union with the cosmos and with the divine. Long training is generally required to master Tantric methods, into which pupils are typically initiated by a guru. *Yoga*, including breathing techniques and postures (*asana*), is employed to subject the body to the control of the will. *Mudras*, or



The Sri Yantra

gestures; *mantras* or syllables, words and phrases; *mandalas* and *yantras*, which are symbolic diagrams of the forces at work in the universe, are all used as aids for meditation and for the achievement of spiritual and magical power.

During meditation, the initiate identifies herself or himself with any of the numerous Hindu gods and goddesses representing cosmic forces. The initiate visualizes them and takes them into her or his mind and so she or he unites with them, a process likened to sexual courtship and consummation.^[9] In fact, some Tantric monks use female partners to represent goddesses. Also, in left-handed Tantra (*Vamachara*), ritual sexual intercourse is employed as a way of entering into the underlying processes and structure of the universe.^[9]

Relation with Vedic tradition

The Tantric tradition may be considered as either parallel to, or intertwined with, the Vedic tradition. The primary sources of written Tantric lore are the *agama*, which generally consist of four parts, delineating metaphysical knowledge (*jnana*), contemplative procedures (*yoga*), ritual regulations (*kriya*), and ethical and religious injunctions (*charya*). Schools and lineages affiliate themselves with specific *agamic* traditions.

André Padoux notes that in India, tantrism is marked by a rejection of orthodox Vedic tenets.^[10] Maurice Winernitz, in his review of the literature of tantra, points out that while Indian tantric texts are not positively hostile to the Vedas, they propound that the precepts of the Vedas are too difficult for our age, and so, for that reason, an easier cult and an easier doctrine have been revealed in them.^[11] Some orthodox Brahmans who accept the authority of the Vedas reject the authority of the Tantras.^[12] N. N. Bhattacharyya explains:

It is to be noticed that although later Tantric writers wanted to base their doctrines on the Vedas, the orthodox followers of the Vedic tradition invariably referred to Tantra in a spirit of denunciation, stressing its anti-Vedic character.^[13]

Tantra exists in *Shaiva*, *Vaisnava*,^[14] *Ganapatya*,^[15] *Saurya* ^[16] and *Shakta* forms, amongst others. Strictly speaking, within individual traditions, tantric texts are classified as *Shaiva Āgamas*, *Vaishnava Pāñcarātra Samhitās*,^[17] and *Shakta Tantras*, but there is no clear dividing line between these works, and on a practical basis the expression *Tantra* generally includes all such works.^[18]

Relation to Yoga

Though the paths of Tantra & Classical Yoga are contrary (as Tantra is a non-dual philosophy and Classical Yoga is a dualistic philosophy of renunciation)^[19] they do intersect at some common philosophies and goals. During his discourse on Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, Osho tries to differentiate between these two paths by saying, "Yoga is suppression with awareness; tantra is indulgence with awareness."^[20]

As Robert Svoboda attempts to summarize the three major paths of the Vedic knowledge, he exclaims:

Because every embodied individual is composed of a body, a mind and a spirit, the ancient Rishis of India who developed the Science of Life organized their wisdom into three bodies of knowledge: Ayurveda, which deals mainly with the physical body; Yoga, which deals mainly with spirit; and Tantra, which is mainly concerned with the mind. The philosophy of all three is identical; their manifestations differ because of their differing emphases. Ayurveda is most concerned with the physical basis of life, concentrating on its harmony of mind and spirit. Yoga controls body and mind to enable them to harmonize with spirit, and Tantra seeks to use the mind to balance the demands of body and spirit.^[21]

Buddhist Tantra

In Buddhism defined as a scripture taught by the Buddha describing the Vajrayana practices.^[22]

According to Tibetan Buddhist Tantric master Lama Thubten Yeshe:

...each one of us is a union of all universal energy. Everything that we need in order to be complete is within us right at this very moment. It is simply a matter of being able to recognize it. This is the tantric approach.^[23]

Evolution and involution

Linguistically the three words *mantram*, *tantram* and *yantram* are related in the ancient traditions of India, as well as phonologically. *Mantram* denotes the chant, or "knowledge." *Tantram* denotes philosophy, or ritual actions. *Yantram* denotes the means by which a human is expected to lead his life.

According to Tantra, "being-consciousness-bliss" or *Satchidananda* has the power of both self-evolution and self-involution. *Prakriti* or "reality" evolves into a multiplicity of creatures and things, yet at the same time always remains pure consciousness, pure being, and pure bliss. In this process of evolution, *Maya* (illusion) veils Reality and separates it into opposites, such as conscious and unconscious, pleasant and unpleasant, and so forth. If not recognized as illusion, these opposing determining conditions bind, limit and fetter (*pashu*) the individual (*jiva*).^[24]

Generally speaking, the Hindu god and goddess Shiva and Shakti are perceived as separate and distinct. However, in Tantra, even in the process of evolution, Reality remains pure consciousness, pure being and pure bliss, and Tantra denies neither the act nor the fact of this process. In fact, Tantra affirms that both the world-process itself, and the individual *jiva*, are themselves Real. In this respect, Tantra distinguishes itself both from pure dualism and from the qualified non-dualism of Vedanta.^[24]

Evolution, or the "outgoing current," is only half of the functioning of *Maya*. Involution, or the "return current," takes the *jiva* back towards the source, or the root of Reality, revealing the infinite. Tantra is understood to teach the method of changing the "outgoing current" into the "return current," transforming the fetters created by *Maya* into that which "releases" or "liberates." This view underscores two maxims of Tantra: "One must rise by that by which one falls," and "the very poison that kills becomes the elixir of life when used by the wise."^[24]

The method

The Tantric aim is to sublimate rather than to negate relative reality. This process of sublimation consists of three phases: purification, elevation, and the "reaffirmation of identity on the plane of pure consciousness."^[24] The methods employed by *Dakshinachara* (right-hand path) interpretations of Tantra are very different from the methods used in the pursuit of the *Vamachara* (left-hand path).

Ritual practices

Because of the wide range of communities covered by the term *tantra*, it is challenging and problematic to describe tantric practices definitively. Avalon (1918) does provide a useful dichotomy of the "Ordinary Ritual"^[25] and the "Secret Ritual".^[26]

Ordinary ritual

The ordinary ritual or *puja* may include any of the following elements:

Mantra and yantra

As in other Hindu and Buddhist yoga traditions, *mantra* and *yantra* play an important role in Tantra. The *mantra* and *yantra* are instruments to invoke specific Hindu deities such as Shiva, Shakti, or Kali. Similarly, *puja* may involve focusing on a *yantra* or *mandala* associated with a deity.^[27]

Identification with deities

Tantra, as a development of early Hindu-Vedic thought, embraced the Hindu gods and goddesses, especially Shiva and Shakti, along with the *Advaita* philosophy that each represents an *aspect* of the ultimate Para Shiva, or Brahman. These deities may be worshipped externally with flowers, incense, and other offerings, such as singing and dancing. But, more importantly, these deities are engaged as *attributes* of *Ishta Devata* meditations, the practitioners either visualizing themselves *as* the deity, or experiencing the *darshan* (the vision) of the deity. These Tantric practices form the foundation of the ritual temple dance of the *devadasis*, and are preserved in the *Melattur* style of *Bharatanatyam* by Guru Mangudi Dorairaja Iyer.

Secret ritual

Called the *Vamamarga*, this branch of Tantra departs from the conventional form or mantra and yoga. Secret ritual may include any or all of the elements of ordinary ritual, either directly or substituted, along with other sensate rites and themes such as a feast (representing food, or sustenance), coitus (representing sexuality and procreation), the charnel grounds (representing death and transition) and defecation, urination and vomiting (representing waste, renewal, and fecundity). It is this sensate inclusion that prompted Zimmer's praise of Tantra's world-affirming attitude:

In the Tantra, the manner of approach is not that of Nay but of Yea ... the world attitude is affirmative ... Man must approach through and by means of nature, not by rejection of nature.^[28]

In Avalon's *Chapter 27: The Pañcatattva (The Secret Ritual) of Sakti and Sakta* (1918),^[26] he states that the Secret Ritual (which he calls *Panchatattva*,^[29] *Chakrapuja* and *Panchamakara*) involves:

Worship with the Pañcatattva generally takes place in a Cakra or circle composed of men and women... sitting in a circle, the Shakti (or female practitioner) being on the Sadhaka's (male practitioner's) left.



Statue of the Tantric goddess Kali from Dakshineswar, West Bengal, India; along with her Yantra.

Hence it is called Cakrapuja. ...There are various kinds of Cakra – productive, it is said, of differing fruits for the participator therein.

Avalon also provides a series of variations and substitutions of the *Panchatattva* (*Panchamakara*) "elements" or *tattva* encoded in the Tantras and various tantric traditions, and affirms that there is a direct correlation to the Tantric Five Nectars and the *Mahābhūta*.^[30]

Sexual rites

Sexual rites of Vamamarga may have emerged from early Hindu Tantra as a practical means of catalyzing biochemical transformations in the body to facilitate heightened states of awareness.^[31] These constitute a vital offering to Tantric deities. Sexual rites may have also evolved from clan initiation ceremonies involving transactions of sexual fluids. Here the male initiate is inseminated or ensanguinated with the sexual emissions of the female consort, sometimes admixed with the semen of the guru. The *Tantrika* is thus transformed into a son of the clan (*kulaputra*) through the grace of his consort. The clan fluid (*kuladravya*) or clan nectar (*kulamrita*) is conceived as flowing naturally from her womb. Later developments in the rite emphasize the primacy of bliss and divine union, which replace the more bodily connotations of earlier forms. Although popularly equated with Tantra in its entirety in the West, such sexual rites were historically practiced by a minority of sects. For many practicing lineages, these *maithuna* practices progressed into psychological symbolism.^[31]

When enacted as enjoined by the Tantras, the ritual culminates in a sublime experience of infinite awareness for both participants. Tantric texts specify that sex has three distinct and separate purposes—procreation, pleasure, and liberation. Those seeking liberation eschew frictional orgasm for a higher form of ecstasy, as the couple participating in the ritual lock in a static embrace. Several sexual rituals are recommended and practiced. These involve elaborate and meticulous preparatory and purificatory rites. The sexual act itself balances energies coursing within the *pranic ida* and *pingala* channels in the subtle bodies of both participants. The *sushumna nadi* is awakened and *kundalini* rises upwards within it. This eventually culminates in *samadhi*, wherein the respective individual personalities and identities of each of the participants are completely dissolved in a unity of cosmic consciousness. Tantrics understand these acts on multiple levels. The male and female participants are conjoined physically, and represent *Shiva* and *Shakti*, the male and female principles. Beyond the physical, a subtle fusion of *Shiva* and *Shakti* energies takes place, resulting in a united energy field. On an individual level, each participant experiences a fusion of one's own *Shiva* and *Shakti* energies.^{[32] [33]}

Western views

Sir John Woodroffe

The first Western scholar to take the study of Tantra seriously was Sir John Woodroffe (1865–1936), who wrote about Tantra under the *pen name Arthur Avalon*. He is generally held as the "founding father of Tantric studies."^[34] Unlike previous Western scholars, Woodroffe was an ardent advocate for Tantra, defending Tantra against its many critics and presenting Tantra as an ethical philosophical system greatly in accord with the Vedas and Vedanta.^[35] Woodroffe himself practised Tantra as he saw and understood it and, while trying to maintain his scholastic objectivity, was considered a student of Hindu Tantra (in particular *Shiva-Shakta*) tradition.^[36]

Further development

Following Sir John Woodroffe, a number of scholars began to actively investigate Tantric teachings. These included a number of scholars of comparative religion and Indology, such as: Aghananda Bharati, Mircea Eliade, Julius Evola, Carl Jung, Giuseppe Tucci and Heinrich Zimmer.^[37]

According to Hugh Urban, Zimmer, Evola and Eliade viewed Tantra as "the culmination of all Indian thought: the most radical form of spirituality and the archaic heart of aboriginal India", and regarded it as the ideal religion of the modern era. All three saw Tantra as "the most *transgressive* and *violent* path to the sacred."^[38]

In the modern world

Following these first presentations of Tantra, other more popular authors such as Joseph Campbell helped to bring Tantra into the imagination of the peoples of the West. Tantra came to be viewed by some as a "cult of ecstasy", combining sexuality and spirituality in such a way as to act as a corrective force to Western repressive attitudes about sex.^[39]

As Tantra has become more popular in the West it has undergone a major transformation. For many modern readers, "Tantra" has become a synonym for "spiritual sex" or "sacred sexuality", a belief that sex in itself ought to be recognized as a sacred act which is capable of elevating its participants to a more sublime spiritual plane.^[40] Though Neotantra may adopt many of the concepts and terminology of Indian Tantra, it often omits one or more of the following: the traditional reliance on *guruparampara* (the guidance of a guru), extensive meditative practice, and traditional rules of conduct—both moral and ritualistic.

According to one author and critic on religion and politics, Hugh Urban:

Since at least the time of Aghananda Bharati, most Western scholars have been severely critical of these new forms of pop Tantra. This "California Tantra" as Georg Feuerstein calls it, is "based on a profound misunderstanding of the Tantric path. Their main error is to confuse Tantric bliss ... with ordinary orgasmic pleasure."^[41]

Urban goes on to say that he himself doesn't consider this "wrong" or "false" but rather "simply a different interpretation for a specific historical situation."^[42]



The *Sri Yantra* (shown here in the three-dimensional projection known as *Sri Meru* or *Maha Meru* used mainly in rituals of the Srividya Shakta sects) is central to most Tantric forms of Shaktism.

Hindu Tantric practitioners

- Swami Rama
- Lord Sri Akshunna
- Jagatguru Vamacharya Sewak Sanjaynath

Notes

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- [4] Brown, Robert L., "Introduction", in: Harper (2002), p. 1.
- [5] Harper (2002), p. 2.
- [6] Harper (2002), p. 3.
- [7] Satyananda (2000)
- [8] Harper (2002), pp. 3–5.
- [9] Cavendish, Richard. *The Great Religions*. New York: Arco Publishing, 1980.
- [10] For tantrism as marked by rejection of Vedic rules and notions, see: Padoux, André, "What do we mean by Tantrism?" in: Harper (2002), p. 23.
- [11] For comment on the contrast between Vedic and tantric teaching, see: Winternitz, volume 1, p. 587.
- [12] For rejection of the authority of the Vedas by "many orthodox Brahmans," see: Flood (1996), p. 122.
- [13] Bhattacharyya, p. 20.
- [14] For a review of tantra in early Vaisnavism see: Bhattacharyya, pp. 182–88.
- [15] For a detailed discussion of Ganapatya tantric ritual see: Bühnemann.
- [16] Lit.: "Relating to the sun," that is, with the sun as the central deity. See: Swami Niranjanda, *The Tantric Tradition*. Yoga Magazine, March, 1998
- [17] For Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās as representing tantric Vaishnavism, see: Flood (1996), p. 122.
- [18] For terminology of Āgamas, Saṃhitās, and Tantras, see: Winternitz, p. 587.
- [19] Second Chapter, *The Book of Secrets*, St. Martin's Griffin, 1998. ISBN 0-312-18058-6, 9780312180584
- [20] P. 16 Second Chapter, *The Book of Secrets*, St. Martin's Griffin, 1998. ISBN 0-312-18058-6, 9780312180584
- [21] *Your ayurvedic constitution: Prakruti* by Robert Svoboda Motilal Banarsidass Publication, 2005; ISBN 81-208-1840-7, 9788120818408
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- [31] White (2000)
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- [34] Urban (2003), p. 22
- [35] Urban (2003), p. 135
- [36] : See Arthur Avalon, trans. *Tantra of the Great Liberation: Mahanirvana Tantra* (London: Luzac & Co., 1913); Avalon, ed. *Principles of Tantra: the Tantratattva of Shriyukta Shiva Chandra Vidyanava Bhattacharyya Mahodaya* (London: Luzac & Co., 1914–16); Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta: Essays and Addresses on the Shakta Tantrashastra* (London : Luzac & Co., 1918)
- [37] Urban (2003), pp. 165–166
- [38] Urban (2003), pp. 166–167
- [39] For "cult of ecstasy" see: Urban (2003), pp. 204–205.
- [40] For "Tantra" as a synonym for "spiritual sex" or "sacred sexuality", see: Urban (2003), pp. 204–205
- [41] Quotation from Urban (2003), pp. 204–205.
- [42] For quotation "simply a different interpretation for a specific historical situation" see: Urban (2003), pp. 204–205

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External links

- Tantra (http://www.dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Tantra/) at the Open Directory Project

Karma

Karma (Sanskrit: कर्म IPA: [ˈkərmə] (listen^[1]; Pali: kamma) in Indian religions is the concept of "action" or "deed", understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect (i.e., the cycle called saṃsāra) originating in ancient India and treated in Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh philosophies.^[2]

'Karma' is an Indian religious concept in contradistinction to 'faith' espoused by Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), which view all human dramas as the will of God as opposed to present—and past—life actions. In theistic schools of Hinduism, humans have free will to choose good or evil and suffer the consequences, which require the will of God to implement karma's consequences, unlike Buddhism or Jainism which do not accord any role to a supreme God or Gods. In Indian beliefs, the karmic effects of all deeds are viewed as actively shaping past, present, and future experiences. The results or 'fruits' of actions are called *karma-phala*.^[3]

Origins

A concept of karma (along with saṃsāra and mokṣa) may originate in the śramaṇa tradition of which Buddhism and Jainism are continuations. This tradition influenced the Brahmanic religion in the early Vedantic (Upanishadic) movement of the 1st millennium BC. This worldview was adopted from this religious culture by Brahmin orthodoxy, and Brahmins wrote the earliest recorded scriptures containing these ideas in the early Upanishads. Until recently, the scholarly consensus was that reincarnation is absent from the earliest strata of Brahminical literature. However, a new translation of two stanzas of the Rig Veda indicate that the Brahmins may have had the idea, common among small-scale societies around the world, that an individual cycles back and forth between the earth and a heavenly realm of ancestors. In this worldview, moral behavior has no influence on rebirth. The idea that the moral quality of one's actions influences one's rebirth is absent from India until the period of the śramaṇa religions, and the Brahmins appear to have adopted this idea from other religious groups.^{[4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13]}

Views

Some traditions (i.e., the Vedanta), believe that a supreme being plays some kind of role, for example, as the dispenser of the 'fruits' of karma^[14] or as exercising the option to change one's karma in rare instances. In general, followers of the Buddhism and many followers of Hinduism traditions consider the natural laws of causation sufficient to explain the effects of karma.^{[15] [16] [17]} Another view holds that a Sadguru, acting on a god's behalf, can mitigate or work out some of the karma of the disciple.^{[18] [19] [20]} And according to the Jainism perspective, neither a god nor a guru have any role in a person's karma—the individual is considered to be the sole doer and enjoyer of his karmas and their 'fruits'. Laws of karma are codified in some books.^{[21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27]}

In the Indian religions

Hinduism

Karma in Hinduism is also considered to be a spiritually originated law. Many Hindus see God's direct involvement in this process; others consider the natural laws of causation sufficient to explain the effects of karma.^{[28] [29] [30]} However, followers of Vedanta, the leading extant school of Hinduism today, consider Ishvara, a personal supreme God, as playing a role in the delivery of karma. Theistic schools of Hinduism such as Vedanta thus disagree with the Buddhist and Jain views and other Hindu views that karma is merely a law of cause and effect but rather is also dependent on the will of a personal supreme God. Examples of a personal supreme God include Shiva in Shaivism or Vishnu in Vaishnavism. A good summary of this theistic view of karma is expressed by the following: "God does not make one suffer for no reason nor does He make one happy for no reason. God is very fair and gives you exactly what you deserve."^[31]

Karma is not punishment or retribution but simply an extended expression or consequence of natural acts. Karma means "deed" or "act" and more broadly names the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction, that governs all life. The effects experienced are also able to be mitigated by actions and are not necessarily fated. That is to say, a particular action now is not binding to some particular, pre-determined future experience or reaction; it is not a simple, one-to-one correspondence of reward or punishment.

Karma is not fate, for humans act with free will creating their own destiny. According to the Vedas, if one sows goodness, one will reap goodness; if one sows evil, one will reap evil. Karma refers to the totality of our actions and their concomitant reactions in this and previous lives, all of which determines our future. The conquest of karma lies in intelligent action and dispassionate response.

One of the first and most dramatic illustrations of Karma can be found in the Bhagavad Gita. In this poem, Arjuna the protagonist is preparing for battle when he realizes that the enemy consists of members of his own family and decides not to fight. His charioteer, Krishna (an avatar of god), explains to Arjuna the concept of dharma (duty) among other things and makes him see that it is his duty to fight. The whole of the Bhagavad Gita within the Mahabharata, is a dialogue between these two on aspects of life including morality and a host of other philosophical themes. The original Hindu concept of karma was later enhanced by several other movements within the religion, most notably Vedanta, and Tantra.


In this way, so long as the stock of *sanchita karma* lasts, a part of it continues to be taken out as *prarabdha karma* for being experienced in one lifetime, leading to the cycle of birth and death. A Jiva cannot attain moksha until the accumulated *sanchita karmas* are completely exhausted.^[32]

Sikhism

Within Sikhism, all living beings are described as being under the influence of Maya's three qualities. Always present together in varying mix and degrees, these three qualities of Maya bind the Soul to the body and to the earth plane. Above these three qualities is the eternal time. Due to the influence of three modes of Maya's nature, jivas (individual beings) perform activities under the control and purview of the eternal time. These activities are called Karma. The underlying principle is that karma is the law that brings back the results of actions to the person performing them.

This life is likened to a field (Khet) in which our Karma is the seed. We harvest exactly what we sow. No less, no more. This infallible law of Karma holds everyone responsible for what the person is or going to be. Based on the total sum of past Karma, some feel close to the Pure Being in this life, and others feel separated. This is the Gurbani's (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, SGGS) law of Karma. Like other Indian as well as oriental school of thoughts, the Gurbani also accepts the doctrines of Karma and reincarnation as the facts of nature.^[33]

Buddhism

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In Buddhism, *karma* (Pāli *kamma*) is strictly distinguished from *vipāka*, meaning "fruit" or "result". Karma is categorized within the group or groups of cause (Pāli *hetu*) in the chain of cause and effect, where it comprises the elements of "volitional activities" (Pali *sankhara*) and "action" (Pali *bhava*). Any action is understood as creating "seeds" in the mind that will sprout into the appropriate result (Pāli *vipaka*) when met with the right conditions. Most types of karmas, with good or bad results, will keep one within the wheel of samsāra, while others will liberate one to nirvāna.

Buddhism links karma directly to the motives behind an action. Motivation usually makes the difference between "good" and "bad" actions; but included in the motivation is also the aspect of ignorance such that a well-intended action from an ignorant mind can subsequently be interpreted as a "bad" action in the sense that it creates unpleasant results for the "actor".

Other causal categories

In Buddhism, karma is not the only cause of everything that happens. The commentarial tradition classified causal mechanisms governing the universe as taught in the early texts in five categories, known as Niyama Dhammas.^[34]^[35]

- Kamma Niyama—Consequences of one's actions
- Utu Niyama—Seasonal changes and climate
- Biiija Niyama—Laws of heredity
- Citta Niyama—Will of mind
- Dhamma Niyama—Nature's tendency to produce a perfect type

Jainism

Karma in Jainism conveys a totally different meaning as commonly understood in the Hindu philosophy and western civilization.^[36] In Jainism, karma is referred to as karmic dirt, as it consists of very subtle and microscopic particles i.e. pudgala that pervade the entire universe.^[37] Karmas are attracted to the karmic field of a soul on account of vibrations created by activities of mind, speech, and body as well as on account of various mental dispositions. Hence the karmas are the subtle matter surrounding the consciousness of a soul. When these two components, i.e. consciousness and karma, interact, we experience the life we know at present.

Herman Kuhn quoting from Tattvarthasutra describes karmas as – *a mechanism that makes us thoroughly experience the themes of our life until we gained optimal knowledge from them and until our emotional attachment to these themes falls off.*^[36]

According to Padmanabh Jaini "this emphasis on reaping the fruits only of one's own karma was not restricted to the Jainas; both Hindus and Buddhist writers have produced doctrinal materials stressing the same point. Each of the latter traditions, however, developed practices in basic contradiction to such belief. In addition to *shrardha* (the ritual Hindu offerings by the son of deceased), we find among Hindus widespread adherence to the notion of divine intervention in ones fate, while Buddhists eventually came to propound such theories like boon-granting bodhisattvas, transfer of merit and like. Only Jainas have been absolutely unwilling to allow such ideas to penetrate their community, despite the fact that there must have been tremendous amount of social pressure on them to do so."^[38]

The key points where the theory of Karma in Jainism differs from the other religions such as theistic traditions of Hinduism, can be stated as follows:

1. Karma in Jainism operates as a self-sustaining mechanism as natural universal law, without any need of an external entity to manage them. (absence of the exogenous "Divine Entity" in Jainism)
2. Jainism advocates that a soul's karma changes even with the thoughts, and not just the actions. Thus, to even think evil of someone would endure a "karm-bandh" or an increment in bad karma. It is for this reason, that Jainism gives a very strong emphasis on "samyak dhyan" (Rationality in thoughts) and "samyak darshan" (Rationality in perception) and not just "samyak charitra" (rationality in conduct).
3. Under Jain theology, a soul is released of worldly affairs as soon as it is able to emancipate from the "karm-bandh". A famous illustration is that of Mata Marudevi, the mother of Shri Rishabh Dev, the first Tirthankar of present time cycle, who reached such emancipation by elevating sequentially her thought processes, while she was visiting her Tirthankar son. This illustration explains how "Nirvana" and "Moksha" are different in Jainism, from other religions. In the presence of a Tirthankar, another soul achieved Keval Gyan and subsequently Nirvana, without any need of intervention by the Tirthankar.
4. The karmic theory in Jainism operates endogenously. Tirthankars are not attributed "godhood" under Jainism. Thus, even the tirthankars themselves have to go through the stages of emancipation, for attaining that state. While Buddhism does give a similar and to some extent a matching account for Shri Gautama Buddha, Hinduism maintains a totally different theory where "divine grace" is needed for emancipation.
5. Jainism treats all souls equally, in as much as it advocates that all souls have the same potential of attaining "nirvana". Only those who make effort, really attain it, but nonetheless, each soul is capable on its own to do so by gradually reducing its karma.^[39]

Western interpretation

An academic and religious definition was mentioned above. The concept of karma is part of the world view of many millions of people throughout the world. Many in western cultures or with a Christian upbringing have incorporated a notion of karma. The Christian concept of reaping what you sow from Galatians 6:7 can be considered equivalent to Karma.^[40]

According to karma, performing positive actions results in a good condition in one's experience, whereas a negative action results in a bad effect. The effects may be seen immediately or delayed. Delay can be until later in the present life or in the next. Thus, meritorious acts may mean rebirth into a higher station, such as a superior human or a godlike being, while evil acts result in rebirth as a human living in less desirable circumstances, or as a lower animal. Some observers have compared the action of karma to Western notions of sin and judgment by God or Gods, while others understand karma as an inherent principle of the universe without the intervention of any supernatural Being. In Hinduism, God does play a role and is seen as a dispenser of karma; see Karma in Hinduism for more details. The non-interventionist view is that of Buddhism and Jainism.

Most teachings say that for common mortals, being involved with karma is an unavoidable part of daily living. However, in light of the Hindu philosophical school of Vedanta, as well as Gautama Buddha's teachings, one is advised to either avoid, control or become mindful of the effects of desires and aversions as a way to moderate or change one's karma (or, more accurately, one's karmic results or destiny).

Spiritism

In Spiritism, karma is known as "the law of cause and effect", and plays a central role in determining how one's life should be lived. Spirits are encouraged to choose how (and when) to suffer retribution for the wrong they did in previous lives. Disabilities, physical or mental impairment or even an unlucky life are due to the choices a spirit makes before reincarnating (that is, before being born to a new life).

What sets Spiritism apart from the more traditional religious views is that it understands karma as a condition inherent to the spirit, whether incarnated or not: the consequences of the crimes committed by the spirit last beyond the physical life and cause him (moral) pain in the afterlife. The choice of a life of hardships is, therefore, a way to rid oneself of the pain caused by moral guilt and to perfect qualities that are necessary for the spirit to progress to a higher form.

Because Spiritism always accepted the plurality of inhabited worlds, its concept of karma became considerably complex. There are worlds that are "primitive" (in the sense that they are home to spirits newly born and still very low on intellect and morals) and a succession of more and more advanced worlds to where spirits move as they are elevated. A spirit may choose to be born on a world inferior to his own as a penance or as a mission.

New Age and Theosophy

The idea of karma was popularized in the Western world through the work of the Theosophical Society. In this conception, karma is affiliated with the Neopagan *law of return* or *Threefold Law*, the idea that the beneficial or harmful effects one has on the world will return to oneself. Colloquially this may be summed up as 'what goes around comes around.'

In the west, karma is often confused with concepts such as the soul, psychic energy, synchronicity (a concept originally from psychoanalyst Carl Jung, which says that things that happen at the same time are related), and ideas from quantum or theoretical physics (which most physicists would not grant as having any bearing on morality or codes of conduct, much less on supernatural notions). This mishmash of word associations is well illustrated by the once-common bumper sticker "My karma ran over your dogma."

Karma and emotions

Since the 20th century emergence of emotional intelligence as a novel paradigm for viewing human experience, karma has become a sectarian term which umbrellas the entire collection (both conscious and subconscious) of human emotionality.^[41] This modern view of karma, devoid of any spiritual exigencies, obviates the need for an acceptance of reincarnation in Judeochristian societies and attempts to portray karma as a universal psychological phenomenon which behaves predictably, like other physical forces such as gravity.

Sakyong Mipham eloquently summed this up when he said;

Like gravity, karma is so basic we often don't even notice it.^[42]

This view of karma, as a universal and personally impacting emotional constant, correlates with Buddhist and Jungian understanding that volition (or libido, created from personal and cultural biases) is the primary instigator of karma. Any conscious thought, word and/or action, arising from a cognitively unresolved emotion (cognitive dissonance), results in karma.^[43]

Jung once opined on unresolved emotions and the synchronicity of karma;

'When an inner situation is not made conscious, it appears outside as fate.'^[44]

Popular methods for negating cognitive dissonance include meditation, metacognition, counselling, psychoanalysis, etc., whose aim is to enhance emotional self-awareness and thus avoid negative karma. This results in better emotional hygiene and reduced karmic impacts.^[45] Permanent neuronal changes within the amygdala and left prefrontal cortex of the human brain attributed to long-term meditation and metacognition techniques have been

proven scientifically.^[46] This process of emotional maturation aspires to a goal of Individuation or self-actualisation. Such peak experience are hypothetically devoid of any karma (nirvana).

As Rabindranath Tagore most eloquently explained about the heat of human emotions;

Nirvana is not the blowing out of the candle. It is the extinguishing of the flame because day is come^[47]

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- [4] Joanna Jurewicz, *The Rigveda, 'small scale' societies and rebirth eschatology*. See (<http://www.ocbs.org/content/view/full/63/121/>).
- [5] Gananath Obeyesekere, *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth* University of California Press, 2002, passim, see in particular page 99.
- [6] Y. Masih (2000) In : A Comparative Study of Religions, Motilal Banarsidass Publ : Delhi, ISBN 8120808150, page 37: "This confirms that the doctrine of transmigration is non-aryan and was accepted by non-vedics like Ajivikism, Jainism and Buddhism. The Indo-aryans have borrowed the theory of re-birth after coming in contact with the aboriginal inhabitants of India. Certainly Jainism and non-vedics [...] accepted the doctrine of rebirth as supreme postulate or article of faith."
- [7] Karel Werner, *The Longhaired Sage in The Yogi and the Mystic*. Karel Werner, ed., Curzon Press, 1989, page 34. "Rahurkar speaks of them as belonging to two distinct 'cultural strands' ... Wayman also found evidence for two distinct approaches to the spiritual dimension in ancient India and calls them the traditions of 'truth and silence.' He traces them particularly in the older Upanishads, in early Buddhism, and in some later literature."
- [8] Gavin D. Flood (1996), *An Introduction to Hinduism*, Cambridge University Press : UK ISBN 0521438780 - "The origin and doctrine of Karma and Samsara are obscure. These concepts were certainly circulating amongst sramanas, and Jainism and Buddhism developed specific and sophisticated ideas about the process of transmigration. It is very possible that the karmas and reincarnation entered the mainstream brahminical thought from the sramana or the renouncer traditions." Page 86.
- [9] Padmanabh S. Jains 2001 "Collected Paper on Buddhist Studies" Motilal Banarsidass Publ 576 pages ISBN 8120817761: "Yajnavalkya's reluctance and manner in expounding the doctrine of karma in the assembly of Janaka (a reluctance not shown on any other occasion) can perhaps be explained by the assumption that it was, like that of the transmigration of soul, of non-brahmanical origin. In view of the fact that this doctrine is emblazoned on almost every page of sramana scriptures, it is highly probable that it was derived from them." Page 51.
- [10] Govind Chandra Pande, (1994) *Life and Thought of Sankaracarya*, Motilal Banarsidass ISBN 8120811046 : Early Upanishad thinkers like Yajnavalkya were acquainted with the sramanic thinking and tried to incorporate these ideals of Karma, Samsara and Moksa into the vedic thought implying a disparagement of the vedic ritualism and recognising the mendicancy as an ideal. Page 135.
- [11] *A History of Yoga* By Vivian Worthington 1982 Routledge ISBN 071009258X - "The Upanishads were like a breath of fresh air blowing through the stuffy corridors of power of the vedic brahminism. They were noticed by the Brahmin establishment because the yogis did not owe allegiance to any established religion or mode of thought.. So although, the Upanishads came to be noticed by Brahmin establishment, they were very largely saying what may well have been current among other sramanic groups at that time. It can be said that this atheistic doctrine was evidently very acceptable to the authors of Upanishads, who made use of many of its concepts." Page 27.
- [12] *A History of Yoga* By Vivian Worthington 1982 Routledge ISBN 071009258X: "The idea of re-incarnation, so central to the older sramanic creeds is still new to many people throughout the world. The Aryans of the Vedic age knew nothing of it. When the Brahmins began to accept it, they declared it as a secret doctrine. [...] It will be seen from this short account of Jains, that they had fully developed the ideas of karma and reincarnation very early in history. The earliest Upanishads were probably strongly influenced by their teachings. Jainism the religion, Samkhya the philosophy and yoga the way to self discipline and enlightenment dominated the spiritual life of Indian during the Dravidian times. They were to be overshadowed for over thousand years by the lower form of religion that was foisted on the local inhabitants by the invading Aryans, but in the end it was Sramanic disciplines that triumphed. They did so by surviving in their own right and by their ideas being fully adopted by the Brahmins who steadily modified their own vedic religion." Page 35.
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- [20] Swami B. V. Tripurari on grace of the Guru destroying karma (<http://www.vnn.org/editorials/ET0410/ET27-8734.html>)

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- [24] 天律聖典 (<http://jzls.read.org.tw/html/nine/nine027.htm>)
- [25] 梁武帝問志公禪師因果文 (<http://www.jt8421.com/UploadFiles/zgcsygw.htm>)
- [26] 純陽祖師演說三生石 (http://www.umind.com.tw/mypower/Article_Print.asp?ArticleID=738)
- [27] 偽經《佛說三世因果經》的誤導 (http://www.wisdombox.org/trikala_t.pdf)
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External links

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- Bhartiya Jain Milan (<http://www.bhartiyajainmilan.com>)
- Share your ideas and view related with jain religion (<http://www.bhartiyajainmilan.net>)

Soul

A **soul**, in certain spiritual, philosophical, and psychological traditions, is the incorporeal essence of a person or living thing.^[1] Many philosophical and spiritual systems teach that humans are souls; some attribute souls to all living things and even to inanimate objects (such as rivers); this belief is commonly called animism.^[2] The soul is often believed to exit the body and live on after a person's death, and some religions posit that God creates souls. The soul has often been deemed integral or essential to consciousness and personality, and *soul* sometimes functions as a synonym for *spirit*, *mind* or *self*,^[3] although the soul is said to function in a distinct enough way from both the spirit and the psyche that the terms should not be treated interchangeably.^{[4] [5] [6]}

Linguistic aspects

Etymology

The Modern English *soul* derived from Old English *sáwol*, *sáwel* (first attested to in the 8th century poem *Beowulf* v. 2820 and in the Vespasian Psalter 77.50), cognate to other Germanic and Baltic terms for the same idea, including Gothic *saiwala*, Old High German *sēula*, *sēla*, Old Saxon *sēola*, Old Low Franconian *sēla*, *sīla*, Old Norse *sála* as well as Lithuanian *siela*. Further etymology of the Germanic word is uncertain. A common suggestion is a connection with the word *sea*, and from this evidence alone, it has been speculated that the early Germanic peoples believed that the spirits of deceased rested at the bottom of the sea or similar. A more recent suggestion^[7] connects it with a root for "binding", Germanic **sailian* (OE *sēlian*, OHG *seilen*), related to the notion of being "bound" in death, and the practice of ritually binding or restraining the corpse of the deceased in the grave to prevent his or her return as a ghost.

The word is in any case clearly an adaptation by early missionaries to the Germanic peoples, in particular Ulfilas, apostle to the Goths (4th century) of a native Germanic concept, coined as a translation of Greek ψυχή *psychē* "life, spirit, consciousness".

The Greek word is derived from a verb "to cool, to blow" and hence refers to the vital breath, the animating principle in humans and other animals, as opposed to σῶμα (*soma*) meaning "body". It could refer to a ghost or spirit of the dead in Homer, and to a more philosophical notion of an immortal and immaterial essence left over at death since Pindar. Latin *anima* figured as a translation of ψυχή since Terence. *Psychē* occurs juxtaposed to σῶμα e.g. in Matthew 10:28:

— καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεννόντων τὸ σῶμα, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι.

φοβεῖσθε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γέεννῃ.

Vulgate: *et nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus animam autem non possunt occidere sed potius eum timete qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam.*

Authorized King James Version (KJV) "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

In the Septuagint (LXX), ψυχή translates Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*, meaning "life, vital breath", in English variously translated as "soul, self, life, creature, person, appetite, mind, living being, desire, emotion, passion"; e.g. in Genesis 1:20:

— תָּבַר אֱלֹהִים בְּיִצְרָאֵל וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַצִּבְיֹוֹת וְאֶת כָּל הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֶת כָּל הַרְמִישׁ וְאֶת כָּל הַרְמִישׁ וְאֶת כָּל הַחַי וְהָרֶמֶשׂ.

LXX καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ἔξαγαγέτω τὰ ὕδατα ἔρπετὰ ψυχῶν ζωσῶν.

Vulgate *Creavitque Deus cete grandia, et omnem animam viventem atque motabilem.*

KJV "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth."

Paul of Tarsus used ψυχή and πνεῦμα specifically to distinguish between the Jewish notions of שפן *nephesh* and חור *ruah* (spirit) (also in LXX, e.g. Genesis 1:2 מִיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ = πνεῦμα θεοῦ = *spiritus Dei* = "the Spirit of God").

Semantics

Although the terms *soul* and *spirit* are sometimes used interchangeably, *soul* may denote a more worldly and less transcendent aspect of a person.^[4] According to psychologist James Hillman, soul has an affinity for negative thoughts and images, whereas spirit seeks to rise above the entanglements of life and death.^[5] The words *soul* and *psyche* can also be treated synonymously, although *psyche* has more physical connotations, whereas *soul* is connected more closely to spirituality and religion.^[6]

Life and death

Religions which subscribe to non-monotheistic views, in particular Dharmic religions, may have differing concepts, such as reincarnation, nirvana, etc.

Philosophical views

The Ancient Greeks used the same word for 'alive' as for 'ensouled'. So the earliest surviving western philosophical view might suggest that the terms soul and aliveness were synonymous - perhaps not that having life universally presupposed the possession of a soul as in Buddhism, but that full "aliveness" and the soul were conceptually linked.

Francis M. Cornford quotes Pindar in saying that the soul sleeps while the limbs are active, but when one is sleeping, the soul is active and reveals in many a dream "an award of joy or sorrow drawing near".^[8]

Erwin Rohde writes that the early pre-Pythagorean belief was that the soul had no life when it departed from the body, and retired into Hades with no hope of returning to a body.^[9]

Socrates and Plato

Plato, drawing on the words of his teacher Socrates, considered the soul as the essence of a person, being, that which decides how we behave. He considered this essence as an incorporeal, eternal occupant of our being. As bodies die the soul is continually reborn in subsequent bodies. The Platonic soul comprises three parts:

1. the logos (mind, nous, or reason)
2. the thymos (emotion, or spiritedness, or masculine)
3. the eros (appetitive, or desire, or feminine)

Each of these has a function in a balanced, level and peaceful soul.

Aristotle

Aristotle, following Plato, defined the soul or *psyche* (psūchês) as the *essence* or definition of a living being, but argued against its having a separate existence from the physical body. In Aristotle's view, a living thing's soul is in its activity, which is, *to live*; for example, the soul of an eye, if it were an independent organism, would be seeing (its purpose or final cause). By an imperfect analogy, an artifact, such as a knife or axe, (which has a clear purpose), if had a soul, that soul would be the act of cutting, because 'cutting' is, in essence, what it is to be a knife. Unlike Plato and the medieval religious tradition, Aristotle did not consider the soul to be a separate, immortal occupant of the body, just as the act of cutting does not occur without a knife or axe, the soul ceases to exist at the death of the body. In his view, the soul is the *actuality* of a living body. More precisely, the soul is the "first actuality" of a body, in so far as it has the capacity to be alive, (as opposed to a cadaver, which cannot come back to life). The various faculties of the soul or psyche, such as nutrition, sensation, movement, and so forth, when exercised, constitute the "second" actuality, or fulfillment, of the capacity to be alive. A good example is someone who falls asleep, as opposed to someone who falls dead, the former (not the latter) actuality *can* wake up, (the first actuality), and go about their life,

(the second actuality). Aristotle identified three hierarchical levels of living things: plants, animals, and people, for which, he identified three corresponding levels of soul, or biological activity: the nutritive activity of growth, sustenance and reproduction, which all life shares; the self-willed motive activity and sensory faculties, which only animals and people have in common; and finally *reason*, of which people alone are capable—thus in Aristotle's taxonomy, the essential difference between a person and an animal, is the exercise of their capacity for reason—what it is to be a rational animal. For Aristotle, there would be only one identifiable kind of soul per species, a form which is transmitted from parent to offspring, who will in turn, given normal circumstances of development, grow up to instantiate that generic form, to some degree of perfection. The particular soul of a specimen, for example of humankind, would in no way be characteristic of their unique personality, or their physical appearance, except in so far as to appear human. Identifying a single individual lacks generality; it would not be a useful theory for natural science, and Aristotle used his theory of the soul in many of his works; most notably *De Anima (On the Soul)*.

Aristotle was concerned to belabor the point, in no uncertain terms, that intellectual activity, i.e., the human soul, ceases to exist upon death. Intelligence and memory is carried on, if at all, in the only way possible: by people who are still alive and by generations yet to come. Aristotle writes that the soul, after death, "does not remember," which is a reference to the river Lethe in popular Greek belief. Saint Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of such remarks, which is to say, his influential treatment of *Aristotle's account of the afterlife*, suggests it is more similar to the Christian afterlife than would appear at first glance.

Aristotle divided the intellectual faculty into two principal parts, the "deliberative" or "calculative" and the "scientific" or "theoretical." The first of these he then subdivided again, to yield a tripartite division of the intellectual soul as technical, prudential and theoretical. The first of these is art, which has its term in something outside man, the product of his activity. The second, prudence, has its term in activity itself; it is sometimes called the "art" of doing. Its highest expression is politics, to which, in the corpus of Aristotle's works, his treatise on ethics serves as an introduction. Prudence is concerned with what men ought to do, and thus with the future. The third part of the intellective faculty, scientific understanding, is the supreme activity of the faculty and accordingly of man himself, since it is the operation of his intellect that differentiates man from other animals. Theory is concerned with nature, and with what is rather than with what men ought to do. As these are parts of the rational faculty of man, their correct activity also constitutes the "excellences" or "virtues" of the rational part of man, of which there are five: art, prudence and science, corresponding in name to the faculties themselves, as well as "nous," often translated as "understanding" or "intelligence," and "Sophia" or "wisdom". Nous is intuitive knowledge of first principles, which are indemonstrable; Sophia is the combination of such "understanding" and science.

Avicenna and Ibn al-Nafis

Following Aristotle, the Persian Muslim philosopher-physician, Avicenna and Arab philosopher Ibn al-Nafis, further elaborated on the Aristotelian understanding of the soul and developed their own theories on the soul. They both made a distinction between the soul and the spirit, and in particular, the Avicennian doctrine on the nature of the soul was influential among the Scholastics. Some of Avicenna's views on the soul included the idea that the immortality of the soul is a consequence of its nature, and not a purpose for it to fulfill. In his theory of "The Ten Intellects", he viewed the human soul as the tenth and final intellect.

While he was imprisoned, Avicenna wrote his famous "Floating Man" thought experiment to demonstrate human self-awareness and the substantiality of the soul. He told his readers to imagine themselves suspended in the air, isolated from all sensations, which includes no sensory contact with even their own bodies. He argues that, in this scenario, one would still have self-consciousness. He thus concludes that the idea of the self is not logically dependent on any physical thing, and that the soul should not be seen in relative terms, but as a primary given, a substance. This argument was later refined and simplified by René Descartes in epistemic terms when he stated: "I can abstract from the supposition of all external things, but not from the supposition of my own consciousness."^[10]

Avicenna generally supported Aristotle's idea of the soul originating from the heart, whereas Ibn al-Nafis on the other hand rejected this idea and instead argued that the soul "is related to the entirety and not to one or a few organs". He further criticized Aristotle's idea that every unique soul requires the existence of a unique source, in this case the heart. Ibn al-Nafis concluded that "the soul is related primarily neither to the spirit nor to any organ, but rather to the entire matter whose temperament is prepared to receive that soul" and he defined the soul as nothing other than "what a human indicates by saying 'I'".^[11]

Thomas Aquinas

Following Aristotle and Avicenna, St. Thomas Aquinas understood the soul to be the first principle, or act, of the body. However, his epistemological theory required that, since the intellectual soul is capable of knowing all material things, and since in order to know a material thing there must be no material thing within it, the soul was definitely not corporeal. Therefore, the soul had an operation separate from the body and therefore could subsist without the body. Furthermore, since the rational soul of human beings was subsistent and was not made up of matter and form, it could not be destroyed in any natural process. The full argument for the immortality of the soul and Thomas's elaboration of Aristotelian theory is found in Question 75 of the *Summa Theologica*.

Immanuel Kant

In his discussions of rational psychology Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) identified the soul as the "I" in the strictest sense and that the existence of inner experience can neither be proved, or disproved. "We cannot prove a priori the immateriality of the soul, but rather only so much: that all properties and actions of the soul cannot be cognized from materiality." It is from the "I", or soul, that Kant proposes transcendental rationalization, but cautions that such rationalization can only determine the limits of knowledge if it is to remain practical.^[12]

James Hillman

Contemporary psychology is defined as the study of mental processes and behavior. However, the word "psychology" literally means "study of the soul",^[13] and psychologist James Hillman, the founder of archetypal psychology, has been credited with "restoring 'soul' to its psychological sense."^[14] Although the words *soul* and *spirit* are often viewed as synonyms, Hillman argues that they can refer to antagonistic components of a person. Summarizing Hillman's views, author and psychotherapist Thomas Moore associates spirit with "afterlife, cosmic issues, idealistic values and hopes, and universal truths", while placing soul "in the thick of things: in the repressed, in the shadow, in the messes of life, in illness, and in the pain and confusion of love."^[15] Hillman believes that religion—especially monotheism and monastic faiths—and humanistic psychology have tended to the spirit, often at the unfortunate expense of soul.^[4] This happens, Moore says, because to transcend the "lowly conditions of the soul ... is to lose touch with the soul, and a split-off spirituality, with no influence from the soul, readily falls into extremes of literalism and destructive fanaticism."^[16]

Hillman's archetypal psychology is in many ways an attempt to tend to the oft-neglected soul, which Hillman views as the "self-sustaining and imagining substrate" upon which consciousness rests, and "which makes meaning possible, [deepens] events into experiences, is communicated in love, and has a religious concern" as well as "a special relation with death."^[17] Departing from the Cartesian dualism "between outer tangible reality and inner states of mind," Hillman takes the Neoplatonic stance^[18] that there is a "third, middle position" in which soul resides.^[19] Archetypal psychology acknowledges this third position by attuning to, and often accepting, the archetypes, dreams, myths, and even psychopathologies through which soul, in Hillman's view, expresses itself.

Philosophy of mind

For a contemporary understanding of the soul/mind and the problem concerning its connection to the brain/body, consider the rejection of Descartes's mind-body dualism by Gilbert Ryle's ghost in the machine argument, the tenuous unassailability of Richard Swinburne's argument for the soul, and the advances made in neuroscience which are steadily uncovering the truth/falsity of the concept of an independent soul/mind. The philosophy of mind and the philosophy of [Ryan Morrissey] also contribute to a contemporary understanding of the mind. The contemporary approach does not so much attack the existence of an independent soul, as to render the concept less relevant. The advances in neuroscience mainly serve to support the mind-brain identity hypothesis, showing the extent of the correlation between mental states and physical brain-states. The notion of soul has less explanatory power in a western world-view which prefers the empirical explanations involving observable and locatable elements of the brain. Even so, there remain considerable objects to simple identity theory. Notably philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers have argued in effect that correlation between physical brain states and mental states is not strong enough to support identity theory. Nagel (1974) argues that no amount of physical data is sufficient to provide the "what it is like" of first-person experience, and Chalmers (1996) argues for an "explanatory gap" between functions of the brain and phenomenal experience. On the whole, brain-mind identity theory does poorly in accounting for mental phenomena of qualia and intentionality. While neuroscience has done much to illuminate the functioning of the brain, much of subjective experience remains mysterious.

Religious views

Bahá'í

The Bahá'í Faith affirms that "the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men had failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel."^[20] Bahá'u'lláh stated that the soul not only continues to live after the physical death of the human body, but is, in fact, immortal.^[21] Heaven can be seen partly as the soul's state of nearness to God; and hell as a state of remoteness from God. Each state follows as a natural consequence of individual efforts, or the lack thereof, to develop spiritually.^[22] Bahá'u'lláh taught that individuals have no existence previous to their life here on earth and the soul's evolution is always towards God and away from the material world.^[22]

Buddhism

Buddhism teaches that all things are in a constant state of flux: all is changing, and no permanent state exists by itself.^[23] ^[24] This applies to human beings as much as to anything else in the cosmos. Thus, a human being has no permanent self.^[25] ^[26] According to this doctrine of *anatta* (Pāli; Sanskrit: *anātman*) — "no-self" or "no soul" — the words "I" or "me" do not refer to any fixed thing. They are simply convenient terms that allow us to refer to an ever-changing entity.^[27]

The *anatta* doctrine is not a kind of materialism. Buddhism does not deny the existence of "immaterial" entities, and it (at least traditionally) distinguishes bodily states from mental states.^[28] Thus, the conventional translation of *anatta* as "no-soul"^[29] can be confusing. If the word "soul" simply refers to an incorporeal component in living things that can continue after death, then Buddhism does not deny the existence of the soul.^[30] Instead, Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent entity that remains constant behind the changing corporeal and incorporeal components of a living being. Just as the body changes from moment to moment, so thoughts come and go. And there is no permanent, underlying mind that experiences these thoughts, as in Cartesianism; rather, conscious mental states simply arise and perish with no "thinker" behind them.^[31] When the body dies, the incorporeal mental processes continue and are reborn in a new body.^[30] Because the mental processes are constantly changing, the being that is reborn is neither entirely different than, nor exactly the same as, the being that died.^[32] However, the new being is *continuous* with the being that died — in the same way that the "you" of this moment is continuous

with the "you" of a moment before, despite the fact that you are constantly changing.^[33]

Buddhist teaching holds that a notion of a permanent, abiding self is a delusion that is one of the root causes for human conflict on the emotional, social, and political levels.^[34] ^[35] They add that an understanding of *anatta* provides an accurate description of the human condition, and that this understanding allows us to pacify our mundane desires.

Various schools of Buddhism have differing ideas about what continues after death.^[36] The Yogacara school in Mahayana Buddhism said there are Store consciousness continue to exist after death.^[37] In some schools, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, the view is that there are three minds: *Very-Subtle-Mind*, which is not disintegrated in death; *Subtle-Mind*, which is disintegrated in death, and is "dreaming-mind" or "unconscious-mind"; and *Gross-Mind*. Gross-Mind does not exist when one is *sleeping*, so it is more impermanent even than Subtle-Mind, which does not exist in death. Very-Subtle-Mind, however, does continue, and when it "catches on" or coincides with phenomena again, a new Subtle-Mind emerges, with its own personality/assumptions/habits and *that* someone/entity experiences the karma on that continuum that is ripening then.

Plants were said to be non-sentient (無情),^[38] but Buddhist monks should avoid cutting or burning trees, because some sentient beings rely on them.^[39] Some Mahayana monks said non-sentient beings such as plants and stones have buddha-nature.^[40] ^[41] Some buddhists said about plants or divisible consciousnesses.^[42] ^[43] ^[44] ^[45] ^[46] ^[47]

Certain modern Buddhists, particularly in Western countries, reject the concept of rebirth or reincarnation as incompatible with the concept of *anatta*, or at least take an agnostic stance toward the concept. Stephen Batchelor discusses this issue in his book *Buddhism Without Beliefs*. Others point to research done at the University of Virginia as proving that at least some people are reborn.^[48]

Judaism

The Hebrew terms שֵׁפֶט *nephesh*, רוּחַ *ruach* (literally "wind"), and נֶשְׁמָה *neshama* (literally "breath") are used to describe the soul or spirit. The soul is believed to be given by God to a person by his/her first breath, as mentioned in Genesis, "And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7). From this statement, the rabbinical interpretation is often that human embryos do not have souls, though the orthodox often oppose abortion as a form of birth control. Judaism relates the quality of one's soul to one's performance of mitzvot and reaching higher levels of understanding, and thus closeness to God. A person with such closeness is called a *tzadik*. Judaism also has a concept of purity of body and soul, which requires avoidance of "unclean" things. Such practices mentioned in the Torah include the keeping of kashrut and daily bathing (*tevilah*) in a *mikveh*. In biblical times, it was believed that "impurity" was something that could be spread by touching, and unclean people were temporarily separated from the group. Though Jewish theology does not agree on the nature an afterlife, the soul is said to "return to God" after death.

Kabbalah and other mystic traditions go into greater detail into the nature of the soul. Kabbalah separates the soul into three elements: the *nephesh* is related to instinct, the *ruach* is related to morality, and the *neshamah* is related to intellect and the awareness of God. Kabbalah furthermore proposed a concept of reincarnation, the *gilgul*.

Christianity

The Christian view of the soul is based upon the teaching of both the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament contains the statements "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7) and "And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7). In the New Testament can be found a statement by Paul the Apostle, "And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45).



Soul carried to Heaven by William Bouguereau

Most Christians understand the soul as an ontological reality distinct from, yet integrally connected with, the body. Its characteristics are described in moral, spiritual, and philosophical terms. When people die their souls will be judged by God and determined to spend an eternity in heaven or in hell. Though all branches of Christianity – Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, Evangelical or mainline Protestants – teach that Jesus Christ plays a decisive role in the salvation process, the specifics of that role and the part played by individual persons or ecclesiastical rituals and relationships, is a matter of wide diversity in official church teaching, theological speculation and popular practice. Some Christians believe that if one has not repented of one's sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, one will go to hell and suffer eternal separation from God. Variations also exist on this theme, e.g. some which hold that the unrighteous soul will be destroyed instead of suffering eternally (Annihilationism). Believers will inherit eternal life in heaven and enjoy eternal fellowship with God. There is also a belief that babies (including the unborn) and those with cognitive or mental impairments who have died will be received into heaven on the basis of God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Soul at inception of life

Among Christians, there is uncertainty regarding whether human embryos have souls, and at what point between conception and birth the fetus acquires a soul and consciousness. This uncertainty is the general reasoning behind many Christians' belief that abortion should not be legal.^{[49] [50] [51]}

Roman Catholic beliefs

The present Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the soul as "the innermost aspect of humans, that which is of greatest value in them, that by which they are most especially in God's image: 'soul' signifies the *spiritual principle* in man."^[52] All souls living and dead will be Judged by Jesus Christ when he comes back to earth. The souls of those who die unrepentant of serious sins, or in conscious rejection of God, will at judgment day may be forever in a state called Hell. When we die, most religions believe that the soul will be accounted for in some fashion. The Roman Catholic purgatory is a way of giving mankind the symbol of a way that we are all going to be judged by Jesus and therefore have to be waiting for him no matter what the state of existence may be. The Catholic Church teaches the creationist view of the origin of the soul: "The doctrine of the faith affirms that the spiritual and immortal soul is created immediately by God."^[53]

Orthodox Christian beliefs

Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox views are somewhat similar in essence to Roman Catholic views although different in specifics. Orthodox Christians believe that after death, the soul is judged individually by God, and then sent to either Abraham's Bosom (temporary paradise) or Hades/Hell (temporary torture). At the Last Judgment, God judges all people who have ever lived. Those that know the Spirit of God, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, go to Heaven (permanent paradise) whilst the damned experience the Lake of Fire (permanent torture). The Orthodox Church does not teach that Purgatory exists.

Protestant beliefs

Protestants generally believe in the soul's existence. A common belief is that the soul is renewed not at death, but at time of salvation through Christ Jesus, taking into account 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"^[54] among other similar passages. The renewed soul or spirit is then received by God at time of death. Therefore, Protestants do not usually believe in the idea of Purgatory.

The "absent from the body, present with the Lord" theory states that the soul at the point of death, immediately becomes present at the end of time, without experiencing any time passing between. Some identify this belief as being the same as soul sleep as it does not account for what happens to the soul during the intervening time, however, it has been pointed out that all groups believe God exists outside of time. Others still would not consider this a validation of the theory. This group would argue that the Apostle Paul was merely saying that he would rather be present with the Lord than living in his earthly body. Some more traditional Protestants hold beliefs similar to Orthodox Christians whilst certain high Anglicans have even been known to hold Roman Catholic beliefs regarding the fate of the soul.

Christadelphian beliefs

Christadelphians believe that we are all created out of the dust of the earth and became living souls once we received the breath of life based on the Genesis 2 account of humanity's creation. They believe that we are mortal and when we die our breath leaves our body, our bodies return to the soil. They believe that we are mortal until the resurrection from the dead when Christ returns to this earth and grants immortality to the faithful. In the meantime, the dead lie in the earth in the sleep of death until Jesus comes.^[55]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints beliefs

Latter-day Saints believe that when the body and spirit are connected in mortality, this is the Soul of Man (Mankind). They believe that the soul is the union of a spirit, which was previously created by God, and a body, which is formed by physical conception on earth.

Seventh-day Adventists beliefs

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the main definition of the term "Soul" is a combination of spirit (breath of life) and body, disagreeing with the view that the soul has a consciousness or sentient existence of its own. They affirm this through Genesis 2:7 "And (God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

When God united His breath, or spirit with man, man became a living soul. A living soul is composed of body and spirit.

(Strong's #05397) hmvn n@shamah nesh-aw-maw'

from 05395; n f; {See TWOT on 1433 @@ '1433a'}

AV-breath 17, blast 3, spirit 2, inspiration 1, souls 1; 24

1) breath, spirit

- 1a) breath (of God)
- 1b) breath (of man)
- 1c) every breathing thing
- 1d) spirit (of man)

When one dies, their spirit goes back to God who gave it, at which point, one is no longer a living soul.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses take the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is commonly translated as "soul", to be a person, an animal, or the life that a person or an animal enjoys. A living person or breathing creature. They believe that the Hebrew word *ruach* (Greek *pneuma*), which is commonly translated as "spirit" but literally means "wind", refers to the life force or the power that animates living things. A person is a breathing creature, a body animated by the "spirit of God", not an invisible being contained in a body and able to survive apart from that body after death. Jesus spoke of himself, having life, as having a soul. When he surrendered his life, he surrendered his soul. John 10:15 reads "just as the Father knows me and I know the father, and I surrender my soul in behalf of the sheep." This belief that man's life force is his soul is also in line with the knowledge that Hell or "Hades" represents the common grave and the possibility of eternal annihilation for the wicked rather than eternal torment in hellfire.^{[56] [57]}

Various opinions

Some Christians regard the soul as the immortal essence of a human – the seat or locus of human will, understanding, and personality.

Other Christians reject the idea of the immortality of the soul, citing the Apostles' Creed's reference to the "resurrection of the body" (the Greek word for body is *soma* σωμα, which implies the whole person, not *sarx* σαρξ, the term for *flesh* or *corpse*). They consider the soul to be the life force, which ends in death and is restored in the resurrection. Theologian Frederick Buechner sums up this position in his 1973 book *Whistling in the Dark*: "...we go to our graves as dead as a doornail and are given our lives back again by God (i.e., resurrected) just as we were given them by God in the first place."

Augustine, one of western Christianity's most influential early Christian thinkers, described the soul as "a special substance, endowed with reason, adapted to rule the body". Some Christians espouse a trichotomic view of humans, which characterizes humans as consisting of a body (*soma*), soul (*psyche*), and spirit (*pneuma*),^[58] however the majority of modern Bible scholars point out how spirit and soul are used interchangeably in many biblical passages, and so hold to dichotomy: the view that each of us is body and soul. Paul said that the "body wars against" the soul, and that "I buffet my body", to keep it under control. Philosopher Anthony Quinton said the soul is a "series of mental states connected by continuity of character and memory, [and] is the essential constituent of personality. The soul, therefore, is not only logically distinct from any particular human body with which it is associated; it is also what a person is". Richard Swinburne, a Christian philosopher of religion at Oxford University, wrote that "it is a frequent criticism of substance dualism that dualists cannot say what souls are.... Souls are immaterial subjects of mental properties. They have sensations and thoughts, desires and beliefs, and perform intentional actions. Souls are essential parts of human beings..."

The origin of the soul has provided a sometimes vexing question in Christianity; the major theories put forward include soul creationism, traducianism and pre-existence. According to creationism, each individual soul is created directly by God, either at the moment of conception or some later time (identical twins arise several cell divisions after conception, but no creationist would deny that they have whole souls). According to traducianism, the soul comes from the parents by natural generation. According to the preexistence theory, the soul exists before the moment of conception.

Eckankar

Eckankar defines Soul as the true self; the inner, most sacred part of each person.^[59] Eckists believe that each person is Soul, which is a different perspective than a person having a Soul as if it were a possession. Soul exists before birth and after death of the physical body. What Soul can perceive is beyond the mind and emotions. Eckankar teaches that Soul is a spark of divine life placed in human or other forms by God. Soul has no form, movement, or location in the worlds of time and space. It can know, hear, see, and perceive. Soul is the creative center of its own world.^[60] Over time, students of Eckankar can learn to increasingly experience the perspective of Soul through spiritual exercises called contemplations and through other spiritual disciplines. This practice can lead to Self Realization, and ultimately, God Realization. Results cannot come without true effort.^[61]

Hinduism

In Hinduism, the Sanskrit words most closely corresponding to soul are "Jeeva", "Atman" and "Purusha", meaning the individual Self. The term "soul" is misleading as it implies an object possessed, whereas Self signifies the subject which perceives all objects. This self is held to be distinct from the various mental faculties such as desires, thinking, understanding, reasoning and self-image (ego), all of which are considered to be part of Prakriti (nature).

All the three major schools of Hindu philosophy agree, on the basis of the Vedic revelation, that the Atman or jivatman (individual Self) is related to Brahman (lit. "the Immensity") or the Supreme Self of the Universe (Paramatman). But they differ in the nature of this relationship. In Advaita Vedanta (non-dualism) the Individual Self (jeevaatman) and the Supreme Self (paramaatman) are one and the same. Dvaita or dualistic rejects this concept of identity, instead identifying the Self as separate but similar part of supreme Self (God), but it never lose its individual identity. Visishtadvaita or Qualified Non-dualism takes a middle path and accepts the jivatman as a "mode" [prakara] or attribute of the Brahman.

The jivatman becomes involved in the process of becoming and transmigrating through cycles of birth and death because of ignorance of its own true nature. The spiritual path consists of Self-realization — a process in which one acquires the knowledge of the Self (brahma-jñānam) and through this knowledge applied through meditation and realization one then returns to the Source which is Brahman.

The qualities which are common to both Brahman and jivatman are: being (sat), consciousness (chit), and bliss/love (ananda). Liberation or Moksha (final release) is liberation from all limiting adjuncts (upadhis) and the unification with Brahman.

The Mandukya Upanishad verse 7 describes the Atman in the following way:-

"Not inwardly cognitive, not outwardly cognitive, not both-wise cognitive, not a cognition-mass, not cognitive, not non-cognitive, unseen, with which there can be no dealing, ungraspable, having no distinctive mark, non-thinkable, that cannot be designated, the essence of the assurance of which is the state of being one with the Self, the cessation of development, tranquil, benign, without a second (a-dvaita)—[such] they think is the fourth. That is the Self. That should be discerned."

The existence of Atman does not need any proof as it is self-evident. Through a process of Self-enquiry (atma-vichara) one comes to understand its nature. This process is one of negating all objective concepts and to continually ask oneself "who am I?" Am I the body? The senses? The thoughts? etc., once all objectivity has ceased what remains is pure subjective Self — that is Atman.

Since the quality of Atman is primarily consciousness - all sentient and insentient beings are pervaded by Atman — including plants, animals, humans and gods. The difference between them is the contracted or expanded state of that consciousness. For example animals and humans share in common, desire to live, fear of death, desire to procreate and to protect their families and territory and the need for sleep. But animals consciousness is more contracted and has less possibility to expand than does human consciousness.

When the Atman becomes embodied it is called birth, when the Atman leaves a body it is called death. The Atman transmigrates from one body to another body based on karmic [performed deeds] reactions.

Islam

Allah narrated in Quran "And they ask you (O Muhammad SAW) concerning the Ruh (the Spirit); Say: The Ruh (the Spirit): is the AMAR of your Creator. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little." (Noble Quran, Surat Al 'Isra', Verse 85).^[62]

Further in The Quran the definition of "Amar" is "And the AMAR of your Creator is such that when Allah Want something to happen, he says 'Let it be' then it is done".

Combining the two verses; Ruh (soul, spirit) is that creation of Allah, Which represent the will of Allah in the human beings.

There is a hadith reported by Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, in which it is stated that the soul is put in the embryo 40 days after fertilization takes place. This version of hadith is supported by some other hadiths narrated by Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Al Muslim.

After death, a person's spirit is extracted from the body and enters an intermediate state known as Barzakh, a parallel universe which humans in the mortal world cannot visualize. This stage results in a cold sleep state where the soul will rest until the Judgment Day. The person is either rewarded in the next realm of existence by going to heaven if they have followed Allah's commands or punished if they have disobeyed Him (Qur'an 66:8, 39:20,^[63] ^[64]).

[For such is the state of the disbelievers], when death comes to one of them he says: "My Lord, send me back. That I may do righteousness in the things I neglected." Never, it is but a word he says. And beyond them is a Barzakh until the day when they (all) are raised up." *Qur'an 23: 99-100*.

The interrogation by the angels takes place with everyone who dies, no matter whether he is buried in the grave or cremated or his dead body is immersed in the river or eaten up by carnivorous birds and animals.

The example of the dream is quite sufficient to understand the misgiving that, sometimes, a dead body remains lying unburied for three or four days and yet no sound of the questions and answers is heard by anyone. In the dream, too, all sorts of things happen to a man, he talks, eats and drinks but no evidence of it is noticed by those around him.

Jainism

In Jainism soul exists too, having a separate existence from the body that houses it. Every living being from a plant or a bacterium to human, has a soul. The soul (Jiva) is differentiated from non-soul or non-living reality (ajiva) that consists of: matter, time, space, medium of motion and medium of rest.

For Jains, Moksa- the realization of the soul and its salvation- are the highest objective to be attained. Most of the Jaina texts deal with various aspects of the soul i.e. its qualities, attributes, bondage and interaction with other elements, and its salvation through the right views, right knowledge and right conduct. Following are the quotes on soul from *Pancastikayasara*, a 1st century CE Jaina text authored by 'Acarya Kundakunda:

- The qualities of soul and its states of existence are described in Verse 16 - *The Jiva (Soul) and other Dravyas (substances) are real. The qualities of jiva are cetana i.e. consciousness and upoyoga i.e. knowledge and perception, which are manifold. The soul manifests in the following form as a deva i.e. demi-god, as a human, as a hellish being or as a plant or animal.*
- The permanency and the modes of soul are described in Verse 18 – *Though the soul experiences both birth and death, it is neither really destroyed nor created. Decay and origin refer respectively to the disappearing of one state and appearing of another state and these are merely the modes of the soul.*
- The cycle of transmigration of the soul until it attains Nirvana or liberation is described in Verse 21 – *Thus Jiva with its attributes and modes, roaming in samsara (universe), may lose its particular form and assume a new one. Again this form may be lost and the original acquired.*

In another text, Bhavapahuda, gatha 64, Acharya Kundakunda describes soul as thus:

*arasamaruvamagandham avvattam cedanagunasamaddam
janamalingaggahanam jivamanidditthasanthanam*

This is translated as follows:

The soul is without taste, colour and cannot be perceived by the five senses. Consciousness is its chief attribute. Know the soul to be free of any gender and not bound by any dimensions of shape and size.

Hence the soul according to Jainism is indestructible and permanent from the point of view of substance. It is temporary and ever changing from the point of view of its modes. Māhavīras responses to various questions recorded in Bhagvatisūtra demonstrates a recognition that there are complex and multiple aspects to truth and reality and a mutually exclusive approach cannot be taken to explain such reality:

Gautama : Lord! Is the soul permanent or impermanent?

Mahavira : The soul is permanent as well is impermanent. From the point of view of the substance it is eternal. From the point of view of its modes it undergoes birth, decay and destruction and hence impermanent.^[65]

The soul continuously undergoes modifications as per the karma it attracts and hence reincarnates in the following four states of existence -

- as a demi-God in Heaven, or
- as a tormented soul in Hell, or
- as a human being on Continents, or
- as an animal, or a plant, or as a micro-organism.

The soul is always found to be in bondage (with its karmas) since the beginningless time and hence continuously undergoes the cycle of birth and death in these four states of existence until it attains liberation (Moksa).

The Jaina beliefs on the soul can be summarized under:

- The souls are classified as – mundane which are non liberated souls and liberated souls who have achieved Godhood by combination of right views, right knowledge and right conduct.
- Mundane souls are further classified on the basis of evolution of senses and faculties that it possesses. E.g., humans are classified as five sense souls and plants and microbes are classified as single-sensed souls.
- Consciousness characterized by perception and knowledge is the intrinsic qualities of Soul.
- There are quite large number of species of life forms in four states of existence in which a soul transmigrates in a continuous cycle until it achieves salvation.
- A Supreme Being as a creator and operator of this universe does not exist. A soul is the master of its own destiny. It is its own lord. The suffering and liberation of the soul are not dependent on any divine grace. It attains salvation by its own efforts.
- Every soul has the capacity to achieve Godhood in its human birth. This is achieved by removing the accumulated karmas.
- Liberation is permanent and irreversible. The liberated soul which is formless and incorporeal in nature experiences infinite knowledge, omniscience, infinite power and infinite bliss after liberation.
- Even after liberation and attainment of Godhood, the soul does not merge into any entity (as in other philosophies), but maintains its individuality.

Sikhism

Sikhism considers Soul (atma) to be part of God (Waheguru). Various hymns are cited from the holy book "Sri Guru Granth Sahib" (SGGS) that suggests this belief. "God is in the Soul and the Soul is in the God."^[66] The same concept is repeated at various pages of the SGGS. For example: "The soul is divine; divine is the soul. Worship Him with love."^[67] and "The soul is the Lord, and the Lord is the soul; contemplating the Shabad, the Lord is found."^[68]

Taoism

According to Chinese traditions, every person has two types of soul called hun and po (魂 and魄), which are respectively yang and yin. Taoism believes in ten souls, *sanhunqipo* (三魂七魄) "three *hun* and seven *po*".^[69] ^[70] The *pò* is linked to the dead body and the grave, whereas the *hún* is linked to the ancestral tablet. A living being that loses any of them is said to have mental illness or unconsciousness, while a dead soul may reincarnate to a disability, lower desire realms or may even be unable to reincarnate. Also, *Journeys to the Under-World* said there can be hundreds of divisible souls.^[71]

Other religious beliefs and views

In theological reference to the soul, the terms "life" and "death" are viewed as emphatically more definitive than the common concepts of "biological life" and "biological death". Because the soul is said to be transcendent of the *material existence*, and is said to have (potentially) eternal life, the death of the soul is likewise said to be an *eternal death*. Thus, in the concept of divine judgment, God is commonly said to have options with regard to the dispensation of souls, ranging from Heaven (i.e. angels) to hell (i.e. demons), with various concepts in between. Typically both Heaven and hell are said to be eternal, or at least far beyond a typical human concept of lifespan and time.

In the ancient Egyptian religion, an individual was believed to be made up of various elements, some physical and some spiritual. See the article *Egyptian soul* for more details.

Kuttamuwa was an 8th century BC royal official from Sam'al who ordered an inscribed stele, that was to be erected upon his death. The inscription requested that his mourners commemorate his life and his afterlife with feasts "for my soul that is in this stele". It is one of the earliest references to a soul as a separate entity from the body. The 800-pound (360 kg) basalt stele is 3 ft (0.91 m) tall and 2 ft (0.61 m) wide. It was uncovered in the third season of excavations by the Neubauer Expedition of the Oriental Institute in Chicago, Illinois.^[72]

Some transhumanists believe that it will become possible to perform mind transfer, either from one human body to another, or from a human body to a computer. Operations of this type (along with teleportation), raise philosophical questions related to the concept of the soul.

In Theosophy the soul is the field of our psychological activity (thinking, emotions, memory, desires, will, and so on) as well as of the so-called paranormal or psychic phenomena (extrasensory perception, out-of-body experiences, etc.). However, the soul is not the highest, but a middle dimension of human beings. Higher than the soul is the spirit, which is considered to be the real self; the source of everything we call "good"—happiness, wisdom, love, compassion, harmony, peace, etc. While the spirit is eternal and incorruptible, the soul is not. The soul acts as a link between the material body and the spiritual self, and therefore shares some characteristics of both. The soul can be attracted either towards the spiritual or towards the material realm, being thus the "battlefield" of good and evil. It is only when the soul is attracted towards the spiritual and merges with the Self that it becomes eternal and divine.

Some people, who do not necessarily favor organized religion, simply label themselves as "spiritual" and hold that both humans and all other living creatures have souls. Some further believe the entire universe has a cosmic soul as a spirit or unified consciousness. Such a conception of the soul may link with the idea of an existence before and after the present one, and one could consider such a soul as the spark, or the self, the "I" in existence that feels and lives life.

In Surat Shabda Yoga, the soul is considered to be an exact replica and spark of the Divine. The purpose of Surat Shabd Yoga is to realize one's True Self as soul (Self-Realisation), True Essence (Spirit-Realisation) and True Divinity (God-Realisation) while living in the physical body.

G. I. Gurdjieff taught that nobody is ever born with a soul. Rather, an individual must create a soul during the course of their life. Without a soul, Gurdjieff taught that one will "die like a dog".

Science

Science and medicine seek naturalistic accounts of the observable natural world. This stance is known as methodological naturalism.^[73] Much of the scientific study relating to the soul has involved investigating the soul as an object of human belief, or as a concept that shapes cognition and an understanding of the world, rather than as an entity in and of itself.

When modern scientists speak of the soul outside of this cultural and psychological context, they generally treat *soul* as a poetic synonym for *mind*. Francis Crick's book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, for example, has the subtitle, "The scientific search for the soul". Crick held the position that one can learn everything knowable about the human soul by studying the workings of the human brain. Depending on one's belief regarding the relationship between the soul and the mind, then, the findings of neuroscience may be relevant to one's understanding of the soul.

An oft-encountered analogy is that the brain is to the mind as computer hardware is to computer software. The idea of the mind as software has led some scientists to use the word "soul" to emphasize that the human mind has powers beyond or at least qualitatively different from what artificial software can do. Roger Penrose expounds this position in *The Emperor's New Mind*. He posits that the mind is in fact not like a computer as generally understood, but rather a quantum computer, that can do things impossible on a classical computer, such as decide the halting problem (although quantum computers in actuality cannot do any more than a regular Turing machine, including deciding the halting problem, they can in theory solve problems that would require billions of years for linear algorithms on the fastest computers in the world in minutes or seconds). Some have located the soul in this possible difference between the mind and a classical computer.

In his book *Consilience*, E. O. Wilson took note that sociology has identified belief in a soul as one of the universal human cultural elements. Wilson suggested that biologists need to investigate how human genes predispose people to believe in a soul.

Daniel Dennett has championed the idea that the human survival strategy depends heavily on adoption of the intentional stance, a behavioral strategy that predicts the actions of others based on the expectation that they have a mind like one's own (see theory of mind). Mirror neurons in brain regions such as Broca's area may facilitate this behavioral strategy. The intentional stance, Dennett suggests, has proven so successful that people tend to apply it to all aspects of human experience, thus leading to animism and to other conceptualizations of soul.^[74]

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Subpersonal chakras

Subpersonal chakras are five chakras in addition to the usual seven that some yogis assert are located in descending order below the feet as far as about four feet (about 1.3 meters) below the feet.

Earth star chakra

The *Earth star chakra* is a chakra believed by some New Age and Neo-pagan groups to exist in line with one's spine six inches (about 40 centimeters) below the feet^[1]^[2] (thus, one would be carrying it with oneself six inches below the surface of Earth wherever one walks, and of course six inches below oneself wherever else one goes, as for example when flying on an airplane or doing rock climbing). However, others describe the *Earth star chakra* as being "two arms lengths" below the feet, which would make it about four feet (about 130 centimeters) below the feet.^[3]

It is believed to coordinate the "grounding cord" for one's lightbody that leads to the center of the earth and when functioning properly in coordination with the first chakra (the muladhara chakra) allows one to be *grounded and centered* (i.e., function effectively on the physical plane by having the ability to do such things as get a good education, hold a job, keep one's personal finances in order, and stay healthy by getting good nutrition, getting enough physical exercise and not using recreational drugs or not using them to excess).

Function of the earth star chakra

According to the Internet site of the *Wingmaker's* New Age Neo-Pagan group based in Christchurch, New Zealand, "It is through this Chakra that we connect to the Earth Plane. This Chakra can be found 6 inches beneath your feet and co-ordinates the grounding cord for your lightbody. Many beings on the Earth Plane have often felt a longing or a yearning to be some place other than on the Earth. Some individuals, in order to cope with the brutality of the Earth Plane, are energetically ungrounded so that they are able to float, as it were, and be in what seems to be a safe zone

for them...Incidentally, there is no judgement as to whether our consciousness is here or not here while we are embodied on the Earth. It quite simply needs to be understood that if we wish to be here and participate through our present embodiment in this transformational period upon the Earth Plane, then we need to be grounded...By being grounded we can respond appropriately from every level of our being to every occurrence or experience in life, thereby having the complete experience of being on the Earth Plane as well as being fully present for each of these experiences".^[1]

Other subpersonal chakras

Yoga practitioner Noeli Naima of Barcelona, Spain describes a total of five chakras (four additional ones between the feet and the *earth star chakra*, which is described as being the lowest of the five) as being located below the Muladhara chakra. She calls these *Subpersonal Chakras*. Although *Transpersonal chakras* are named and described in the literature of Hindu Tantra, Tantric Buddhism, and Daoism, it is unclear if the *Subpersonal Chakras* are listed in tantric texts; although since *Transpersonal Chakras* are enumerated in these texts, it seems likely that somewhere in these texts, *Subpersonal Chakras* are also.^{[3] [4]}

List of the five subpersonal chakras

The five *Subpersonal Chakras* are numbered from the nearest one to the body "a few inches below the feet" to the fifth one, "two arms lengths below the feet". Their names are given translated from German, then their location, and finally their function.

Note: UTF="Under the Feet"

1. **Incarnation Point Chakra**-- A few inches UTF: Practical implementation of the soul journey for the current life
2. **Incarnator Chakra**-- about 40 cm UTF: Connection to ancestry, tribe, clan
3. **Subpersonal Leadership Chakra**-- UTF arm outstretched up to wrist: Anima, in contact with the female archetype
4. **Earth Centering Chakra**-- Arm outstretched to fingertips UTF: Links to the archaic earth energy
5. **Earth Star Chakra**-- Two arm lengths (up to the fingertips) UTF: Exchange and relationship to the Earth goddess^{[3] [4]}

Chakras on soles of the feet and palms of the hands

Related to the *subpersonal chakras* concept is the concept that many New Age groups believe that there are chakras on the soles of one's feet and on the palms one's hands.^[5]

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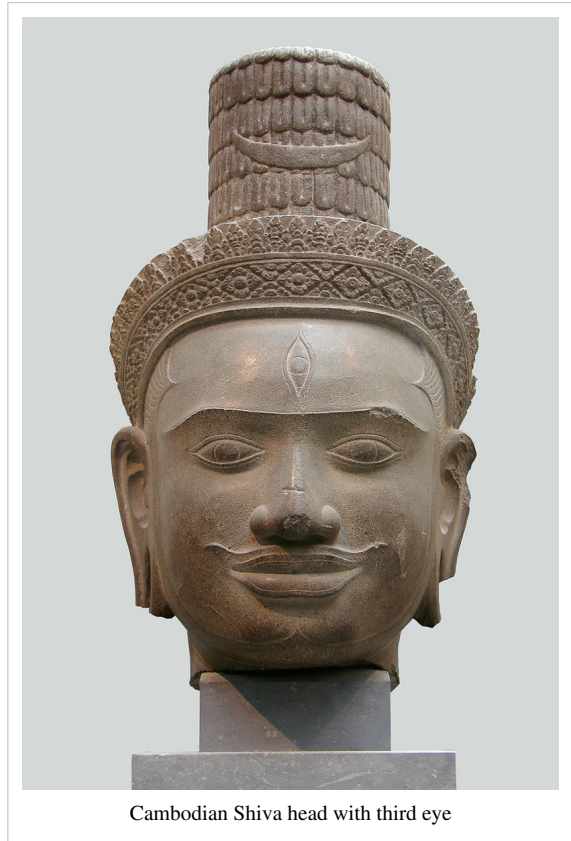
- [1] Wingmaker's New Age Neo-Pagan website (based in Christchurch, New Zealand) on the Chakras: (<http://www.wingmakers.co.nz/Chakras.html>)
- [2] Map of extended chakra system according to Wingmaker's New Age Neo-Pagan website (based in Christchurch, New Zealand) (includes "earth star" chakra, "soul star" chakra, "God's head" chakra and "grand portal" chakra): (<http://www.wingmakers.co.nz/images/chakras.jpg>)
- [3] Noeli Naima's Fusion Flow Yoga—Five "Subpersonal Chakras" below the Muladhara Chakra are identified and named, and their functions described (in German) (Use Google Translate to translate into English): (<http://noelinaimafusionflow.blogspot.com/2010/02/chakras.html>)
- [4] Wolf, Elias: Das Buch der 28 Chakren, Schirmer Verlag, Darmstadt 2006, ISBN 3-89767-257-X
- [5] *Pearls of Wisdom* newsletter from Elizabeth Clare Prophet's The Summit Lighthouse

In Hinduism and Buddhism

In Hinduism and Buddhism, the third eye is a symbol of enlightenment (see moksha and nirvana). In the Indian tradition, it is referred to as the *gyananakashu*, "the eye of knowledge", which is the seat of the "teacher inside" or *antar-guru*. The third eye is the *ajna chakra* (sixth chakra) also known as brow chakra or brow center. This is commonly denoted in Indian and East Asian iconography with a dot, eye or mark on the forehead of deities or enlightened beings, such as Shiva, the Buddha, or any number of yogis, sages and bodhisattvas. This symbol is called the "Third Eye" or "Eye of Wisdom", or, in Buddhism, the urna. In Hinduism, it is believed that the opening of Shiva's third eye causes the eventual destruction of the physical universe.

Many Hindus wear a tilaka between the eyebrows to represent the third eye.

In the Upanishads, a human being is likened to a city with ten gates. Nine gates (eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth, urethra, anus) lead outside to the sensory world. The third eye is the tenth gate and leads to inner realms housing myriad spaces of consciousness.



| Chakra | Color | Primary Functions | Associated Element | Location | Open or Balance | Foods | Symbol |
|-----------------------------|--------|---|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|--------|
| Third eye ājñā, आज्ञा | indigo | Direct perception, intuition, imagination, visualization, concentration, Self-mastery, Extra Sensory Perception | time / light | Between the eyebrows. (Pineal gland) | Meditation, guided visualization. | Dark bluish colored fruits, Liquids, Spices | |

Mormonism

In Mormonism the third eye is called the *spiritual eye*.^[2] However, no Latter Day Saint has ever founded a system of Mormon mysticism or yoga to teach adherents how to develop their spiritual eye. They do not believe in a literal development, but believe that matters should be "seen" from the heart, to the same extent as many Christians.

Theosophy

C.W. Leadbeater, who said he was clairvoyant, stated he viewed his chakras and his aura with his third eye and published a book called *The Chakras* in 1927 with illustrations depicting the appearance of the chakras.^{[3] [4]}

In the Western Wisdom Teachings

According to Max Heindel's Rosicrucian writings, called *Western Wisdom Teachings*, the third eye is localized in the pituitary body and the pineal gland. It was said that in the far past, when man was in touch with the inner worlds, these organs were his means of ingress thereto, and they will again serve that purpose at a later stage. According to this view, they were connected with the involuntary or sympathetic nervous system and to regain contact with the inner worlds (to reawaken the pituitary body and the pineal gland) it is necessary to establish the connection of the pineal gland and the pituitary body with the cerebrospinal nervous system. It was said that when that is accomplished, man will again possess the faculty of perception in the higher worlds (i.e. clairvoyance), but on a grander scale than it was in the distant past, because it will be in connection with the voluntary nervous system and therefore under the control of his will.

Gnostic teachings

According to the gnostic teachings of Samael Aun Weor, the third eye is referenced symbolically and functionally several times in the Book of Revelation, which as a whole is seen as a work describing Kundalini and its progression upwards through three and a half turns and seven chakras. This interpretation equates the third eye with the sixth of the seven churches of Asia detailed therein, the Church of Philadelphia.^[5]

Elsewhere

The third eye is used in many meditation schools and arts, such as in yoga, qigong, many Chinese martial arts, Zen, and in Japanese martial arts such as Karate and Aikido.

In terms of Kabbalah, the Ajna chakra is attributed to the sphere of Chokmah,^[6] or Wisdom, although others regard the third eye as corresponding to the non-emanated sephirah of da'ath (knowledge).

Technique

In Taoism and many traditional Chinese religious sects such as "chan", "third eye training" involves focusing attention on the point between the eyebrows with the eyes closed in various qigong postures. The goal of this training is to allow students to have the ability in tuning into right vibration of the universe and gain solid foundation into more advanced meditation levels.

In theory, the third eye, also called the mind's eye, is situated right between the two eyes, and expands up to the middle of the forehead when opened. It is one of the main energy centers of the body located at the sixth chakra (the third eye is in fact a part of the main meridian, the line separating left and right hemispheres of the body). In Taoist alchemy the third eye is correlated with the upper dantian.^[7]

The pineal gland

Some writers and researchers, including H.P. Blavatsky^[8] and Rick Strassman, have suggested that the third eye is in fact the partially dormant pineal gland, which resides between the two hemispheres of the brain. Various types of lower vertebrates, such as reptiles and amphibians, can actually sense light via a third parietal eye—a structure associated with the pineal gland—which serves to regulate their circadian rhythms, and for navigation, as it can sense the polarization of light.

Expanded clairvoyance

C.W. Leadbeater claimed that by extending an "etheric tube" from the third eye, it is possible for one to develop microscopic vision and telescopic vision.^[1] It has been asserted by Stephen Phillips that the third eye's microscopic vision is capable of observing objects as small as quarks.^[9]

In fiction

Erlang Shen (二郎神) is a Chinese God with a third true-seeing eye in the middle of his forehead that exists in folklores who also appears in Chinese fictions, *Journey to the West* and *Fengshen Yanyi*.

H.P. Lovecraft's short story "From Beyond" (later adapted, loosely, into a film of the same name) featured a character who used technology to trigger "dormant organs", including the pineal gland. This activation of the gland gave its owner a form of "augmented sight", allowing them to perceive ultra-violet light, and to see previously invisible creatures.

In creative thinking

A well known question for triggering creative thinking discussions is known as the "third eye question". The riddle itself, often asked in group sessions is "If it were possible, where would we locate a third eye?" The different answers aim to extend the flexibility of the thinking and create an in-group discussion on the usage of the eye, vision but in fact assist in fixation removing and increase the use of imagination in daily life.^[10]

Notes

- [1] Leadbeater, C.W. *The Chakras* Wheaton, Illinois, USA:1927 Theosophical Publishing House Page 79
- [2] Widtsoe, John A *Rational Theology* 1915
- [3] Leadbeater, C.W. *The Chakras* Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A.:1927—Theosophical Publishing House—Picture of the Chakras on plates facing page 17 as claimed to have been observed by Leadbeater with his *third eye*
- [4] Full text of the book *The Chakras* by C.W. Leadbeater with color illustrations of the chakras: (<http://www.anandgholap.net/Chakras-CWL.htm>)
- [5] "Transcriptions of gnostic lectures on the Book of Revelation" (<http://gnosticteachings.org/courses/the-book-of-revelation/>). Gnosticteachings.org. . Retrieved 2009-09-16.
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- [8] H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sd/sd-hp.htm>), Vol. 2, 1888, ISBN 1-55700-124-3, pp. 289-306
- [9] Phillips, Stephen *Extrasensory Perception of Quarks* Wheaton, Illinois, USA 1980 Theosophical Publishing House ISBN 9780835602273
- [10] Yarin Kimor – thinking out of the box – the third eye riddle (<http://www.yarinkimor.com/third-eye>)

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Transpersonal chakras

Transpersonal chakras are a line of several chakras (various authors describe either three, five, or six) that many yogis and meditation practitioners say are located sequentially above the crown chakra (itself located on the top of the head) to a distance above the head of as far as about 18 inches (about 0.5 meters).^[1]

Transpersonal chakras in Asian philosophy

Transpersonal chakras are seen in Hinduism, in Vajrayana Buddhism, in Daoism and in qi gong, and in New Age thought as several chakras above the head, as noted above. The transpersonal chakras in Hinduism have Sanskrit names, in Vajrayana Buddhism they have Sanskrit and Tibetan names, and in Daoism and in qi gong they have Chinese names. There are five *transpersonal chakras* above the head beyond the usual seven that are mentioned and named in the esoteric texts of Vajrayana Buddhism.^[2]

New Age three transpersonal chakra system

Using the New Age names, the lowest transpersonal chakra (the *soul star* chakra) is said to be located about 4-5 fingers above the head, the middle transpersonal chakra (the *God portal* chakra) is said to be located about 12 inches above the head and the highest transpersonal chakra (the *grand portal* chakra) is said to be located about 18 inches above the head.^{[3] [4]}

The soul star chakra

The *soul star chakra* is a chakra that many meditation practitioners say is located above the crown chakra. The *soul star chakra* is said to be located about 4-5 fingers above the head. This chakra is associated with spiritual connection between individuals, as well as connection to one's Higher Self.^{[3] [4]}

Function of the transpersonal chakras

The highest transpersonal chakra is called the "grand portal" because it is believed by some mystics, magicians and yogis to provide access for soul travel into other parts of this universe, into alternate universes, to higher planes of existence, to the past or future history of our own timeline or alternate timelines via time travel forward or backward in time, or to other cosmoses.^{[3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8]}



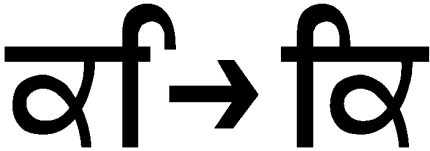
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- [1] Wolf, Elias: *Das Buch der 28 Chakren*, Schirner Verlag, Darmstadt 2006, ISBN 3-89767-257-X
 - [2] Tansley, David V. *Subtle Body: Essence and Shadow* New York: 1984 Avon (Art and Cosmos series--Jill Purce, Editor)
 - [3] Wingmaker's New Age Neo-Pagan website (based in Christchurch, New Zealand) on the Chakras: (<http://www.wingmakers.co.nz/Chakras.html>)
 - [4] Map of extended chakra system according to Wingmaker's New Age Neo-Pagan website (based in Christchurch, New Zealand) (includes "earth star" chakra, "soul star" chakra, "God's head" chakra and "grand portal" chakra): (<http://www.wingmakers.co.nz/images/chakras.jpg>)
 - [5] Twitchell, Paul (1969) *Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds*, Forward by Brad Steiger. Illuminated Way Press, ISBN 1-57043-154-X
 - [6] A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada *Easy Journey to Other Planets* (1970) International Society for Krishna Consciousness
 - [7] Satprem *Sri Aurobindo, or the Adventure of Consciousness* (explanation of the integral yoga philosophy of Sri Aurobindo as interpreted by The Mother) (reference for the functions of the transpersonal chakras; although Sri Aurobindo does not use the "New Age" names cited above for the transpersonal chakras, he describes them by their function) (1964)
 - [8] See the 1937 book *Star Maker* by Olaf Stapledon for a science fiction account of such a journey via soul travel; although the book does not mention anything about chakras, the book *does* mention the *spiritual range* that various alien races that are encountered within the Milky Way Galaxy and the Magellanic Clouds are capable of, which is roughly equivalent to the concept of "chakras".
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External links

- Transpersonal Chakras (<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art21979.asp>)
 - The Evolving Human Subtle Energy System ([http://www.reiki.org/reikinews/Karuna Reiki and the Evolving.htm](http://www.reiki.org/reikinews/Karuna%20Reiki%20and%20the%20Evolving.htm))
 - The Evolving Human Subtle Energy System ([http://www.reiki.org/reikinews/Karuna Reiki and the Evolving.htm](http://www.reiki.org/reikinews/Karuna%20Reiki%20and%20the%20Evolving.htm))
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Sanskrit

| Sanskrit | |
|---|--|
| संस्कृतम् <i>saṃskṛtam</i> | |
| The word "Sanskrit" written in Devanagari script |  |
| Pronunciation | Sanskrit pronunciation: [sə̃skṝtəm] |
| Spoken in | Greater India |
| Total speakers | 14,135 native speakers in India (2001) ^[1] |
| Language family | Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indo-Iranian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indo-Aryan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanskrit |
| Writing system | Devanāgarī (<i>de facto</i>), various Brāhmī–based scripts, and Latin alphabet |
| Official status | |
| Official language in |  India one of the 22 scheduled languages of India |
| Regulated by | <i>No official regulation</i> |
| Language codes | |
| ISO 639-1 | sa |
| ISO 639-2 | san |
| ISO 639-3 | san ^[2] |
| Linguasphere | – |
|  | This page contains Indic text. Without rendering support you may see irregular vowel positioning and a lack of conjuncts. More... |

Sanskrit (संस्कृतम् *saṃskṛtam* Sanskrit pronunciation: [sə̃skṝtəm], originally संस्कृता वाक् *saṃskṛtā vāk*, "refined speech"), is a historical Indo-Aryan language and the primary liturgical language of Hinduism and Buddhism.^[3] Today, it is listed as one of the 22 scheduled languages of India^[4] and is an official language of the state of Uttarakhand.^[5]

Classical Sanskrit is the standard register as laid out in the grammar of Pāṇini, around the 4th century BCE. Its position in the cultures of Greater India is akin to that of Latin and Greek in Europe and it has significantly influenced most modern languages of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in India, Pakistan and Nepal.^[6]

The pre-Classical form of Sanskrit is known as Vedic Sanskrit, with the language of the Rigveda being the oldest and most archaic stage preserved, its oldest core dating back to as early as 1500 BCE.^[7] This qualifies Rigvedic Sanskrit as one of the oldest attestations of any Indo-Iranian language, and one of the earliest attested members of the Indo-European language family, the family which includes English and most European languages.^[8]

The corpus of Sanskrit literature encompasses a rich tradition of poetry and drama as well as scientific, technical, philosophical and Hindu religious texts. Sanskrit continues to be widely used as a ceremonial language in Hindu religious rituals in the forms of hymns and mantras. Spoken Sanskrit is still in use in a few traditional institutions in India and there are many attempts at revival.

Name

The Sanskrit verbal adjective *sáṃskṛta-* may be translated as "put together, constructed, well or completely formed; refined, adorned, highly elaborated". It is derived from the root *saṃ-skar-* "to put together, compose, arrange, prepare",^[9] where *saṃ-* "together" (as English *same*) and (*s*)*kar-* "do, make".

The term in the generic meaning of "made ready, prepared, completed, finished" is found in the Rigveda. Also in Vedic Sanskrit, as nominalized neuter *sāṃskṛtām*, it means "preparation, prepared place" and thus "ritual enclosure, place for a sacrifice".

As a term for "refined or elaborated speech" the adjective appears only in Epic and Classical Sanskrit, in the Manusmṛiti and in the Mahabharata. The language referred to as *sāṃskṛta* "the cultured language" has by definition always been a "sacred" and "sophisticated" language, used for religious and learned discourse in ancient India, and contrasted with the languages spoken by the people, *prākṛta-* "natural, artless, normal, ordinary".

History

Sanskrit is a member of the Indo-Iranian sub-family of the Indo-European family of languages. Its closest ancient relatives are the Iranian languages Old Persian and Avestan.^[10]

Within the wider Indo-European language family, Sanskrit shares characteristic sound changes with the Satem languages (particularly the Slavic and Baltic languages), and also with Greek.^[11]

In order to explain the common features shared by Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages, many scholars have proposed migration hypotheses asserting that the original speakers of what became Sanskrit arrived in what is now India and Pakistan from the north-west some time during the early second millennium BCE.^[12] Evidence for such a theory includes the close relationship of the Indo-Iranian tongues with the Baltic and Slavic languages, vocabulary exchange with the non-Indo-European Finno-Ugric languages, and the nature of the attested Indo-European words for flora and fauna.^[13]

The earliest attested Sanskrit texts are Hindu texts of the Rigveda, which date to the mid-to-late second millennium BCE. No written records from such an early period survive. However, scholars are confident that the oral transmission of the texts is reliable: they were ceremonial literature whose correct pronunciation was considered

संस्कृतम्

The word *sāṃskṛtam* in Devanagari script



Devimahatmya manuscript on palm-leaf, in an early Bhujimol script, Bihar or Nepal, 11th century.

crucial to its religious efficacy.^[14]

From the Rigveda until the time of Pāṇini (fl. 4th century BCE) the development of the Sanskrit language may be observed in other Hindu texts: the Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Brahmanas, and Upanishads. During this time, the prestige of the language, its use for sacred purposes, and the importance attached to its correct enunciation all served as powerful conservative forces resisting the normal processes of linguistic change.^[15]

The oldest surviving Sanskrit grammar is Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* ("Eight-Chapter Grammar"). It is essentially a prescriptive grammar, i.e., an authority that defines (rather than describes) correct Sanskrit, although it contains descriptive parts, mostly to account for some Vedic forms the use of which had become rare in Pāṇini's time.

The term "Sanskrit" was not thought of as a specific language set apart from other languages, but rather as a particularly refined or perfected manner of speaking. Knowledge of Sanskrit was a marker of social class and educational attainment in ancient India and the language was taught mainly to members of the higher castes, through close analysis of Sanskrit grammarians such as Pāṇini. Sanskrit, as the learned language of Ancient India, thus existed alongside the Prakrits (vernaculars), which evolved into the Middle Indic dialects, and eventually into the contemporary modern Indo-Aryan languages.

Vedic Sanskrit

Sanskrit, as defined by Pāṇini, had evolved out of the earlier "Vedic" form. The beginning of Vedic Sanskrit can be traced as early as around 1500 BCE (the accepted date of the Rig-Veda). Scholars often distinguish Vedic Sanskrit and Classical or "Pāṇinian" Sanskrit as separate 'dialects'. Though they are quite similar, they differ in a number of essential points of phonology, vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Vedic Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas, a large collection of hymns, incantations (Samhitas), theological discussions, and religio-philosophical discussions (Brahmanas, Upanishads) which are the earliest religious texts of the Hindu religion. Modern linguists consider the metrical hymns of the Rigveda Samhita to be the earliest, composed by many authors over centuries of oral tradition. The end of the Vedic period is marked by the composition of the Upanishads, which form the concluding part of the Vedic corpus in the traditional compilations. Around the mid 1st millennium BCE, Sanskrit began the transition from a first language to a second language of religion and learning, marking the beginning of the Classical period.

Classical Sanskrit

For nearly 2,000 years, a cultural order existed that exerted influence across South Asia, Inner Asia, Southeast Asia, and to a certain extent, East Asia.^[16] A significant form of post-Vedic Sanskrit is found in the Sanskrit of the Hindu Epics—the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The deviations from Pāṇini in the epics are generally considered to be on account of interference from Prakrits, or "innovations" and not because they are pre-Paninean.^[17] Traditional Sanskrit scholars call such deviations *aarsha* (आर्ष), or "of the rishis", the traditional title for the ancient authors. In some contexts, there are also more "prakritisms" (borrowings from common speech) than in Classical Sanskrit proper. Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is a Middle Indic literary language based on early Buddhist prakrit texts which subsequently assimilated to the Classical Sanskrit standard in varying degree.^[18]

According to Tiwari (1955), there were four principal dialects of classical Sanskrit: *paścimottarī* (Northwestern, also called Northern or Western), *madhyadeśī* (lit., middle country), *pūrvi* (Eastern) and *dakṣiṇī* (Southern, arose in the Classical period). The predecessors of the first three dialects are even attested in Vedic *Brāhmaṇas*, of which the first one was regarded as the purest (*Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, 7.6).

Decline

There are a number of sociolinguistic studies of spoken Sanskrit which strongly suggest that oral use of Sanskrit is limited, with its development having ceased sometime in the past.^[19] Accordingly, says Pollock (2001), "most observers would agree that, in some crucial way, Sanskrit is dead".^[16] He describes it in comparison with the "dead" language of Latin:^[20]

Both died slowly, and earliest as a vehicle of literary expression, while much longer retaining significance for learned discourse with its universalist claims. Both were subject to periodic renewals or forced rebirths, sometimes in connection with a politics of translocal aspiration... At the same time... both came to be ever more exclusively associated with narrow forms of religion and priestcraft, despite centuries of a secular aesthetic.

The decline of Sanskrit use in literary and political circles was likely due to a weakening of the political institutions that supported it, and to heightened competition with vernacular languages seeking literary-cultural dignity.^[21] There was regional variation in the forcefulness of these vernacular movements and Sanskrit declined in different ways across the Indian subcontinent. For example, in Kashmir, Kashmiri was used alongside Sanskrit as the language of literature after the 13th century, and Sanskrit works from the Vijayanagara Empire failed to circulate outside their place and time of composition. By contrast, works in Kannada and Telugu flourished.^[22]

Despite this presumed "death" of Sanskrit and the literary use of vernacular languages, Sanskrit continued to be used in literary cultures in India, and those who could read vernacular languages could also read Sanskrit.^[21] It did mean that Sanskrit was not used to express changing forms of subjectivity and sociality embodied and conceptualized in the modern age.^[21] Instead, it was reduced to "reinscription and restatements" of ideas already explored, and any creativity in Sanskrit was restricted to religious hymns and verses.^{[23] [24]}

Hanneder (2002) and Hatcher (2007) contest Pollock's characterization, pointing out that modern works continue to be produced in Sanskrit:

On a more public level the statement that Sanskrit is a dead language is misleading, for Sanskrit is quite obviously not as dead as other dead languages and the fact that it is spoken, written and read will probably convince most people that it cannot be a dead language in the most common usage of the term. Pollock's notion of the "death of Sanskrit" remains in this unclear realm between academia and public opinion when he says that "most observers would agree that, in some crucial way, Sanskrit is dead"

—Hanneder (2002:294)

Hanneder (2009) argues that modern works in Sanskrit are either ignored or their "modernity" contested. The Sahitya Akademi has had, since 1967, an award for the best creative work written that year in Sanskrit. In 2009, Satyavrat Shastri became the first Sanskrit author to win the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary award.^[25]

European scholarship

European scholarship in Sanskrit, begun by Heinrich Roth (1620–1668) and Johann Ernst Hanxleden (1681–1731), is regarded as responsible for the discovery of the Indo-European language family by Sir William Jones. This scholarship played an important role in the development of Western philology, or historical linguistics.

Sir William Jones, speaking to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on February 2, 1786, said:

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.

Phonology

Classical Sanskrit distinguishes about 36 phonemes. There is, however, some allophony and the writing systems used for Sanskrit generally indicate this, thus distinguishing 48 sounds.

The sounds are traditionally listed in the order vowels (*Ach*), diphthongs (*Hal*), anusvara and visarga, plosives (*Sparsā*) and nasals (starting in the back of the mouth and moving forward), and finally the liquids and fricatives, written in IAST as follows (see the tables below for details):

a ā i ī u ū ṛ ṝ ḷ ḹ; e ai o au

ṁ ḥ

k kh g gh ṅ; c ch j jh ṅ; ṭ ṭh ḍ ḍh ṇ; t th d dh n; p ph b bh m

y r l v; ś ṣ s h

An alternate traditional ordering is that of the Shiva Sutra of Pāṇini.

Vowels

The vowels of Classical Sanskrit with their word-initial Devanagari symbol, diacritical mark with the consonant ष (/p/), pronunciation (of the vowel alone and of /p/+vowel) in IPA, equivalent in IAST and (approximate) equivalents in English are listed below:

| Letter | व | Pronunciation | Pronunciation with /p/ | IAST equiv. | English equivalent (GA unless stated otherwise) |
|--------|-----|---------------|------------------------|-------------|--|
| अ | ष | /ə/ or /e/ | /pə/ or /pɛ/ | a | short near-open central vowel or schwa: <i>u</i> in <i>bunny</i> or <i>a</i> in <i>about</i> |
| आ | षा | /ɑː/ | /pɑː/ | ā | long open back unrounded vowel: <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> (RP) |
| इ | षि | /i/ | /pi/ | i | short close front unrounded vowel: <i>e</i> in <i>england</i> |
| ई | षी | /iː/ | /piː/ | ī | long close front unrounded vowel: <i>ee</i> in <i>feet</i> |
| उ | षु | /u/ | /pu/ | u | short close back rounded vowel: <i>oo</i> in <i>foot</i> |
| ऊ | षू | /uː/ | /puː/ | ū | long close back rounded vowel: <i>oo</i> in <i>cool</i> |
| ऋ | षृ | /ɻ/ | /pɻ/ | ṛ | short retroflex approximant: <i>r</i> in <i>run</i> |
| ॠ | षृ | /ɻː/ | /pɻː/ | ṝ | long retroflex approximant <i>r</i> in <i>run</i> |
| ऌ | ष्ल | /l/ | /pl/ | ḷ | short retroflex lateral approximant (no English equivalent) |
| ॡ | ष्ल | /lː/ | /plː/ | ḹ | long retroflex lateral approximant |
| ए | षे | /eː/ | /peː/ | e | long close-mid front unrounded vowel: <i>a</i> in <i>bane</i> (some speakers) |
| ऐ | षै | /eɪ/ | /pɛɪ/ | ai | a long diphthong: <i>i</i> in <i>ice</i> , <i>i</i> in <i>kite</i> (Canadian and Scottish English) |
| ओ | षो | /oː/ | /poː/ | o | long close-mid back rounded vowel: <i>o</i> in <i>bone</i> (some speakers) |
| औ | षौ | /əu/ | /pəu/ | au | a long diphthong: Similar to the <i>ou</i> in <i>house</i> (Canadian English) |

The long vowels are pronounced twice as long as their short counterparts. Also, there exists a third, extra-long length for most vowels, called *pluti*, which is used in various cases, but particularly in the vocative. The *pluti* is not accepted by all grammarians.

The vowels /e/ and /o/ continue as allophonic variants of Proto-Indo-Iranian /ai/, /au/ and are categorized as diphthongs by Sanskrit grammarians even though they are realized phonetically as simple long vowels. (See above).

Additional points:

- There are some additional signs traditionally listed in tables of the Devanagari script:
 - The diacritic [˙] called *anusvāra*, (IAST: ṁ). It is used both to indicate the nasalization of the vowel in the syllable ([ṁ]) and to represent the sound of a syllabic /n/ or /m/; e.g. ण /pṅ/.

- The diacritic : called *visarga*, represents /əh/ (IAST: ḥ); e.g. पः /pəh/.
- The diacritic ° called *chandrabindu*, not traditionally included in Devanagari charts for Sanskrit, is used interchangeably with the *anusvāra* to indicate nasalization of the vowel, primarily in Vedic notation; e.g. पैँ /pə̃/.
- If a lone consonant needs to be written without any following vowel, it is given a *halanta/virāma* diacritic below (पृ).
- The vowel /a:/ in Sanskrit is realized as being more central and less back than the closest English approximation, which is /ɑ:/. But the grammarians have classified it as a back vowel.^[26]
- The ancient Sanskrit grammarians classified the vowel system as velars, retroflexes, palatals and plosives rather than as back, central and front vowels. Hence ए and औ are classified respectively as palato-velar (a+i) and labio-velar (a+u) vowels respectively. But the grammarians have classified them as diphthongs and in prosody, each is given two *mātrās*. This does not necessarily mean that they are proper diphthongs, but neither excludes the possibility that they could have been proper diphthongs at a very ancient stage (see above). These vowels *are* pronounced as long /e:/ and /o:/ respectively by learned Sanskrit Brahmins and priests of today. Other than the "four" diphthongs, Sanskrit usually disallows any other diphthong—vowels in succession, where they occur, are converted to semivowels according to sandhi rules.

Consonants

IAST and Devanagari notations are given, with approximate IPA values in square brackets.

| | | Labial Ōshtya | | Labiodental Dantōshtya | Dental Dantya | | Retroflex Mūrdhanya | | Palatal Tālavya | | Velar Kanthya | | Glottal | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Stop Sparśa | Unaspirated Alpaprāna | p प [p] | b ब [b] | | t त [t] | d द [d] | ʈ ट [ʈ] | ḍ ड [ḍ] | c च [c̪] | j ज [j] | k क [k] | g ग [g] | | |
| | Aspirated Mahāprāna | ph फ [pʰ] | bh भ [bʰ] | | th थ [tʰ] | dh ध [dʰ] | ʈh ठ [ʈʰ] | ḍh ढ [ḍʰ] | ch छ [c̪ʰ] | jh झ [jʰ] | kh ख [kʰ] | gh घ [gʰ] | | |
| Nasal Anunāsika | | m म [m] | | | n न [n] | | ṇ ण [ɳ] | | ñ ञ [ɲ] | | ṅ ङ [ŋ] | | | |
| Semivowel Antastha | | | | | v व [v] | | | | y य [j] | | | | | |
| Liquid Drava | | | | | l ल [l] | | r र [r] | | | | | | | |
| Fricative Ūshman | | | | | s स [s] | | ṣ ष [ʃ] | | ś श [ʃ] | | | | h : [h] | h ḥ [ɦ] |

The table below shows the traditional listing of the Sanskrit consonants with the (nearest) equivalents in English (as pronounced in General American and Received Pronunciation) and Spanish. Each consonant shown below is deemed to be followed by the neutral vowel schwa (/ə/), and is named in the table as such.

Plosives—Sprshṭa

| | Unaspirated Voiceless Alpaprāna Śvāsa | Aspirated Voiceless Mahāprāna Śvāsa | Unaspirated Voiced Alpaprāna Nāda | Aspirated Voiced Mahāprāna Nāda | Nasal Anunāsika Nāda |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Velar Kanthya | क /kə/; English: skip | ख /kʰə/; English: cat | ग /gə/; English: game | घ /gʰə/; somewhat similar to English: doghouse | ङ /ŋə/; English: ring |
| Palatal Tālavya | च /cə/; English: exchange | छ /cʰə/; English: church | ज /jə/; ≈English: jam | झ /jʰə/; somewhat similar to English: hedgehog | ञ /ɲə/; English: bench |
| Retroflex Mūrdhanya | ट /ʈə/; No English equivalent | ठ /ʈʰə/; No English equivalent | ड /ɖə/; No English equivalent | ढ /ɖʰə/; No English equivalent | ण /ɳə/; No English equivalent |
| Apico-Dental Dantya | त /tə/; Spanish: tomato | थ /tʰə/; Aspirated /t/ | द /də/; Spanish: donde | ध /dʰə/; Aspirated /d/ | न /nə/; English: name |
| Labial Ōshṭya | प /pə/; English: spin | फ /pʰə/; English: pit | ब /bə/; English: bone | भ /bʰə/; somewhat similar to English: clubhouse | म /mə/; English: mine |

Non-Plosives/Sonorants

| | Palatal Tālavya | Retroflex Mūrdhanya | Dental Dantya | Labial/ Glottal Ōshṭya |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Approximant Antastha | य /jə/; English: you | र /rə/; English: trip | ल /lə/; English: love | व (labio-dental) /və/; English: vase |
| Sibilant/ Fricative Ūshman | श /ʃə/; English: ship | ष /ʂə/; Retroflex form of /ʃ/ | स /sə/; English: same | ह (glottal) /hə/; English behind |

Phonology and Sandhi

The Sanskrit vowels are as discussed in the section above. The long syllabic \bar{l} (\bar{l}) is not attested, and is only discussed by grammarians for systematic reasons. Its short counterpart l occurs in a single root only, $kṣp$ "to order, array". Long syllabic r (\bar{r}) is also quite marginal, occurring in the genitive plural of r -stems (e.g. $mātr̥$ "mother" and $pitṛ̥$ "father" have gen.pl. $mātr̥ṇām$ and $pitṛ̥ṇām$). i , u , r , l are vocalic allophones of consonantal y , v , r , l . There are thus only 5 invariably vocalic phonemes,

a, ā, ī, ū, ṛ.

Visarga $ḥ$: is an allophone of r and s , and anusvara $ṃ$, Devanagari $̣$ of any nasal, both in pausa (i.e., the nasalized vowel). The exact pronunciation of the three sibilants may vary, but they are distinct phonemes. An aspirated voiced sibilant $/zʰ/$ was inherited by Indo-Aryan from Proto-Indo-Iranian but lost shortly before the time of the R̥gveda (aspirated fricatives are exceedingly rare in any language). The retroflex consonants are somewhat marginal phonemes, often being conditioned by their phonetic environment; they do not continue a PIE series and are often ascribed by some linguists to the substratal influence of Dravidian^[27] or other substrate languages. The nasal $[ŋ]$ is a conditioned allophone of $/n/$ ($/n/$ and $/ŋ/$ are distinct phonemes— $aṇu$ 'minute', 'atomic' [nom. sg. neutr. of an adjective] is distinctive from anu 'after', 'along'; phonologically independent $/ŋ/$ occurs only marginally, e.g. in $prāṇ$ 'directed forwards/towards' [nom. sg. masc. of an adjective]). There are thus 31 consonantal or semi-vocalic phonemes, consisting of four/five kinds of stops realized both with or without aspiration and both voiced and

voiceless, three nasals, four semi-vowels or liquids, and four fricatives, written in IAST transliteration as follows:

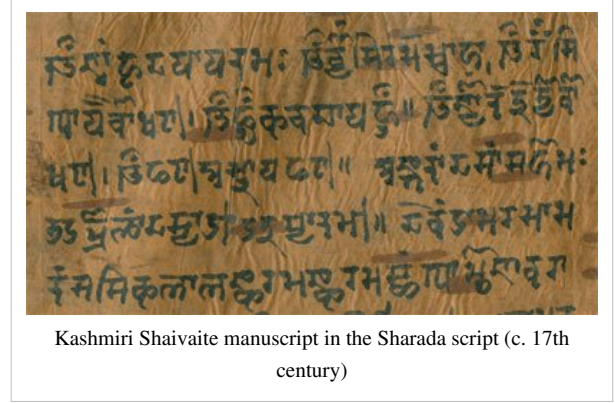
k, kh, g, gh; c, ch, j, jh; t, th, d, dh; t, th, d, dh; p, ph, b, bh; m, n, ṅ; y, r, l, v; ś, ṣ, s, h

or a total of 36 unique Sanskrit phonemes altogether.

The phonological rules which are applied when combining morphemes to a word, and when combining words to a sentence, are collectively called *sandhi* "composition". Texts are written phonetically, with sandhi applied (except for the so-called *padapāṭha*).

Writing system

Sanskrit was spoken in an oral society, and the oral tradition was maintained through the development of early classical Sanskrit literature.^[28] Writing was not introduced to India until after Sanskrit had evolved into the Prakrits; when it was written, the choice of writing system was influenced by the regional scripts of the scribes. As such, virtually all of the major writing systems of South Asia have been used for the production of Sanskrit manuscripts. Since the late 19th century, Devanagari has been considered as the *de facto* writing system for Sanskrit,^[29] quite possibly because of the European practice of printing Sanskrit texts in this script. Devanagari is written from left to right, lacks distinct letter cases, and is recognizable by a distinctive horizontal line running along the tops of the letters that links them together.



Kashmiri Shaivaite manuscript in the Sharada script (c. 17th century)

The earliest known inscriptions in Sanskrit date to the 1st century BCE.^[30] They are in the Brahmi script, which was originally used for Prakrit, not Sanskrit.^[31] It has been described as a "paradox" that the first evidence of written Sanskrit occurs centuries later than that of the Prakrit languages which are its linguistic descendants.^[30] ^[32] When Sanskrit was written down, it was first used for texts of an administrative, literary or scientific nature. The sacred texts were preserved orally, and were set down in writing, "reluctantly" (according to one commentator), and at a comparatively late date.^[31]

Brahmi evolved into a multiplicity of scripts of the Brahmic family, many of which were used to write Sanskrit. Roughly contemporary with the Brahmi, the Kharosthi script was used in the northwest of the subcontinent. Later (around the 4th to 8th centuries CE) the Gupta script, derived from Brahmi, became prevalent. From ca. the 8th century, the Sharada script evolved out of the Gupta script. The latter was displaced in its turn by Devanagari from ca. the 11/12th century, with intermediary stages such as the Siddham script. In Eastern India, the Bengali script and, later, the Oriya script, were used. In the south where Dravidian languages predominate, scripts used for Sanskrit include Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Grantha.

desideratives, causatives, and benedictives derived from more basic forms) based on the different stem forms (derived from verbal roots) used in conjugation. There are four tense systems:

- Present (Present, Imperfect, Imperative, Optative)
- Perfect
- Aorist
- Future (Future, Conditional)

Nouns

Sanskrit is a highly inflected language with three grammatical genders (masculine, feminine, neuter) and three numbers (singular, plural, dual). It has eight cases: nominative, vocative, accusative, instrumental, dative, ablative, genitive, and locative.

The number of actual declensions is debatable. Pāṇini identifies six *karakas* corresponding to the nominative, accusative, dative, instrumental, locative, and ablative cases.^[34] Pāṇini defines them as follows (Ashtadhyayi, I.4.24–54):

1. *Apadana* (lit. 'take off'): "(that which is) firm when departure (takes place)." This is the equivalent of the ablative case, which signifies a stationary object from which movement proceeds.
2. *Sampradana* ('bestowal'): "he whom one aims at with the object". This is equivalent to the dative case, which signifies a recipient in an act of giving or similar acts.
3. *Karana* ("instrument") "that which effects most." This is equivalent to the instrumental case.
4. *Adhikarana* ('location'): or "substratum." This is equivalent to the locative case.
5. *Karman* ('deed/object'): "what the agent seeks most to attain". This is equivalent to the accusative case.
6. *Karta* ('agent'): "he/that which is independent in action". This is equivalent to the nominative case. (On the basis of Scharfe, 1977: 94)

Personal pronouns and determiners

Sanskrit pronouns are declined for case, number, and gender. The pronominal declension applies to a few adjectives as well. Many pronouns have alternative enclitic forms.

The first and second person pronouns are declined for the most part alike, having by analogy assimilated themselves with one another. Where two forms are given, the second is enclitic and an alternative form. Ablatives in singular and plural may be extended by the syllable *-tas*; thus *mat* or *mattas*, *asmad* or *asmattas*. Sanskrit does not have true third person pronouns, but its demonstratives fulfill this function instead by standing independently without a modified substantive.

There are four different demonstratives in Sanskrit: *tat*, *etat*, *idam*, and *adas*. *etat* indicates greater proximity than *tat*. While *idam* is similar to *etat*, *adas* refers to objects that are more remote than *tat*. *eta*, is declined almost identically to *ta*. Its paradigm is obtained by prefixing *e-* to all the forms of *ta*. As a result of *sandhi*, the masculine and feminine singular forms transform into *eṣas* and *eṣā*.

The enclitic pronoun *ena* is found only in a few oblique cases and numbers. Interrogative pronouns all begin with *k-*, and decline just as *tat* does, with the initial *t-* being replaced by *k-*. The only exception to this are the singular neuter nominative and accusative forms, which are both *kim* and not the expected **kat*. For example, the singular feminine genitive interrogative pronoun, "of whom?", is *kasyāḥ*. Indefinite pronouns are formed by adding the participles *api*, *cid*, or *cana* after the appropriate interrogative pronouns. All relative pronouns begin with *y-*, and decline just as *tat* does. The correlative pronouns are identical to the *tat* series.

In addition to the pronouns described above, some adjectives follow the pronominal declension. Unless otherwise noted, their declension is identical to *tat*.

- *eka*: "one", "a certain". (singular neuter nominative and accusative forms are both *ekam*)

- *anya*: "another".
- *sarva*: "all", "every". (singular neuter nominative and accusative forms are both *sarvam*)
- *para*: "the other". (singular neuter nominative and accusative forms are both *param*)
- *sva*: "self" (a reflexive adjective). (singular neuter nominative and accusative forms are both *svam*)

Compounds

One other notable feature of the nominal system is the very common use of nominal compounds, which may be huge (10+ words) as in some modern languages such as German and Finnish. Nominal compounds occur with various structures, however morphologically speaking they are essentially the same. Each noun (or adjective) is in its (weak) stem form, with only the final element receiving case inflection. The four principle categories of nominal compounds are:^[35]

Dvandva (co-ordinative)

These consist of two or more noun stems, connected in sense with 'and'. Examples are *rāma-lakṣmaṇau*—Rama and Lakshmana, *rāma-lakṣmaṇa-bharata-śatruḥnāh*—Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna, and *pāṇipādam*—limbs, literally hands and feet, from *pāṇi* = hand and *pāda* = foot.

Tatpuruṣa (determinative)

There are many tatpuruṣas; in a tatpuruṣa the first component is in a case relationship with another. For example, a doghouse is a dative compound, a house *for* a dog; other examples include instrumental relationships ("thunderstruck") and locative relationships ("towndwelling").

Karmadhāraya (descriptive)

A compound where the relation of the first member to the last is appositional, attributive or adverbial; e.g., *uluka-yatu* (owl+demon) is a demon in the shape of an owl. Karmadhārayas are considered by some to be tatpuruṣas.^[35]

Bahuvrīhi (possessive/exocentric)

Bahuvrīhi compounds refer to a compound noun that refers to a thing which is itself not part of the compound. For example the word *bahuvrīhi* itself, from *bahu* = much and *vrīhi* = rice, denotes a rich person—one who has much rice.

Syntax

Because of Sanskrit's complex declension system the word order is free.^[36] In usage, there is a strong tendency toward Subject Object Verb (SOV), which was the original system in place in Vedic prose. However, there are exceptions when word pairs cannot be transposed.^[37]

Numerals

The numbers from one to ten:

1. *éka*-
2. *dva*-
3. *tri*-
4. *catúr*-
5. *pāñcan*-
6. *ṣaṣ*-
7. *saptán*-
8. *aṣṭá*-
9. *návan*-
10. *dáśan*-

The numbers one through four are declined. **Éka** is declined like a pronominal adjective, though the dual form does not occur. **Dvā** appears only in the dual. **Trī** and **catúr** are declined irregularly:

| | Three | | | Four | | |
|---------------------|-----------|--------|-----------|------------|---------|-------------|
| | Masculine | Neuter | Feminine | Masculine | Neuter | Feminine |
| Nominative | tráyas | trīṇi | tisrās | catvāras | catvāri | cātasras |
| Accusative | trīn | trīṇi | tisrās | catúras | catvāri | cātasras |
| Instrumental | tribhís | | tisṛbhis | catúrbhis | | catasṛbhis |
| Dative | tribhyás | | tisṛbhyas | catúrbhyas | | catasṛbhyas |
| Ablative | tribhyás | | tisṛbhyas | catúrbhyas | | catasṛbhyas |
| Genitive | triyāṇām | | tisṛṇām | caturnām | | catasṛṇām |
| Locative | triṣú | | tisṛṣu | catúrṣu | | catasṛṣu |

Influence

Modern-day India

Influence on vernaculars

Sanskrit's greatest influence, presumably, is that which it exerted on languages of India that grew from its vocabulary and grammatical base; for instance Hindi, which is a "Sanskritized register" of the Khariboli dialect. However, all modern Indo-Aryan languages as well as Munda and Dravidian languages, have borrowed many words either directly from Sanskrit (*tatsama* words), or indirectly via middle Indo-Aryan languages (*tadbhava* words).^[6] Words originating in Sanskrit are estimated to constitute roughly fifty percent of the vocabulary of modern Indo-Aryan languages,^[38] and the literary forms of (Dravidian) Malayalam and Kannada.^[6] Literary texts in Telugu are lexically Sanskrit or Sanskritized to an enormous extent, perhaps seventy percent or more.^[39]

Sanskrit is prized as a storehouse of scripture and the language of prayers in Hinduism. Like Latin's influence on European languages and Classical Chinese's influence on East Asian languages, Sanskrit has influenced most Indian languages. While vernacular prayer is common, Sanskrit mantras are recited by millions of Hindus and most temple functions are conducted entirely in Sanskrit, often Vedic in form. Of modern day Indian languages, while Hindi and Urdu tend to be more heavily weighted with Arabic and Persian influence, Nepali, Bengali, Assamese, Konkani and Marathi still retain a largely Sanskrit and Prakrit vocabulary base. The Indian national anthem, Jana Gana Mana, is written in a literary form of Bengali (known as *sadhu bhasha*), Sanskritized so as to be recognizable, but still archaic to the modern ear. The national song of India Vande Mataram was originally a poem composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and taken from his book called 'Anandamath', is in a similarly highly Sanskritized Bengali. Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada also combine a great deal of Sanskrit vocabulary. Sanskrit also has influence on Chinese through Buddhist Sutras. Chinese words like 刹那 *chà nà* (Skt. क्ण *kṣana* 'instantaneous period of time') were borrowed from Sanskrit.

Revival attempts

The 1991 and 2001, census of India recorded 49,736 and 14,135 persons, respectively, with Sanskrit as their native language.^[1] Since the 1990s, efforts to revive spoken Sanskrit have been increasing. Many organizations like the *Samskṛta Bharati* are conducting Speak Sanskrit workshops to popularize the language. The state of Uttarakhand in India has ruled Sanskrit as its second official language. The *CBSE* (Central Board of Secondary Education) of India has made Sanskrit a third language (though it is an option for the school to adopt it or not, the other choice being the state's own official language) in the schools it governs. In such schools, learning Sanskrit is an option for grades 5 to

8 (Classes V to VIII). This is true of most schools affiliated to the ICSE board too, especially in those states where the official language is Hindi. Sudharma, the only daily newspaper in Sanskrit has been published out of Mysore in India since the year 1970. Since 1974, there has been a short daily news broadcast on All India Radio.

In these Indian villages, inhabitants of all castes speak Sanskrit natively since childhood:

1. Mattur in Karnataka,^[40]
2. Jhiri, District: Rajgadh, Madhya Pradesh,^[41]
3. Ganoda, District: Banswada, Rajasthan,^[42]
4. Bawali, District: Bagapat, Uttar Pradesh
5. Mohad, District: Narasinhpur, Madhya Pradesh

Symbolic usage

In the Republic of India, in Nepal and Indonesia, Sanskrit phrases are widely used as mottoes for various educational and social organizations (much as Latin is used by some institutions in the West). The motto of the Republic is also in Sanskrit.

Republic of India

'सत्यमेव जयते' *Satyameva Jayate* "Truth alone triumphs"

Nepal

'जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी' *Janani Janmabhūmisca Svargādapi garīyasi* "Mother and motherland are greater than heaven"

Goa

'सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत्' *Sarve Bhadrāni Paśyantu Mā Kaścid Duhkhabhāg bhavet* "May all perceive good, may not anyone attain unhappiness"^[43]

Life Insurance Corporation of India

'योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्', *Yogakshemam Vahāmyaham* "I shall take care of welfare" (taken from the Bhagavad Gita)^[44]

Indian Navy

'शं नो वरुणः' *Shanno Varuna* "May Varuna be peaceful to us"

Indian Air Force

'नभःस्पृशं दीप्तम्' *Nabhah-Spr̥śam Dīptam* "Touching the Sky with Glory"^[45]

Mumbai Police

'सद्रक्षणाय खलनगिरेहणाय' *Sadrakshanaaya Khalanigrahanaaya* "For protection of the good and control of the wicked"

Indian Coast Guard

'वयम् रक्षामः' *Vayam Rakshāmaḥ* "We protect"^[46]

All India Radio

'बहुजनहिताय बहुजनसुखाय' *Bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya* "For the benefit of all, for the comfort of all"

Indonesian Navy

'जलेष्वेव जयामहे' *Jalesveva Jayamahe* "On the Sea We Are Glorious"

Aceh Province

'पञ्चचति' *Pancacita* "Five Goals"

Many of the post-Independence educational institutions of national importance in India and Sri Lanka have Sanskrit mottoes. For a fuller list of such educational institutions, see List of educational institutions which have Sanskrit phrases as their mottoes.

Interaction with other languages

Sanskrit and related languages have also influenced their Sino-Tibetan-speaking neighbors to the north through the spread of Buddhist texts in translation.^[47] Buddhism was spread to China by Mahayanist missionaries sent by Emperor Ashoka mostly through translations of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and Classical Sanskrit texts, and many terms were transliterated directly and added to the Chinese vocabulary. (Although Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is not Sanskrit, properly speaking, its grammar and vocabulary are substantially the same, both because of genetic relationship, and because of conscious implementation of Pāṇinian standardizations on the part of composers. Buddhist texts composed in Sanskrit proper were primarily found in philosophical schools like the Madhyamaka.) The situation in Tibet is similar; many Sanskrit texts survive only in Tibetan translation (in the Tanjur).

The Thai language contains many loan words from Sanskrit. For example, in Thai, the Rāvana—the emperor of Sri Lanka is called 'Thosakanth' which is a derivation of his Sanskrit name 'Dashakanth' ("of ten necks"). Many Sanskrit loanwords are also found in traditional Malay, Modern Indonesian, and numerous Philippine languages,^[48] Old Javanese language (nearly half)^[49] and to a lesser extent, Cambodian, Vietnamese, through Sinitified hybrid Sanskrit.

Usage in modern times

Many of India's and Nepal's scientific and administrative terms are named in Sanskrit, as a counterpart of the western practice of naming scientific developments in Latin or Greek. The Indian guided missile program that was commenced in 1983 by DRDO has named the five missiles (ballistic and others) that it has developed as Prithvi, Agni, Akash, Nag and Trishul. India's first modern fighter aircraft is named HAL Tejas.

Recital of Sanskrit shlokas as background chorus in films, television advertisements and as slogans for corporate organizations has become a trend.

Recently, Sanskrit also made an appearance in Western pop music in two recordings by Madonna. One, "Shanti/Ashtangi", from the 1998 album "Ray of Light", is the traditional Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga chant referenced above set to music. The second, "Cyber-raga", released in 2000 as a B-side to Madonna's single "Music", is a Sanskrit-language ode of devotion to a higher power and a wish for peace on earth. The climactic battle theme of The Matrix Revolutions features a choir singing a Sanskrit prayer from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in the closing titles of the movie. Composer John Williams also featured a choir singing in Sanskrit for Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace.

The Sky1 version of the title sequence in season one of Battlestar Galactica 2004 features the Gayatri Mantra, taken from the Rig Veda (3.62.10). The composition was written by miniseries composer Richard Gibbs.

Computational linguistics

There have been suggestions to use Sanskrit as a metalanguage for knowledge representation in e.g. machine translation, and other areas of natural language processing because of its relatively high regular structure.^[50] This is due to Classical Sanskrit being a regularized, prescriptivist form abstracted from the much more complex and richer Vedic Sanskrit. This leveling of the grammar of Classical Sanskrit began during the Brahmana phase, and had not yet completed by the time of Pāṇini, when the language had fallen out of popular use.

Notes

Footnotes

- [1] "Comparative speaker's strength of scheduled languages -1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001" (http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/Statement5.htm). *Census of India, 2001*. Office of the Registrar and Census Commissioner, India. . Retrieved 31 December 2009.
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- [8] Burrow (2001:?)
- [9] Monier-Williams (1898:1120)
- [10] Masica, p. 32
- [11] Masica, p. 33
- [12] Masica, pp. 36–37
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- [21] Pollock (2001:416)
- [22] Pollock (2001:414)
- [23] Pollock (2001:398)
- [24] A notable exception are the military references of Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara's 17th-century commentary on the Mahābhārata, according to Minkowski (2004).
- [25] "Sanskrit's first Jnanpith winner is a 'poet by instinct'" (<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/sanskrits-first-jnanpith-winner-is-a-poet-by-instinct/410480/0>). *The Indian Express*. Wednesday, Jan 14, 2009. .
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- [29] Whitney (1889:?)
- [30] Salomon (1998), p. 86
- [31] Masica (1991:135)
- [32] In northern India, there are Brahmi inscriptions dating from the 3rd century BCE onwards, the oldest appearing on the famous Prakrit pillar inscriptions of king Ashoka. The earliest South Indian inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, written in early Tamil, belong to the same period. Mahadevan (2003:?)
- [33] Abhyankar (1986:?)
- [34] Utoronto.ca (<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/cyber/man3.html>)
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- [43] See the seal of the Government of Goa
- [44] See e.g. File:LIC Logo.svg
- [45] The IAF Motto (http://indianairforce.nic.in/show_page.php?pg_id=132), Official website
- [46] See banner (<http://indiancoastguard.nic.in/cgbanner5.bmp>) on Indian Coast Guard website (<http://indiancoastguard.nic.in/>)
- [47] van Gulik (1956:?)
- [48] See this page from the Indonesian Wikipedia for a list
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External links

- Academic Courses on Sanskrit Around The World (<http://www.montclair.edu/RISA/d-studies.html>)
- Samskrita Bharati (<http://samskrita-bharati.org/>), organization promoting Sanskrit
- Sanskrit Alphabet (<http://www.user.uni-hannover.de/nhtcapri/sanskrit-alphabet.html>) in Devanagari, Gujarati, Bengali, and Thai scripts with an extensive list of Devanagari, Gujarati, and Bengali conjuncts

Software

- Romanized Nepali Unicode Keyboard (http://oopslite.appspot.com/software/nepali_keyboard.html) developed by OOPSLite Technologies
- Sanskrit transliteration software (<http://baraha.com/>) with font conversion to Latin and other Indian Languages

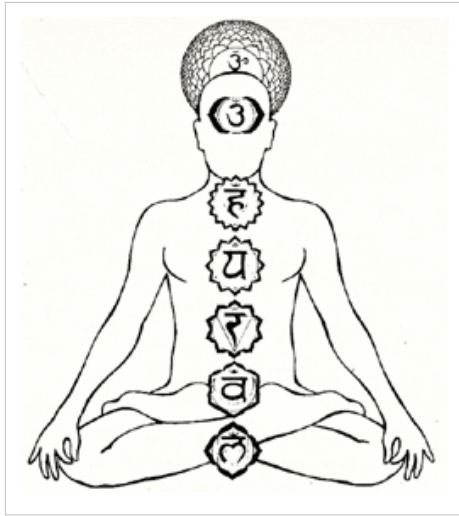
Sanskrit documents

- Sanskrit Documents (<http://sanskritdocuments.org/home.html>)—Documents in ITX format of Upanishads, Stotras etc. and a metasite with links to translations, dictionaries, tutorials, tools and other Sanskrit resources.
- Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon (<http://uwest.edu/sanskritcanon/index.html>)
- Gretil: Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/ebene_1/fiindolo/gretil.htm)—a cumulative register of the numerous download sites for electronic texts in Indian languages.
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- Digital Library of India at Ernet.in (<http://www.new.dli.ernet.in/>) and IIT.in (<http://dli.iiit.ac.in/>)—scanned/OCRred copies of public-domain books

Primers

- A Practical Sanskrit Introductory by Charles Wikner (http://sanskritdocuments.org/learning_tutorial_wikner/index.html)
- Sanskrit Self Study (<http://chitrapurmath.net/sanskrit/step-by-step.htm>) by Chitrapur Math
- An Analytical Cross Referenced Sanskrit Grammar (<http://warnemyr.com/skrgram/>) By Lennart Warnemyr

Kundalini



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Kundalini (kuṇḍalinī, Sanskrit: कुण्डलिनी) literally means *coiled*. In yoga, a "corporeal energy"^[1] - an unconscious, instinctive or libidinal force or Shakti, lies coiled at the base of the spine.^{[2] [3] [4]} It is envisioned either as a goddess or else as a sleeping serpent, hence a number of English renderings of the term such as 'serpent power'. The kundalini resides in the sacrum bone in three and a half coils and has been described as a residual power of pure desire.^[5]

Description

Kundalini is described as a sleeping, dormant potential force in the human organism.^[6] It is one of the components of an esoteric description of man's 'subtle body', which consists of nadis (energy channels), chakras (psychic centres), prana (subtle energy), and bindu (drops of essence).

Kundalini is described as being coiled up at the base of the spine, usually within muladhara chakra. The image given is that of a serpent coiled 3 and a half times around a smokey grey lingam. Each coil is said to represent one of the 3 gunas, with the half coil signifying transcendence.

Through meditation, and various esoteric practices, such as *laya-yoga*,^[7] and kriya yoga, the kundalini is awakened, and can rise up through the central nadi, called sushumna, that rises up inside or alongside the spine. The progress of kundalini through the different chakras leads to different levels of awakening and mystical experience, until the kundalini finally reaches the top of the head, Sahasrara chakra, producing an extremely profound mystical experience.

Meaning

A number of descriptions exist that attempt to describe exactly what the kundalini experience is.

Sri Ramana Maharshi maintained that the kundalini energy is nothing but the natural energy of the Self, where Self is the universal consciousness (Paramatma) present in every being, and that the individual mind of thoughts cloaks this natural energy from unadulterated expression. Advaita teaches that Self-realization, enlightenment, God-consciousness, nirvana and kundalini awakening are all the same thing, and self-inquiry meditation is considered a very natural and simple means of reaching this goal.^[8]

Swami Vivekananda described kundalini briefly in London during his lectures on Raja Yoga as follows:^[9]

"According to the Yogis, there are two nerve currents in the spinal column, called Pingala and Ida, and a hollow canal called Sushumna running through the spinal cord. At the lower end of the hollow canal is what the Yogis call the "Lotus of the kundalini". They describe it as triangular in form in which, in the symbolical language of the Yogis, there is a power called the kundalini, coiled up. When that kundalini awakes, it tries to force a passage through this hollow canal, and as it rises step by step, as it were, layer after layer of the mind becomes open and all the different visions and wonderful powers come to the Yogi. When it reaches the brain, the Yogi is perfectly detached from the body and mind; the soul finds itself free. We know that the spinal cord is composed in a peculiar manner. If we take the figure eight horizontally (∞) there are two parts which are connected in the middle. Suppose you add eight after eight, piled one on top of the other, that will represent the spinal cord. The left is the Ida, the right Pingala, and that hollow canal which runs through the centre of the spinal cord is the Sushumna. Where the spinal cord ends in some of the lumbar vertebrae, a fine fibre issues downwards, and the canal runs up even within that fibre, only much finer. The canal is closed at the lower end, which is situated near what is called the sacral plexus, which, according to modern physiology, is triangular in form. The different plexuses that have their centres in the spinal canal can very well stand for the different "lotuses" of the Yogi."

Etymology

According to well-known teacher and translator Eknath Easwaran, kundalini means "the coiled power," a force which ordinarily rests at the base of the spine, described as being coiled there like a serpent.^[10]

According to Swami Maheshwarananda, the term "kundalini" is based on several words and has several meanings. The word ending with "i" indicates that it relates to the feminine principle and deals with a form of *Shakti* (energy) and *Prakriti* (nature).^[11] "Kunda" is a hole or well into which all debris and rubbish is thrown. In time the rubbish loses its original form and disintegrates into a formless mesh in which the individual components are no longer recognizable. In a similar way, our impressions from earlier lives lie like an amorphous substance deep in the unconscious (Muladhara Chakra).^[11] "Kundala" means the ring and is generally used to refer to an earring in

Sanskrit. The other roots of kundalini are "kundala" the serpent, and "kala" the time or death. In Indian mythology Lord Vishnu rests on a thousand-headed snake and sends out the first vibration (Sphurna), from which the entire Universe evolves.^[11]

Awakening of the kundalini

Yoga and Tantra propose that kundalini energy can be "awakened" by a guru (teacher), but body and spirit must be prepared by yogic austerities such as pranayama, or breath control, physical exercises, visualization, and chanting. The kundalini can also awaken as a result of doing hatha yoga or other forms of spiritual practice, and sometimes it can awaken spontaneously, for no obvious reason.^[12]

Kundalini can be awakened through the grace of a Siddha-Guru who awakens the kundalini shakti of his disciple through shaktipat, or blessing. A Siddha Guru is a spiritual teacher, a master, whose identification with the supreme Self is uninterrupted.^[13] Like every form of energy one must also learn to understand spiritual energy. According to Hindu tradition, in order to be able to integrate this spiritual energy, a period of careful purification and strengthening of the body and nervous system is usually required beforehand.^[11]

Some schools of yoga also teach that the kundalini can be awakened through spiritual practices such as hatha yoga and meditation, rather than via shaktipat.^[14] Additionally, spontaneous awakenings can occur, often triggered by intense personal experiences such as accidents, near death experiences, childbirth, emotional trauma, extreme mental stress, and so on. Sometimes awakenings seem to occur for no obvious reason at all. Some sources attribute spontaneous awakenings to the "grace of God", or possibly to spiritual practice in past lives.

The kundalini rises from muladhara chakra up a subtle channel at the base of the spine (called *Sushumna*), and from there to top of the head merging with the sahasrara, or crown chakra. When kundalini Shakti is conceived as a goddess, then, when it rises to the head, it unites itself with the Supreme Being (Lord Shiva). Then the aspirant becomes engrossed in deep meditation and infinite bliss.^{[15] [16]}

The arousing of kundalini is said by some to be the one and only way of attaining Divine Wisdom. Self-Realization is said to be equivalent to Divine Wisdom or Gnosis or what amounts to the same thing: self-knowledge.^[17] The awakening of the kundalini shows itself as "awakening of inner knowledge" and brings with itself "pure joy, pure knowledge and pure love."^[11]

Physical effects

Physical effects are believed to be a sign of kundalini awakening by some,^[18] but described as unwanted side effects pointing to a problem rather than progress by others.^[11] Some of the more common signs and symptoms of an awakened kundalini include:

- Involuntary jerks, tremors, shaking, itching, tingling, and crawling sensations, especially in the arms and legs
- Energy rushes or feelings of electricity circulating the body
- Intense heat (sweating) or cold, especially as energy is experienced passing through the chakras
- Spontaneous pranayama, asanas, mudras and bandhas
- Visions or sounds at times associated with a particular chakra
- Diminished sexual desire or a state of constant orgasm
- Emotional purgings in which particular emotions become dominant for short periods of time.^[19]
- Depression
- Pressure inside the skull and headache
- Bliss, feelings of infinite love and universal connectedness, transcendent awareness

Reports about the Sahaja Yoga technique of kundalini awakening suggest the practice can result in a cool breeze felt on the fingertips as well as on the fontanel bone area.^{[5] [20]} One study has measured a drop in temperature on the palms of the hands resulting from this technique.^[18]

Vedanta view on kundalini, Tantra and Sex

Tantra is the worship of Shakti, the divine mother.^[21] Shakti is also referred to as Prakriti, or primordial nature. To ensure that nature (Prakriti) would always maintain the connection to the divine original consciousness (Purusha), the force of attraction developed as an aspect of Prakriti. The desire for union and the striving for expansion are "natural"; they are intrinsic impulses of nature.^[22] Other terms for Purusha and Prakriti are Shiva and Shakti. Shiva is the symbol for consciousness and the masculine principle, Shakti symbolizes energy and the feminine principle.^[23] The meaning of Shiva and Shakti is sometimes misunderstood when they are looked upon as man and woman and their relation is regarded as sexual.^[23]

Comparisons with other religious systems

Vajrayana Buddhism

The tantras of Vajrayana manage a system which is very similar to the Indian systems of kundalini yoga, in that they too manage a series of subtle channels, subtle winds, wheels and subtle drops, and they refer to a force known as kandali which must be raised up the central channel. However, there are a number of differences. Firstly, the descriptions are mostly about 'red bodhicitta', that resides in the lower chakras, and 'white bodhicitta', that resides in the crown. The 'inner fire' is ignited, through practices such as Tummo, which causes all the winds in the body to enter and rise up the central channel. When the fire reaches the crown of the head, the white bodhicitta melts and flows down to the lower chakras, producing profound spiritual experiences of bliss and emptiness.^[24]

This practice of 'inner fire' is seen as a preliminary yoga to a further set of practices; obtaining the 'Illusory body', and obtaining the 'Clear Light', as well as practices such as dream yoga, and consciousness projection.

Western interpretation

Kundalini is considered an interaction of the subtle body along with chakra energy centers and nadis channels. Each chakra is said to contain special characteristics^[25] and with proper training, moving kundalini energy 'through' these chakras can help express or open these characteristics.

Sir John Woodroffe (pen name Arthur Avalon) was one of the first to bring the notion of kundalini to the West. As High Court Judge in Calcutta, he became interested in Shaktism and Hindu Tantra. His translation of and commentary on two key texts was published as *The Serpent Power*. Woodroffe rendered kundalini as "Serpent Power" for lack of a better term in the English language but "kundala" in Sanskrit means "coiled".^[26]

Western awareness of the idea of kundalini was strengthened by the Theosophical Society and the interest of the psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1875–1961)[27]. "Jung's seminar on kundalini yoga, presented to the Psychological Club in Zurich in 1932, has been widely regarded as a milestone in the psychological understanding of Eastern thought. Kundalini yoga presented Jung with a model for the development of higher consciousness, and he interpreted its symbols in terms of the process of individuation".^[28]

Sri Aurobindo was the other great authority scholar on Kundalini parallel to Sir John Woodroffe, with a somewhat different viewpoint, according to Mary Scott (who is herself a later day scholar on Kundalini and its physical basis) and was a member of the Theosophical Society.^[29]

Another populariser of the concept of kundalini among Western readers was Gopi Krishna. His autobiography is entitled *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*.^[30] According to one writer his writings influenced Western interest in kundalini yoga.^[31]

In the early 1930s two Italian scholars, Tommaso Palamidessi and Julius Evola, published several books with the intent of re-interpreting alchemy with reference to yoga.^[32] Those works had an impact on modern interpretations of Alchemy as a mystical science. In those works, kundalini is called an *Igneous Power* or *Serpentine Fire*.

Other well-known spiritual teachers who have made use of the idea of kundalini include Swami Rudrananda (Rudi), Yogi Bhanan, Osho, George Gurdjieff, Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Sivananda Radha who produced an English language guide of Kundalini Yoga methods, Swami Muktananda, Bhagawan Nityananda, Nirmala Srivastava (Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi), Samael Aun Weor and Lord Sri Akshunna.

New Age

Kundalini references may commonly be found in a wide variety of derivative "New Age" presentations, such as Shirley MacLaine's, and is a catchword that has been adopted by many new religious movements. However, some commentators, such as transpersonal psychologist Stuart Sovatsky,^[33] disapprove of New Age authors and groups who have appropriated certain Yogic Sanskrit terms, such as chakra, kundalini, and mantra, and defined them in ways that relate only superficially, if at all, to the traditional meaning of the words.^[34]

Psychiatry (Brain waves)

Recently, there has been a growing interest within the medical community to study the physiological effects of meditation, and some of these studies have applied the discipline of Kundalini Yoga to their clinical settings.^[35] ^[36] Their findings are not all positive. Some modern experimental research^[37] seeks to establish links between kundalini practice and the ideas of Wilhelm Reich and his followers.

However, the intensive spiritual practices associated with some Asian traditions are not without their problems. Psychiatric literature^[38] notes that "since the influx of eastern spiritual practices and the rising popularity of meditation starting in the 1960s, many people have experienced a variety of psychological difficulties, either while engaged in intensive spiritual practice or spontaneously". Among the psychological difficulties associated with intensive spiritual practice we find "kundalini awakening", "a complex physio-psychospiritual transformative process described in the yogic tradition".^[38] Also, researchers in the fields of Transpersonal psychology,^[39] and Near-death studies^[40] ^[41] describe a complex pattern of sensory, motor, mental and affective symptoms associated with the concept of kundalini, sometimes called the Kundalini Syndrome.

According to the psychiatrist Carl Jung, "...the concept of Kundalini has for us only one use, that is, to describe our own experiences with the unconscious..."^[42]

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External links

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Tantra

Tantra (Sanskrit: तन्त्र "loom, warp"; hence "principle, system, doctrine", from the two root words *tanoti* "stretch, extend", and *trayati* "liberation"), anglicised **tantricism** or **tantrism** or **tantram**, is an esoteric current of Hinduism.

The word Tantra also applies to any of the scriptures (called "Tantras") commonly identified with the worship of Shakti.^[1] Tantra deals primarily with spiritual practices and ritual forms of worship, which aim at liberation from ignorance and rebirth,^[1] the universe being regarded as the divine play of *Shakti* and *Shiva*.^[1]

Tantrism originated in the early centuries CE and developed into a fully articulated tradition by the end of the Gupta period. It has influenced the Hindu, Sikh, Bön, Buddhist, and Jain religious traditions.

Along with Buddhism, Tantra in its various forms has spread to East Asia and Southeast Asia.^[2] Despite reluctance to support a rigorous definition of tantra, David Gordon White offers the following definition:

Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the Godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.^[3]

Overview

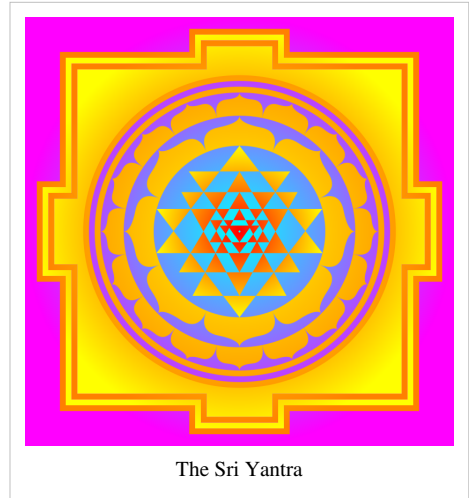
There are a number of different definitions of tantra from various viewpoints, not all of them necessarily consistent. Robert Brown notes that the term *tantrism* is a construction of Western scholarship and that:

It is not a concept that comes from within the religious system itself, although it is generally recognized internally as different from the Vedic tradition. This immediately makes it suspect as an independent category.^[4]

Rather than a single coherent system, Tantra is an accumulation of practices and ideas which is characterized by the use of ritual, by the use of the mundane to access the supra-mundane, and by the identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm.^[5] The Tantric practitioner seeks to use the *prana* (divine power) that flows through the universe (including one's own body) to attain purposeful goals. These goals may be spiritual, material or both.^[6] Most practitioners of tantra consider mystical experience imperative. Some versions of Tantra require the guidance of a guru.^[7]

In the process of working with energy, the *Tantrika*, or tantric practitioner, has various tools at hand. These include *yoga*, to actuate processes that will "yoke" the practitioner to the divine. Also important are visualizations of deity, and verbalisation or evocation through *mantras*, which may be construed as seeing, listening internally, and singing power into a stronger state within the individual, resulting in an ever-increasing awareness of cosmic vibration through daily practice. Identification with and internalisation of the divine is enacted, through a total identification with deity, such that the aspirant "becomes" the *Ishta-deva* or meditational deity.^[8]

Tantrism is a quest for spiritual perfection and magical power. Its purpose is to achieve complete control of oneself, and of all the forces of nature, in order to attain union with the cosmos and with the divine. Long training is generally required to master Tantric methods, into which pupils are typically initiated by a guru. *Yoga*, including breathing techniques and postures (*asana*), is employed to subject the body to the control of the will. *Mudras*, or



gestures; *mantras* or syllables, words and phrases; *mandalas* and *yantras*, which are symbolic diagrams of the forces at work in the universe, are all used as aids for meditation and for the achievement of spiritual and magical power.

During meditation, the initiate identifies herself or himself with any of the numerous Hindu gods and goddesses representing cosmic forces. The initiate visualizes them and takes them into her or his mind and so she or he unites with them, a process likened to sexual courtship and consummation.^[9] In fact, some Tantric monks use female partners to represent goddesses. Also, in left-handed Tantra (*Vamachara*), ritual sexual intercourse is employed as a way of entering into the underlying processes and structure of the universe.^[9]

Relation with Vedic tradition

The Tantric tradition may be considered as either parallel to, or intertwined with, the Vedic tradition. The primary sources of written Tantric lore are the *agama*, which generally consist of four parts, delineating metaphysical knowledge (*jnana*), contemplative procedures (*yoga*), ritual regulations (*kriya*), and ethical and religious injunctions (*charya*). Schools and lineages affiliate themselves with specific *agamic* traditions.

André Padoux notes that in India, tantrism is marked by a rejection of orthodox Vedic tenets.^[10] Maurice Winernitz, in his review of the literature of tantra, points out that while Indian tantric texts are not positively hostile to the Vedas, they propound that the precepts of the Vedas are too difficult for our age, and so, for that reason, an easier cult and an easier doctrine have been revealed in them.^[11] Some orthodox Brahmans who accept the authority of the Vedas reject the authority of the Tantras.^[12] N. N. Bhattacharyya explains:

It is to be noticed that although later Tantric writers wanted to base their doctrines on the Vedas, the orthodox followers of the Vedic tradition invariably referred to Tantra in a spirit of denunciation, stressing its anti-Vedic character.^[13]

Tantra exists in *Shaiva*, *Vaisnava*,^[14] *Ganapatya*,^[15] *Saurya* ^[16] and *Shakta* forms, amongst others. Strictly speaking, within individual traditions, tantric texts are classified as *Shaiva Āgamas*, *Vaishnava Pāñcarātra Samhitās*,^[17] and *Shakta Tantras*, but there is no clear dividing line between these works, and on a practical basis the expression *Tantra* generally includes all such works.^[18]

Relation to Yoga

Though the paths of Tantra & Classical Yoga are contrary (as Tantra is a non-dual philosophy and Classical Yoga is a dualistic philosophy of renunciation)^[19] they do intersect at some common philosophies and goals. During his discourse on Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, Osho tries to differentiate between these two paths by saying, "Yoga is suppression with awareness; tantra is indulgence with awareness."^[20]

As Robert Svoboda attempts to summarize the three major paths of the Vedic knowledge, he exclaims:

Because every embodied individual is composed of a body, a mind and a spirit, the ancient Rishis of India who developed the Science of Life organized their wisdom into three bodies of knowledge: Ayurveda, which deals mainly with the physical body; Yoga, which deals mainly with spirit; and Tantra, which is mainly concerned with the mind. The philosophy of all three is identical; their manifestations differ because of their differing emphases. Ayurveda is most concerned with the physical basis of life, concentrating on its harmony of mind and spirit. Yoga controls body and mind to enable them to harmonize with spirit, and Tantra seeks to use the mind to balance the demands of body and spirit.^[21]

Buddhist Tantra

In Buddhism defined as a scripture taught by the Buddha describing the Vajrayana practices.^[22]

According to Tibetan Buddhist Tantric master Lama Thubten Yeshe:

...each one of us is a union of all universal energy. Everything that we need in order to be complete is within us right at this very moment. It is simply a matter of being able to recognize it. This is the tantric approach.^[23]

Evolution and involution

Linguistically the three words *mantram*, *tantram* and *yantram* are related in the ancient traditions of India, as well as phonologically. *Mantram* denotes the chant, or "knowledge." *Tantram* denotes philosophy, or ritual actions. *Yantram* denotes the means by which a human is expected to lead his life.

According to Tantra, "being-consciousness-bliss" or *Satchidananda* has the power of both self-evolution and self-involution. *Prakriti* or "reality" evolves into a multiplicity of creatures and things, yet at the same time always remains pure consciousness, pure being, and pure bliss. In this process of evolution, *Maya* (illusion) veils Reality and separates it into opposites, such as conscious and unconscious, pleasant and unpleasant, and so forth. If not recognized as illusion, these opposing determining conditions bind, limit and fetter (*pashu*) the individual (*jiva*).^[24]

Generally speaking, the Hindu god and goddess Shiva and Shakti are perceived as separate and distinct. However, in Tantra, even in the process of evolution, Reality remains pure consciousness, pure being and pure bliss, and Tantra denies neither the act nor the fact of this process. In fact, Tantra affirms that both the world-process itself, and the individual *jiva*, are themselves Real. In this respect, Tantra distinguishes itself both from pure dualism and from the qualified non-dualism of Vedanta.^[24]

Evolution, or the "outgoing current," is only half of the functioning of *Maya*. Involution, or the "return current," takes the *jiva* back towards the source, or the root of Reality, revealing the infinite. Tantra is understood to teach the method of changing the "outgoing current" into the "return current," transforming the fetters created by *Maya* into that which "releases" or "liberates." This view underscores two maxims of Tantra: "One must rise by that by which one falls," and "the very poison that kills becomes the elixir of life when used by the wise."^[24]

The method

The Tantric aim is to sublimate rather than to negate relative reality. This process of sublimation consists of three phases: purification, elevation, and the "reaffirmation of identity on the plane of pure consciousness."^[24] The methods employed by *Dakshinachara* (right-hand path) interpretations of Tantra are very different from the methods used in the pursuit of the *Vamachara* (left-hand path).

Ritual practices

Because of the wide range of communities covered by the term *tantra*, it is challenging and problematic to describe tantric practices definitively. Avalon (1918) does provide a useful dichotomy of the "Ordinary Ritual" ^[25] and the "Secret Ritual".^[26]

Ordinary ritual

The ordinary ritual or *puja* may include any of the following elements:

Mantra and yantra

As in other Hindu and Buddhist yoga traditions, *mantra* and *yantra* play an important role in Tantra. The *mantra* and *yantra* are instruments to invoke specific Hindu deities such as Shiva, Shakti, or Kali. Similarly, *puja* may involve focusing on a *yantra* or *mandala* associated with a deity.^[27]

Identification with deities

Tantra, as a development of early Hindu-Vedic thought, embraced the Hindu gods and goddesses, especially Shiva and Shakti, along with the *Advaita* philosophy that each represents an *aspect* of the ultimate Para Shiva, or Brahman. These deities may be worshipped externally with flowers, incense, and other offerings, such as singing and dancing. But, more importantly, these deities are engaged as *attributes* of *Ishta Devata* meditations, the practitioners either visualizing themselves *as* the deity, or experiencing the *darshan* (the vision) of the deity. These Tantric practices form the foundation of the ritual temple dance of the *devadasis*, and are preserved in the *Melattur* style of *Bharatanatyam* by Guru Mangudi Dorairaja Iyer.

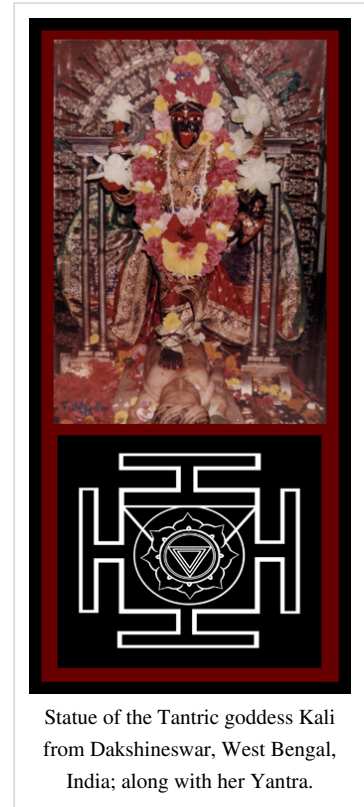
Secret ritual

Called the *Vamamarga*, this branch of Tantra departs from the conventional form or mantra and yoga. Secret ritual may include any or all of the elements of ordinary ritual, either directly or substituted, along with other sensate rites and themes such as a feast (representing food, or sustenance), coitus (representing sexuality and procreation), the charnel grounds (representing death and transition) and defecation, urination and vomiting (representing waste, renewal, and fecundity). It is this sensate inclusion that prompted Zimmer's praise of Tantra's world-affirming attitude:

In the Tantra, the manner of approach is not that of Nay but of Yea ... the world attitude is affirmative ... Man must approach through and by means of nature, not by rejection of nature.^[28]

In Avalon's *Chapter 27: The Pañcatattva (The Secret Ritual) of Sakti and Sakta* (1918),^[26] he states that the Secret Ritual (which he calls *Panchatattva*,^[29] *Chakrapuja* and *Panchamakara*) involves:

Worship with the Pañcatattva generally takes place in a Cakra or circle composed of men and women... sitting in a circle, the Shakti (or female practitioner) being on the Sadhaka's (male practitioner's) left.



Statue of the Tantric goddess Kali from Dakshineswar, West Bengal, India; along with her Yantra.

Hence it is called Cakrapuja. ...There are various kinds of Cakra – productive, it is said, of differing fruits for the participator therein.

Avalon also provides a series of variations and substitutions of the *Panchatattva* (*Panchamakara*) "elements" or *tattva* encoded in the Tantras and various tantric traditions, and affirms that there is a direct correlation to the Tantric Five Nectars and the *Mahābhūta*.^[30]

Sexual rites

Sexual rites of Vamamarga may have emerged from early Hindu Tantra as a practical means of catalyzing biochemical transformations in the body to facilitate heightened states of awareness.^[31] These constitute a vital offering to Tantric deities. Sexual rites may have also evolved from clan initiation ceremonies involving transactions of sexual fluids. Here the male initiate is inseminated or ensanguinated with the sexual emissions of the female consort, sometimes admixed with the semen of the guru. The *Tantrika* is thus transformed into a son of the clan (*kulaputra*) through the grace of his consort. The clan fluid (*kuladravya*) or clan nectar (*kulamrita*) is conceived as flowing naturally from her womb. Later developments in the rite emphasize the primacy of bliss and divine union, which replace the more bodily connotations of earlier forms. Although popularly equated with Tantra in its entirety in the West, such sexual rites were historically practiced by a minority of sects. For many practicing lineages, these *maithuna* practices progressed into psychological symbolism.^[31]

When enacted as enjoined by the Tantras, the ritual culminates in a sublime experience of infinite awareness for both participants. Tantric texts specify that sex has three distinct and separate purposes—procreation, pleasure, and liberation. Those seeking liberation eschew frictional orgasm for a higher form of ecstasy, as the couple participating in the ritual lock in a static embrace. Several sexual rituals are recommended and practiced. These involve elaborate and meticulous preparatory and purificatory rites. The sexual act itself balances energies coursing within the *pranic ida* and *pingala* channels in the subtle bodies of both participants. The *sushumna nadi* is awakened and *kundalini* rises upwards within it. This eventually culminates in *samadhi*, wherein the respective individual personalities and identities of each of the participants are completely dissolved in a unity of cosmic consciousness. Tantrics understand these acts on multiple levels. The male and female participants are conjoined physically, and represent *Shiva* and *Shakti*, the male and female principles. Beyond the physical, a subtle fusion of *Shiva* and *Shakti* energies takes place, resulting in a united energy field. On an individual level, each participant experiences a fusion of one's own *Shiva* and *Shakti* energies.^{[32] [33]}

Western views

Sir John Woodroffe

The first Western scholar to take the study of Tantra seriously was Sir John Woodroffe (1865–1936), who wrote about Tantra under the *pen name Arthur Avalon*. He is generally held as the "founding father of Tantric studies."^[34] Unlike previous Western scholars, Woodroffe was an ardent advocate for Tantra, defending Tantra against its many critics and presenting Tantra as an ethical philosophical system greatly in accord with the Vedas and Vedanta.^[35] Woodroffe himself practised Tantra as he saw and understood it and, while trying to maintain his scholastic objectivity, was considered a student of Hindu Tantra (in particular *Shiva-Shakta*) tradition.^[36]

Further development

Following Sir John Woodroffe, a number of scholars began to actively investigate Tantric teachings. These included a number of scholars of comparative religion and Indology, such as: Aghananda Bharati, Mircea Eliade, Julius Evola, Carl Jung, Giuseppe Tucci and Heinrich Zimmer.^[37]

According to Hugh Urban, Zimmer, Evola and Eliade viewed Tantra as "the culmination of all Indian thought: the most radical form of spirituality and the archaic heart of aboriginal India", and regarded it as the ideal religion of the modern era. All three saw Tantra as "the most *transgressive* and *violent* path to the sacred."^[38]

In the modern world

Following these first presentations of Tantra, other more popular authors such as Joseph Campbell helped to bring Tantra into the imagination of the peoples of the West. Tantra came to be viewed by some as a "cult of ecstasy", combining sexuality and spirituality in such a way as to act as a corrective force to Western repressive attitudes about sex.^[39]

As Tantra has become more popular in the West it has undergone a major transformation. For many modern readers, "Tantra" has become a synonym for "spiritual sex" or "sacred sexuality", a belief that sex in itself ought to be recognized as a sacred act which is capable of elevating its participants to a more sublime spiritual plane.^[40] Though Neotantra may adopt many of the concepts and terminology of Indian Tantra, it often omits one or more of the following: the traditional reliance on *guruparampara* (the guidance of a guru), extensive meditative practice, and traditional rules of conduct—both moral and ritualistic.

According to one author and critic on religion and politics, Hugh Urban:

Since at least the time of Aghananda Bharati, most Western scholars have been severely critical of these new forms of pop Tantra. This "California Tantra" as Georg Feuerstein calls it, is "based on a profound misunderstanding of the Tantric path. Their main error is to confuse Tantric bliss ... with ordinary orgasmic pleasure."^[41]

Urban goes on to say that he himself doesn't consider this "wrong" or "false" but rather "simply a different interpretation for a specific historical situation."^[42]



The *Sri Yantra* (shown here in the three-dimensional projection known as *Sri Meru* or *Maha Meru* used mainly in rituals of the Srividya Shakta sects) is central to most Tantric forms of Shaktism.

Hindu Tantric practitioners

- Swami Rama
- Lord Sri Akshunna
- Jagatguru Vamacharya Sewak Sanjaynath

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External links

- Tantra (http://www.dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Tantra/) at the Open Directory Project

Crystal healing

Crystal healing is an alternative medicine technique that employs stones and crystals as healing tools.

The practitioner places crystals on different parts of the body, often corresponding to the chakras, or places crystals around the body in an attempt to construct an energy grid, which is believed to surround the client with healing energy.^[1] The healing is supposed to remove blockages in the aura or the body's electromagnetic field.^[2]

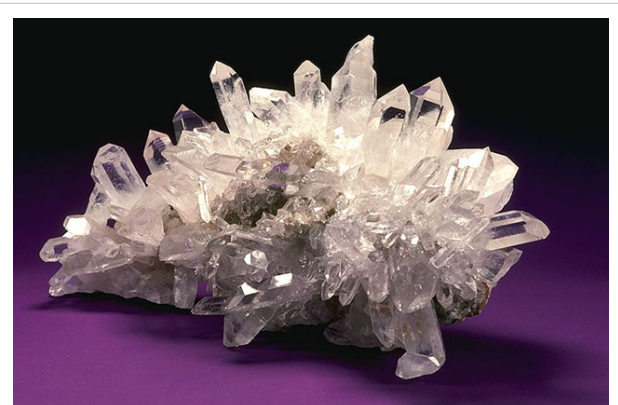
When the stones are placed in the area of the chakras, the colour of the stones may correspond to the colour which is associated with the corresponding chakra.

Going from the tail bone to the top of the head, the colours are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. Different stones are believed to have different healing vibrations,^[3] so a treatment based on the type of stone may be used instead. Stones may also be used at the feet in an attempt at grounding the individual, or held in the hands. Practitioners may also use tools such as crystal wands, which are placed near the receiver's body, or near a certain 'blocked' chakra, or use to perform psychic surgery, normally conducted with laser quartz wands.

Believers in crystal healing may carry crystals around with them, believing that they impart healing powers to them wherever they go, or that they have positive vibrations that attract positive events and interactions with others.

Cultural uses

Crystal healing has been used in many different cultures throughout history, including the Hopi Indians of Arizona^[4] and the Hawaiian islanders, some of whom still use them to this day.^[5] In Egypt, jade amulets were found in the tombs and burial chambers because of their supposed power to guide souls in the afterworld. The Chinese still attribute extensive healing powers to jade, and some other eastern cultures believe that emerald will strengthen the memory and increase intelligence.^[6]



Quartz crystals are often used in crystal healing.

Notable proponents

- William A. Tiller
- Marcel Vogel

Criticism

There is no peer reviewed scientific evidence that crystal healing has any effect. It has been called a pseudoscience. It is also a historical belief similar to that of charmstones, rather than one based on modern scientific practices and advances.^[7] Pleasant feelings or seeming successes of crystal healing can be attributed to the placebo effect, or the believers wanting it to be true and seeing only things that back that up; cognitive bias.^[8]

Crystal healing techniques are also practiced on animals, although some veterinary organizations, such as the British Veterinary Association, have warned that these methods are not scientifically proven and thus could cause greater harm if not used in conjunction with traditional medical care.^[9]

In a 90-page booklet titled *A Christian reflection on the New Age* published in 2003, the Roman Catholic Church criticized crystal healing along with other New Age practices and stated that crystals have no intrinsic power.^{[10] [11] [12] [13] [14]}

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Color healing

| |
|--|
| Energy therapy[1] |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acupuncture • Energy (esotericism) • Polarity therapy • Reiki • Spiritual healing • Therapeutic touch |
| NCCAM classifications |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alternative Medical Systems 2. Mind-Body Intervention 3. Biologically Based Therapy 4. Manipulative Methods 5. Energy Therapy |
| See also |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative medicine |

Chromotherapy, sometimes called **color therapy**, **colorology** or **chromatherapy**, is an alternative medicine method. It is claimed that a therapist trained in chromotherapy can use color and light to balance "energy" wherever a person's body be lacking, be it physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental. The practice has been labelled pseudoscientific by its critics.

Color therapy is unrelated to light therapy, a valid and proven form of medical treatment for seasonal affective disorder and a small number of other conditions.

History

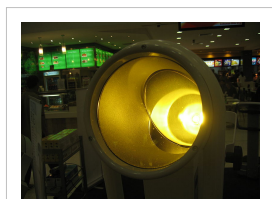
Avicenna (980-1037), who viewed color to be of vital importance in diagnosis and treatment, discussed chromotherapy in *The Canon of Medicine*. He wrote that "Color is an observable symptom of disease" and also developed a chart that related color to the temperature and physical condition of the body. His view was that red moved the blood, blue or white cooled it, and yellow reduced muscular pain and inflammation. He further discussed the properties of colors for healing and was "the first to establish that the wrong color suggested for therapy would elicit no response in specific diseases." As an example, "he observed that a person with a nosebleed should not gaze at things of a brilliant red color and should not be exposed to red light because this would stimulate the sanguineous humor, whereas blue would soothe it and reduce blood flow."^[2]

Robert Hunt a scientist from the United Kingdom wrote "Researches on Light in its chemical relations" in 1844 the book described the influences of plant growth of selected applications of light.

American Civil War General Augustus Pleasonton conducted his own experiments and published his book *The Influence Of The Blue Ray Of The Sunlight And Of The Blue Color Of The Sky*, published in 1876 about how the color blue can improve the growth of crops and livestock and can help heal diseases in humans. This led to a birth of modern chromotherapy, influencing scientist Dr. S. Pancoast and Edwin Dwight Babbitt to conduct experiments and publish books about chromotherapy. Dr. S. Pancoast wrote "Blue and Red Light; or, Light and Its Rays as Medicine" in 1877 and Edwin Dwight Babbitt wrote "The Principles of Light and Color" in 1878.



A Biopton color therapy device with lenses



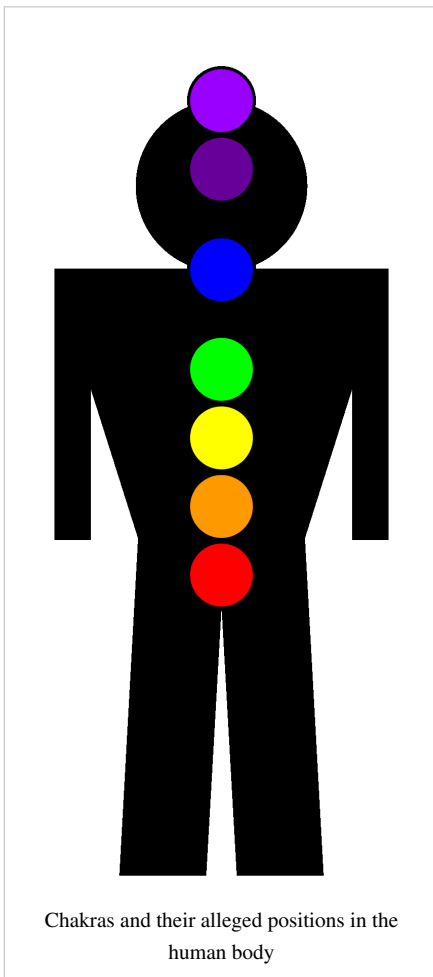
A look inside a color therapy device

Dinshah P. Ghadiali a Hindu scientist discovered the scientific principles which explain why and how the different colored rays have various therapeutic effects on organisms. In 1933, after years of research, Ghadiali published "The Spectro Chromemetry Encyclopaedia", a master work on color therapy. He stated that colors represent chemical potencies in higher octaves of vibration. And for each organism and system of the body there is a particular color that stimulates and another that inhibits the work of that organ or system. By knowing the action of the different colors upon the different organs and systems of the body, one can apply the correct color that will tend to balance the action of any organ or system that has become abnormal in its functioning or condition.^[3]

After this, throughout the 19th century, healers claimed colored glass filters could treat many diseases including constipation and meningitis. Photobiology, the term for the contemporary scientific study of the effects of light on humans, has replaced the term chromotherapy in an effort to separate it from its roots in Victorian mysticism and to strip it of its associations with symbolism and magic.^[4]

Light therapy is a specific treatment approach using high intensity light to treat specific sleep, skin and mood disorders.

Alleged meaning of colors



Ayurvedic medicine describes the body as having seven main chakras, which are spiritual centers located along the spine that are associated with a color, function and organ or bodily system. According to this explanation, these colors can become imbalanced and result in physical diseases but these imbalances can be corrected through using the appropriate color as a treatment.^[5] The purported colors and their associations are described as:^[6]

| Color | Chakra | Chakra location | Alleged function | Associated system |
|--------|---------|---|---|---|
| Red | First | Base of the spine | Grounding and Survival | gonads, kidneys, spine, sense of smell |
| Orange | Second | Lower abdomen, genitals | Emotions, sexuality | Urinary tract, circulation, reproduction |
| Yellow | Third | Solar plexus | Power, ego | stomach, liver, gall bladder, pancreas |
| Green | Fourth | Heart | Love, sense of responsibility | Heart, lungs, thymus |
| Blue | Fifth | Throat | Physical and spiritual communication | Throat, ears, mouth, hands |
| Indigo | Sixth | Just above the center of the brow, middle of forehead | Forgiveness, compassion, understanding | Eye, pineal glands |
| Violet | Seventh | Crown of the head | Connection with universal energies, transmission of ideas and information | pituitary gland, the central nervous system and the cerebral cortex |

[7]

Criticism

Chromotherapy has been deemed pseudoscience by its critics, who state that the falsifiability and verifiability conditions necessary to deem an experiment valid are not being met, and therefore that it has not been proven that introducing colors is the key element in the healing process which is healing its patients. Chromotherapy has also been criticized for selection bias in statistics of success for the treatment. It has also been suggested that the placebo effect may be a key factor in the healing of some patients, which could be tested for by a chromotherapy control group.^[8]

See also

- Colorpuncture

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External links

- MeSH *Color+Therapy* (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/cgi/mesh/2010/MB_cgi?mode=&term=Color+Therapy)

Alternative medicine

"*Complementary medicine*" and "*Complementary and Alternative Medicine*" redirect here.

In Western culture, the controversial term **alternative medicine** is any healing practice "that does not fall within the realm of conventional medicine",^[1] or "that which has not been shown consistently to be effective."^[2] It is often opposed to evidence based medicine and encompasses therapies with a historical or cultural, rather than a scientific, basis. However, the term *alternative medicine* has been criticized by those skeptical of such practices as deceptive.^[3] Richard Dawkins has stated that "there is no alternative medicine. There is only medicine that works and medicine that doesn't work."^[4]

The American National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) cites examples including naturopathy, chiropractic medicine, herbalism, traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda, meditation, yoga, biofeedback, hypnosis, homeopathy, acupuncture, and nutritional-based therapies, in addition to a range of other practices.^[5]

It is frequently grouped with **complementary medicine**, which generally refers to the same interventions when used in conjunction with mainstream techniques,^[6] ^[7] ^[8] under the umbrella term **complementary and alternative medicine**, or *CAM*. Some researchers in alternative medicine oppose this grouping, preferring to emphasize differences of approach, but nevertheless use the term CAM, which has become standard.^[9] ^[10] "Although heterogeneous, the major CAM systems have many common characteristics, including a focus on individualizing treatments, treating the whole person, promoting self-care and self-healing, and recognizing the spiritual nature of each individual. In addition, many CAM systems have characteristics commonly found in mainstream health care, such as a focus on good nutrition and preventive practices. Unlike mainstream medicine, CAM often lacks or has only limited experimental and clinical study; however, scientific investigation of CAM is beginning to address this knowledge gap. Thus, boundaries between CAM and mainstream medicine, as well as among different CAM systems, are often blurred and are constantly changing."^[6]

Alternative medicine practices are as diverse in their foundations as in their methodologies. Practices may incorporate or base themselves on traditional medicine, folk knowledge, spiritual beliefs, or newly conceived approaches to healing.^[11] Jurisdictions where alternative medical practices are sufficiently widespread may license and regulate them. The claims made by alternative medicine practitioners are generally not accepted by the medical community because evidence-based assessment of safety and efficacy is either not available or has not been performed for these practices. If scientific investigation establishes the safety and effectiveness of an alternative medical practice, it then becomes mainstream medicine and is no longer "alternative", and may therefore become widely adopted by conventional practitioners.^[12] ^[13]

Because alternative techniques tend to lack evidence, or may even have repeatedly failed to work in tests, some have advocated defining it as non-evidence based medicine, or not medicine at all. Some researchers state that the evidence-based approach to defining CAM is problematic because some CAM is tested, and research suggests that many mainstream medical techniques lack solid evidence.^[14]

A 1998 systematic review of studies assessing its prevalence in 13 countries concluded that about 31% of cancer patients use some form of complementary and alternative medicine.^[15] Alternative medicine varies from country to country. Edzard Ernst says that in Austria and Germany CAM is mainly in the hands of physicians,^[10] while some estimates suggest that at least half of American alternative practitioners are physicians.^[16] In Germany, herbs are tightly regulated, with half prescribed by doctors and covered by health insurance based on their Commission E legislation.^[17]

Terms

The term 'alternative medicine' is generally used to describe practices used independently or in place of conventional medicine. The term 'complementary medicine' is primarily used to describe practices used in conjunction with or to complement conventional medical treatments. NCCAM suggests "using aromatherapy therapy in which the scent of essential oils from flowers, herbs, and trees is inhaled in an attempt to promote health and well-being and to help lessen a patient's discomfort following surgery"^[13] as an example of complementary medicine. The terms 'integrative' or 'integrated medicine' indicate combinations of conventional and alternative medical treatments which have some scientific proof of efficacy; such practices are viewed by advocates as the best examples of complementary medicine.^[13]

Ralph Snyderman and Andrew Weil state that "integrative medicine is not synonymous with complementary and alternative medicine. It has a far larger meaning and mission in that it calls for restoration of the focus of medicine on health and healing and emphasizes the centrality of the patient-physician relationship."^[18] The combination of orthodox and complementary medicine with an emphasis on prevention and lifestyle changes is known as *integrated medicine*.

Characterization

There is no clear and consistent definition for either alternative or complementary medicine.^[19] :¹⁷ In Western culture it is often defined as any healing practice "that does not fall within the realm of conventional medicine",^[1] or "that which has not been shown consistently to be effective."^[2]

Self characterization

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) defines CAM as "a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products, that are not currently part of conventional medicine."^[13]

The Danish Knowledge and Research Center for Alternative Medicine (Danish abbreviation: ViFAB. ViFAB is an independent institution under the Danish Ministry of the Interior and Health. ViFAB's website: www.vifab.dk/uk) uses the term "alternative medicine" for: - Treatments performed by therapists who are not authorized health care professionals. - Treatments performed by authorized health care professionals, but which are based on methods otherwise mainly used outside the health care system. People without a health care authorisation must be able to perform the treatments.

The Cochrane Complementary Medicine Field finds that what is considered complementary or alternative practices in one country may be considered conventional medical practices in another. Their definition is therefore general: "complementary medicine includes all such practices and ideas which are outside the domain of conventional medicine in several countries and defined by its users as preventing or treating illness, or promoting health and well-being."^[20]

For example, biofeedback is commonly used within the Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation community, but is considered alternative within the medical community as a whole, and some herbal therapies are mainstream in Europe, but are alternative in the United States.^[21] David M. Eisenberg, an integrative medicine researcher,^[22] defines it as "medical interventions not taught widely at US medical schools or generally available at US hospitals."^[23] NCCAM states that formerly unproven remedies may be incorporated into conventional medicine if they are shown to be safe and effective.^[13]

Barrie R. Cassileth, a researcher of complementary and alternative medicine, has summed up the situation as "not all mainstream physicians are pleased with CAM, with current efforts to integrate CAM into mainstream medicine, or with a separate NIH research entity for "alternative" medicine."^[12] ^[24]

Scientific community

Institutions

The National Science Foundation has defined alternative medicine as "all treatments that have not been proven effective using scientific methods."^[25] The Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2005 defined complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) as the non-dominant approach to medicine in a given culture and historical period. A similar definition has been adopted by the Cochrane Collaboration,^[20] and official government bodies such as the UK Department of Health.^[26] Proponents of evidence-based medicine, such as the Cochrane Collaboration, use the term alternative medicine but agree that all treatments, whether "mainstream" or "alternative", ought to be held to the standards of the scientific method.^[27]

Scientists

Numerous mainstream scientists and physicians have commented on and criticised alternative medicine.

There is a debate among medical researchers over whether any therapy may be properly classified as 'alternative medicine'. Some claim that there is only medicine which has been adequately tested and that which has not.^[12] They feel that health care practices should be classified based solely on scientific evidence. If a treatment has been rigorously tested and found safe and effective traditional medicine will adopt it regardless of if it was considered alternative to begin with.^[12] It is thus possible for a method to change categories (proven vs. unproven), based on increased knowledge of its effectiveness or lack thereof. Prominent supporters of this position include George D. Lundberg, former editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).^[28]

Stephen Barrett, founder and operator of Quackwatch, argues that practices labeled "alternative" should be reclassified as either genuine, experimental, or questionable. Here he defines genuine as being methods that have sound evidence for safety and effectiveness, experimental as being unproven but with a plausible rationale for effectiveness, and questionable as groundless without a scientifically plausible rationale. He has concerns that just because some "alternative" have merit, there is the impression that the rest deserve equal consideration and respect even though most are worthless.^[29] He says that there is a policy at the NIH of never saying something doesn't work only that a different version or dose might give different results.^[30]

Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine, characterizes the evidence for many alternative techniques as weak, nonexistent, or negative, but states that evidence exists for others, in particular certain herbs and acupuncture.^[31]

Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist, defines alternative medicine as a "set of practices which cannot be tested, refuse to be tested, or consistently fail tests."^[32] He also states that "there is no alternative medicine. There is only medicine that works and medicine that doesn't work."^[4] He says that if a technique is demonstrated effective in properly performed trials, it ceases to be alternative and simply becomes medicine.^[33]

A letter by four Nobel Laureates and other prominent scientists deplored the lack of critical thinking and scientific rigor in National Institutes of Health supported alternative medicine research.^[34] In 2009 a group of scientists made a proposal to shut down the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. They argued that the vast majority of studies were based on unconventional understandings of physiology and disease and have shown little or no effect. Further, they argue that the field's more-plausible interventions such as diet, relaxation, yoga and botanical remedies can be studied just as well in other parts of NIH, where they would need to compete with conventional research projects.^[35]

These concerns are supported by negative results in almost all studies conducted over ten years at a cost of \$2.5 billion by the NCCAM.^[36] R. Barker Bausell, a research methods expert and author of "Snake Oil Science" states that "it's become politically correct to investigate nonsense."^[30] There are concerns that just having NIH support is being used to give unfounded "legitimacy to treatments that are not legitimate."^[35]

Wallace Sampson, an editor of Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine and a Stanford University professor of medicine write that CAM is the "propagation of the absurd" based on the example that *alternative* and

complementary have been substituted for *quackery*, *dubious* and *implausible* and concerns that CAM tolerates contradiction without through reason and experiment.^[37]

Popular press

The Washington Post reports that a growing number of traditionally trained physicians practice integrative medicine, which it defines as "conventional medical care that incorporates strategies such as acupuncture, reiki and herbal remedies."^[38] The Australian comedian Tim Minchin, in his nine minute beat poem "Storm", states that alternative medicine is that which "has either not been proved to work, or been proved not to work", and then he quips "You know what they call 'alternative medicine' that's been proved to work? Medicine."^[39]

Classifications

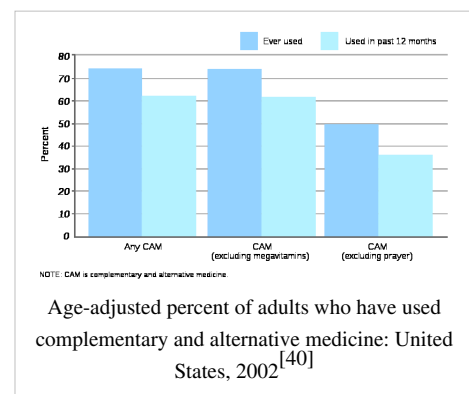
NCCAM has developed one of the most widely used classification systems for the branches of complementary and alternative medicine.^{[13] [19]} It classifies complementary and alternative therapies into five major groups which have some overlap.^[13]

1. Whole medical systems: cut across more than one of the other groups; examples include Traditional Chinese medicine, Naturopathy, Homeopathy and Ayurveda.
2. Mind-body medicine: takes a holistic approach to health that explores the interconnection between the mind, body, and spirit. It works under the premise that the mind can affect "bodily functions and symptoms".
3. Biologically based practices: use substances found in nature such as herbs, foods, vitamins, and other natural substances.
4. Manipulative and body-based practices: feature manipulation or movement of body parts, such as is done in chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation.
5. Energy medicine: is a domain that deals with putative and verifiable energy fields:
 - Biofield therapies are intended to influence energy fields that purportedly surround and penetrate the body. No empirical evidence has been found to support the existence of the putative energy fields on which these therapies are predicated.
 - Bioelectromagnetic-based therapies use verifiable electromagnetic fields, such as pulsed fields, alternating-current or direct-current fields in an unconventional manner.

Usage

Many people utilize mainstream medicine for diagnosis and basic information, while turning to alternatives for therapy or health-enhancing measures. Studies indicate that alternative approaches are often used *in conjunction with* conventional medicine.^[40] This is referred to by NCCAM as integrative (or integrated) medicine because it "combines treatments from conventional medicine and CAM for which there is some high-quality evidence of safety and effectiveness."^[13] According to Andrew T. Weil M.D., a leading proponent of integrative medicine, the principles of integrative medicine include: appropriate use of conventional and CAM methods; patient participation; promotion of health as well as treatment of disease; and a preference for natural, minimally-invasive methods.^[41]

A 1997 survey found that 13.7% of respondents in the United States had sought the services of both a medical doctor and an alternative medicine practitioner. The same survey found that 96% of respondents who sought the services of an alternative medicine practitioner also sought the services of a medical doctor in the past 12 months. Medical



doctors are often unaware of their patient's use of alternative medical treatments as only 38.5% of the patients alternative therapies were discussed with their medical doctor.^[42]

Edzard Ernst, Professor of Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter, wrote in the *Medical Journal of Australia* that "*about half the general population in developed countries use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).*"^[43] Survey results released in May 2004 by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, part of the United States National Institutes of Health, found that in 2002 62.1% of adults in the country had used some form of CAM in the past 12 months and 75% across lifespan (though these figure drop to 36.0% and 50% if *prayer specifically for health reasons* is excluded); this study included yoga, meditation, herbal treatments and the Atkins diet as CAM.^{[40] [44]} Another study suggests a similar figure of 40%.^[45]

A British telephone survey by the BBC of 1209 adults in 1998 shows that around 20% of adults in Britain had used alternative medicine in the past 12 months.^[46] Ernst has been active politically on this issue as well, publicly requesting that Prince Charles recall two guides to alternative medicine published by the Foundation for Integrated Health, on the grounds that "[t]hey both contain numerous misleading and inaccurate claims concerning the supposed benefits of alternative medicine" and that "[t]he nation cannot be served by promoting ineffective and sometimes dangerous alternative treatments."^[47] In general, he believes that CAM can and should be subjected to scientific testing.^{[27] [31] [48]}

The use of alternative medicine in developed countries appears to be increasing. A 1998 study showed that the use of alternative medicine had risen from 33.8% in 1990 to 42.1% in 1997.^[42] In the United Kingdom, a 2000 report ordered by the House of Lords suggested that "...limited data seem to support the idea that CAM use in the United Kingdom is high and is increasing."^[49] In developing nations, access to essential medicines is severely restricted by lack of resources and poverty. Traditional remedies, often closely resembling or forming the basis for alternative remedies, may comprise primary health care or be integrated into the health care system. In Africa, traditional medicine is used for 80% of primary health care, and in developing nations as a whole over one third of the population lack access to essential medicines.^[50]

Advocates of alternative medicine hold that the various alternative treatment methods are effective in treating a wide range of major and minor medical conditions, and that recently published research (such as Michalsen, 2003,^[51] Gonsalkorale 2003,^[52] and Berga 2003)^[53] proves the effectiveness of specific alternative treatments. They assert that a PubMed search revealed over 370,000 research papers classified as alternative medicine published in Medline-recognized journals since 1966 in the National Library of Medicine database. See also Kleijnen 1991,^[54] and Linde 1997.^[55]

Complementary therapies are often used in palliative care or by practitioners attempting to manage chronic pain in patients. Complementary medicine is considered more acceptable in the interdisciplinary approach used in palliative care than in other areas of medicine. "From its early experiences of care for the dying, palliative care took for granted the necessity of placing patient values and lifestyle habits at the core of any design and delivery of quality care at the end of life. If the patient desired complementary therapies, and as long as such treatments provided additional support and did not endanger the patient, they were considered acceptable."^[56] The non-pharmacologic interventions of complementary medicine can employ mind-body interventions designed to "reduce pain and concomitant mood disturbance and increase quality of life."^[57]

Physicians who practice complementary medicine usually discuss and advise patients as to available complementary therapies. Patients often express interest in mind-body complementary therapies because they offer a non-drug approach to treating some health conditions.^[58] Some mind-body techniques, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, were once considered complementary medicine, but are now a part of conventional medicine in the United States.^[59] "Complementary medicine treatments used for pain include: acupuncture, low-level laser therapy, meditation, aroma therapy, Chinese medicine, dance therapy, music therapy, massage, herbalism, therapeutic touch, yoga, osteopathy, chiropractic, naturopathy, and homeopathy."^[60]

In defining complementary medicine in the UK, the House of Lords Select Committee determined that the following therapies were the most often used to complement conventional medicine:^[61] Alexander technique, Aromatherapy, Bach and other flower remedies, Body work therapies including massage, Counselling stress therapies, hypnotherapy, Meditation, Reflexology, Shiatsu, Maharishi Ayurvedic medicine, Nutritional medicine, and Yoga.

United States

A 2002 survey of US adults 18 years and older conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (CDC) and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine indicated:^[40]

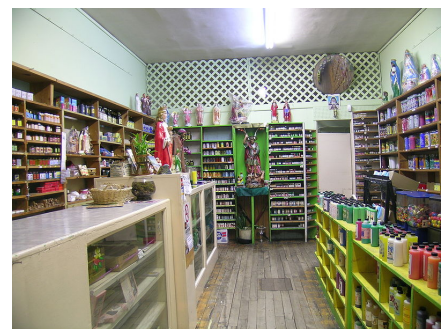
- 74.6% had used some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).
- 62.1% had done so within the preceding twelve months.
- When prayer specifically for health reasons is excluded, these figures fall to 49.8% and 36.0%, respectively.
- 45.2% had in the last twelve months used prayer for health reasons, either through praying for their own health or through others praying for them.
- 54.9% used CAM in conjunction with conventional medicine.
- 14.8% "sought care from a licensed or certified" practitioner, suggesting that "most individuals who use CAM prefer to treat themselves."
- Most people used CAM to treat and/or prevent musculoskeletal conditions or other conditions associated with chronic or recurring pain.
- "Women were more likely than men to use CAM. The largest sex differential is seen in the use of mind-body therapies including prayer specifically for health reasons".
- "Except for the groups of therapies that included prayer specifically for health reasons, use of CAM increased as education levels increased".
- The most common CAM therapies used in the US in 2002 were prayer (45.2%), herbalism (18.9%), breathing meditation (11.6%), meditation (7.6%), chiropractic medicine (7.5%), yoga (5.1%), body work (5.0%), diet-based therapy (3.5%), progressive relaxation (3.0%), mega-vitamin therapy (2.8%) and Visualization (2.1%)

In 2004, a survey of nearly 1,400 U.S. hospitals found that more than one in four offered alternative and complementary therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, and massage therapy.^[62]

A 2008 survey of US hospitals by Health Forum, a subsidiary of the American Hospital Association, found that more than 37 percent of responding hospitals indicated they offer one or more alternative medicine therapies, up from 26.5 percent in 2005. Additionally, hospitals in the southern Atlantic states were most likely to include CAM, followed by east north central states and those in the middle Atlantic. More than 70% of the hospitals offering CAM were in urban areas.^[63]

The National Science Foundation has also conducted surveys of the popularity of alternative medicine. After describing the negative impact science fiction in the media has on public attitudes and understandings of pseudoscience, and defining alternative medicine as all treatments that have not been proven effective using scientific methods, as well as mentioning the concerns of individual scientists, organizations, and members of the science policymaking community, it commented that "nevertheless, the popularity of alternative medicine appears to be increasing."^[25]

In the state of Texas, physicians may be partially protected from charges of unprofessional conduct or failure to practice medicine in an acceptable manner, and thus from disciplinary action, when they prescribe alternative medicine in a complementary manner, if board specific practice requirements are satisfied and the therapies utilized do not present "a safety risk for the patient that is unreasonably greater than the conventional treatment for the



A botánica, such as this one, caters to the Latino community and sells folk medicine alongside statues of saints, candles decorated with prayers, and other items.

patient's medical condition."^[64]

Denmark

45.2 % of the Danish population aged 16 or above had in 2005 used alternative medicine at some point in life. 22.5 % had used alternative medicine within the previous year.

The most popular types of therapies within the previous year (2005) are:

- Massage, osteopathy or other manipulative techniques (13.2 percent)
- Reflexology (6.1 percent)
- Acupuncture (5.4 percent)

More results of statistical surveys on alternative medicine in Denmark is available on ViFABs (Knowledge and Research Center for Alternative Medicines)home page, see the pages on Statistics: <http://www.vifab.dk/uk/alternative+medicine/statistics>

Education

In the United States, increasing numbers of medical colleges have started offering courses in alternative medicine. For example, in three separate research surveys that surveyed 729 schools (125 medical schools offering an MD degree, 25 medical schools offering a Doctor of Osteopathic medicine degree, and 585 schools offering a nursing degree), 60% of the standard medical schools, 95% of osteopathic medical schools and 84.8% of the nursing schools teach some form of CAM.^{[65] [66] [67]} The University of Arizona College of Medicine offers a program in Integrative Medicine under the leadership of Andrew Weil that trains physicians in various branches of alternative medicine which "...neither rejects conventional medicine, nor embraces alternative practices uncritically."^[68]

Accredited Naturopathic colleges and universities are also increasing in number and popularity in Canada and the USA. (See Naturopathic medical school in North America). In Connecticut, the University of Connecticut Medical School sponsors exposure to *Ayurveda* in periodic seminars and courses, for example, on mental health by a Yale affiliated medical doctor and psychiatrist (Ninivaggi, Frank John (2008). *Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Guide to Traditional Indian Medicine for the West*. Praeger Press: ISBN 0-313-34837-5).

Similarly "unconventional medicine courses are widely represented at European universities. They cover a wide range of therapies. Many of them are used clinically. Research work is underway at several faculties,"^[69] but "only 40% of the responding [European] universities were offering some form of CAM training."^[70]

In contrast to unconventional schools in Britain, no conventional medical schools offer courses that teach the clinical practice of alternative medicine.^[71] The British Medical Acupuncture Society offers medical acupuncture certificates to doctors, as does the College of Naturopathic Medicine UK and Ireland.

Regulation

Due to the uncertain nature of various alternative therapies and the wide variety of claims different practitioners make, alternative medicine has been a source of vigorous debate, even over the definition of alternative medicine.^[72] ^[73] Dietary supplements, their ingredients, safety, and claims, are a continual source of controversy.^[74] In some cases, political issues, mainstream medicine and alternative medicine all collide, such as in cases where synthetic drugs are legal but the herbal sources of the same active chemical are banned.^[75]

In other cases, controversy over mainstream medicine causes questions about the nature of a treatment, such as water fluoridation.^[76] Alternative medicine and mainstream medicine debates can also spill over into freedom of religion discussions, such as the right to decline lifesaving treatment for one's children because of religious beliefs.^[77] Government regulators continue to attempt to find a regulatory balance.^[78]

Jurisdiction differs concerning which branches of alternative medicine are legal, which are regulated, and which (if any) are provided by a government-controlled health service or reimbursed by a private health medical insurance company. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - article 34 (*Specific legal obligations*) of the General Comment No. 14 (2000) on *The right to the highest attainable standard of health* - states that

"Furthermore, obligations to respect include a State's obligation to refrain from prohibiting or impeding traditional preventive care, healing practices and medicines, from marketing unsafe drugs and from applying coercive medical treatments, unless on an exceptional basis for the treatment of mental illness or the prevention and control of communicable diseases."^[79]

Specific implementations of this article are left to member states.

A number of alternative medicine advocates disagree with the restrictions of government agencies that approve medical treatments. In the United States, for example, critics say that the Food and Drug Administration's criteria for experimental evaluation methods impedes those seeking to bring useful and effective treatments and approaches to the public, and that their contributions and discoveries are unfairly dismissed, overlooked or suppressed. Alternative medicine providers recognize that health fraud occurs, and argue that it should be dealt with appropriately when it does, but that these restrictions should not extend to what they view as legitimate health care products.

In New Zealand alternative medicine products are classified as food products, so there are no regulations or safety standards in place.^[80]

In Australia, the topic is termed as *complementary medicine* and the Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued various guidances and standards.^[81] Australian regulatory guidelines for complementary medicines (ARGCM) demands that the pesticides, fumigants, toxic metals, microbial toxins, radionuclides and microbial contaminations etc., present in *herbal substances* should be monitored, although the guidance does not request for the evidences of these traits.^[82] However, for the herbal substances in pharmacopoeial monographs, the detailed information should be supplied to relevant authorities^[83]

The production of modern pharmaceuticals is strictly regulated to ensure that medicines contain a standardized quantity of active ingredients and are free from contamination. Alternative medicine products are not subject to the same governmental quality control standards, and consistency between doses can vary. This leads to uncertainty in the chemical content and biological activity of individual doses. This lack of oversight means that alternative health products are vulnerable to adulteration and contamination.^[84] This problem is magnified by international commerce, since different countries have different types and degrees of regulation. This can make it difficult for consumers to properly evaluate the risks and qualities of given products.

Alternative and evidence-based medicine

Testing of efficacy

Many alternative therapies have been tested with varying results. In 2003, a project funded by the CDC identified 208 condition-treatment pairs, of which 58% had been studied by at least one randomized controlled trial (RCT), and 23% had been assessed with a meta-analysis.^[85] According to a 2005 book by a US Institute of Medicine panel, the number of RCTs focused on CAM has risen dramatically. The book cites Vickers (1998), who found that many of the CAM-related RCTs are in the Cochrane register, but 19% of these trials were not in MEDLINE, and 84% were in conventional medical journals.^[19]:133

As of 2005 the Cochrane Library had 145 CAM-related Cochrane systematic reviews and 340 non-Cochrane systematic reviews. An analysis of the conclusions of only the 145 Cochrane reviews was done by two readers. In 83% of the cases, the readers agreed. In the 17% in which they disagreed, a third reader agreed with one of the initial readers to set a rating. These studies found that for CAM, 38.4% concluded positive effect or possibly positive

(12.4%) effect, 4.8% concluded no effect, 0.69% concluded harmful effect, and 56.6% concluded insufficient evidence. An assessment of conventional treatments found that 41.3% concluded positive or possibly positive effect, 20% concluded no effect, 8.1% concluded net harmful effects, and 21.3% concluded insufficient evidence. However, the CAM review used the 2004 Cochrane database while the conventional review used the 1998 Cochrane database.^[19] :135-136

Lists of the Cochrane Reviews on alternative medicine including summaries of the results sorted by type of therapy (updated monthly) are made available at ViFABs (Knowledge and Research Center for Alternative Medicines) home page, see the lists here: <http://www.vifab.dk/uk/cochrane+and+alternative+medicine>

Most alternative medical treatments are not patentable, which may lead to less research funded by the private sector. Additionally, in most countries alternative treatments (in contrast to pharmaceuticals) can be marketed without any proof of efficacy—also a disincentive for manufacturers to fund scientific research.^[86] Some have proposed adopting a prize system to reward medical research.^[87] However, public funding for research exists. Increasing the funding for research of alternative medicine techniques was the purpose of the US National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. NCCAM and its predecessor, the Office of Alternative Medicine, have spent more than \$1 billion on such research since 1992.^[88] ^[89]

Some skeptics of alternative practices say that a person may attribute symptomatic relief to an otherwise ineffective therapy due to the placebo effect, the natural recovery from or the cyclical nature of an illness (the regression fallacy), or the possibility that the person never originally had a true illness.^[90]

In the same way as for conventional therapies, drugs, and interventions, it can be difficult to test the efficacy of alternative medicine in clinical trials. In instances where an established, effective, treatment for a condition is already available, the Helsinki Declaration states that withholding such treatment is unethical in most circumstances. Use of standard-of-care treatment in addition to an alternative technique being tested may produce confounded or difficult-to-interpret results.^[91]

In 2009 the complaints of critics were vindicated by the highly publicized negative results of ten years of big studies funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (formerly OAM):

"Ten years ago the government set out to test herbal and other alternative health remedies to find the ones that work. After spending \$2.5 billion, the disappointing answer seems to be that almost none of them do."^[30]

Cancer researcher Andrew J. Vickers has stated:

"Contrary to much popular and scientific writing, many alternative cancer treatments have been investigated in good quality clinical trials, and they have been shown to be ineffective. In this article, clinical trial data on a number of alternative cancer cures including Livingston-Wheeler, Di Bella Multitherapy, antineoplastons, vitamin C, hydrazine sulfate, Laetrile, and psychotherapy are reviewed. The label "unproven" is inappropriate for such therapies; it is time to assert that many alternative cancer therapies have been "disproven."^[92]

Testing of safety

Interactions with conventional pharmaceuticals

Forms of alternative medicine that are biologically active can be dangerous even when used in conjunction with conventional medicine. Examples include immuno-augmentation therapy, shark cartilage, bioresonance therapy, oxygen and ozone therapies, insulin potentiation therapy. Some herbal remedies can cause dangerous interactions with chemotherapy drugs, radiation therapy or anesthetics during surgery, among other problems.^[9] An anecdotal example of these dangers was reported by Associate Professor Alastair MacLennan of Adelaide University, Australia regarding a patient who almost bled to death on the operating table after neglecting to mention that she had been taking "natural" potions to "build up her strength" before the operation, including a powerful anticoagulant that nearly caused her death.^[93]

To *ABC Online*, MacLennan also gives another possible mechanism:

"And lastly there's the cynicism and disappointment and depression that some patients get from going on from one alternative medicine to the next, and they find after three months the placebo effect wears off, and they're disappointed and they move on to the next one, and they're disappointed and disillusioned, and that can create depression and make the eventual treatment of the patient with anything effective difficult, because you may not get compliance, because they've seen the failure so often in the past".^[94]

Potential side-effects

Conventional treatments are subjected to testing for undesired side-effects, whereas alternative treatments generally are not subjected to such testing at all. Any treatment — whether conventional or alternative — that has a biological or psychological effect on a patient may also have potentially dangerous biological or psychological side-effects. Attempts to refute this fact with regard to alternative treatments sometimes use the *appeal to nature* fallacy, *i.e.* "that which is natural cannot be harmful".

An exception to the normal thinking regarding side-effects is Homeopathy. Since 1938 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has regulated homeopathic products in "several significantly different ways from other drugs."^[95] Homeopathic preparations, termed "remedies," are extremely dilute, often far beyond the point where a single molecule of the original active (and possibly toxic) ingredient is likely to remain. They are thus considered safe on that count, but "their products are exempt from good manufacturing practice requirements related to expiration dating and from finished product testing for identity and strength," and their alcohol concentration may be much higher than allowed in conventional drugs.^[95]

Treatment delay

Those who have experienced or perceived success with one alternative therapy for a minor ailment may be convinced of its efficacy and persuaded to extrapolate that success to some other alternative therapy for a more serious, possibly life-threatening illness.^[96] For this reason, critics argue that therapies that rely on the placebo effect to define success are very dangerous. According to mental health journalist Scott Lilienfeld in 2002, "unvalidated or scientifically unsupported mental health practices can lead individuals to forgo effective treatments" and refers to this as "opportunity cost". Individuals who spend large amounts of time and money on ineffective treatments may be left with precious little of either, and may forfeit the opportunity to obtain treatments that could be more helpful. In short, even innocuous treatments can indirectly produce negative outcomes.^[97]

Between 2001 and 2003, four children died in Australia because their parents chose ineffective naturopathic, homeopathic, or other alternative medicines and diets rather than conventional therapies.^[98] In all, they found 17 instances in which children were significantly harmed by a failure to use conventional medicine.

Danger can be increased when used as a complement to standard medical care

Patients who use alternative cancer treatments have a poorer survival time, even after controlling for type and stage of disease.^[99] This may be because patients who accurately perceive that they are likely to survive do not attempt unproven remedies, and patients who accurately perceive that they are unlikely to survive are attracted to unproven remedies.^[99]

Research funding

Although the Dutch government funded CAM research between 1986 and 2003, it formally ended funding in 2006.^[100]

Appeal

A study published in 1998^[45] indicates that a majority of alternative medicine use was in conjunction with standard medical treatments. Approximately 4.4 percent of those studied used alternative medicine as a replacement for conventional medicine. The research found that those who used alternative medicine tended to have higher education or report poorer health status. Dissatisfaction with conventional medicine was not a meaningful factor in the choice, but rather the majority of alternative medicine users appear to be doing so largely because "they find these health care alternatives to be more congruent with their own values, beliefs, and philosophical orientations toward health and life." In particular, subjects reported a holistic orientation to health, a transformational experience that changed their worldview, identification with a number of groups committed to environmentalism, feminism, psychology, and/or spirituality and personal growth, or that they were suffering from a variety of common and minor ailments - notably anxiety, back problems, and chronic pain.

Authors have speculated on the socio-cultural and psychological reasons for the appeal of alternative medicines among that minority whose use them *in lieu* of conventional medicine. There are several socio-cultural reasons for the interest in these treatments centered on the low level of scientific literacy among the public at large and a concomitant increase in antiscientific attitudes and new age mysticism.^[101] Related to this are vigorous marketing^[102] of extravagant claims by the alternative medical community combined with inadequate media scrutiny and attacks on critics.^{[101] [103]}

There is also an increase in conspiracy theories towards conventional medicine and pharmaceutical companies, mistrust of traditional authority figures, such as the physician, and a dislike of the current delivery methods of scientific biomedicine, all of which have led patients to seek out alternative medicine to treat a variety of ailments.^[103] Many patients lack access to contemporary medicine, due to a lack of private or public health insurance, which leads them to seek out lower-cost alternative medicine.^[40] Medical doctors are also aggressively marketing alternative medicine to profit from this market.^[102]

In addition to the social-cultural underpinnings of the popularity of alternative medicine, there are several psychological issues that are critical to its growth. One of the most critical is the placebo effect, which is a well-established observation in medicine.^[104] Related to it are similar psychological effects such as the will to believe,^[101] cognitive biases that help maintain self-esteem and promote harmonious social functioning,^[101] and the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy.^[101]

Patients can also be averse to the painful, unpleasant, and sometimes dangerous side effects of biomedical treatments. Treatments for severe diseases such as cancer and HIV infection have well-known, significant side effects. Even low-risk medications such as antibiotics can potentially cause life-threatening anaphylactic reactions in a very few individuals. More commonly, many medications may cause minor but bothersome symptoms such as cough or upset stomach. In all of these cases, patients may be seeking out alternative treatments to avoid the adverse effects of conventional treatments.^{[101] [103]}

Its popularity may be related to other factors. In an interview with Edzard Ernst, *The Independent* wrote:

"Why is it so popular, then? Ernst blames the providers, customers and the doctors whose neglect, he says, has created the opening into which alternative therapists have stepped. "People are told lies. There are 40 million websites and 39.9 million tell lies, sometimes outrageous lies. They mislead cancer patients, who are encouraged not only to pay their last penny but to be treated with something that shortens their lives. "At the same time, people are gullible. It needs gullibility for the industry to succeed. It doesn't make me popular with the public, but it's the truth."^[105]

Academic resources

- Journal of alternative and complementary medicine
- Knowledge and Research Center for Alternative Medicines: Cochrane and alternative medicine, see: <http://www.vifab.dk/uk/cochrane+and+alternative+medicine>

See also

- Index of alternative medicine articles
- History of alternative medicine
- Program for Evaluating Complementary Medicine
- Alternative cancer treatments
- List of branches of alternative medicine
- Criticism of medicine
- Traditional medicine
- Health freedom movement
- Shakoor v Situ
- Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine
- Home remedy

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Further reading

World Health Organization publication

- WHO Global Atlas of Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine (<http://apps.who.int/bookorders/anglais/detart1.jsp?sesslan=1&codlan=1&codcol=15&codcch=614>)

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- Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine (SRAM) (<http://www.sram.org/index.html>)
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External links

- The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (<http://nccam.nih.gov/>): U.S. National Institutes of Health
- The Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine (<http://www.cancer.gov/cam/>): U.S. National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health
- Knowledge and Research Center for Alternative Medicine (<http://www.vifab.dk/uk>): Denmark, the Ministry of the Interior and Health
- Guidelines For Using Complementary and Alternative Methods (http://www.cancer.org/docroot/eto/content/eto_5_3x_guidelines_for_using_complementary_and_alternative_methods.asp): from the American Cancer Society
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine Index (<http://www.umm.edu/altmed/>): from the University of Maryland Medical Center
- Integrative Medicine Podcasts and Handouts (<http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/integrative/modules>): Teaching modules from the University of Wisconsin Integrative Medicine Program
- "Alternative Medicine" (<http://www.open2.net/alternativemedicine/index.html>): A BBC/Open University television series that examines the evidence scientifically
- "Complementary and alternative medicine: What is it?" (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alternative-medicine/PN00001>): from the Mayo Clinic
- Natural Standard Research Collaboration (<http://www.naturalstandard.com/>)
- A Different Way to Heal? (<http://www.pbs.org/saf/1210/index.html>) and Videos (<http://www.pbs.org/saf/1210/video/watchonline.htm>): from PBS and Scientific American Frontiers

- Who Gets to Validate Alternative Medicine? (http://www.pbs.org/kcet/closetotruth/explore/show_11.html): from PBS

Criticism

- Davis, Adam Brooke. "A Few Words About Folk Medicine/" (<http://missourifolkloresociety.truman.edu/remedy.html>) Folklorist argues against uncritical use of traditional healing practices, especially by non-members of the cultures which generate the traditions
 - What is Complementary and Alternative Medicine? (<http://www.theness.com/what-is-complementary-and-alternative-medicine/>) - Steven Novella, MD
 - "Alternative" health practice (<http://www.skepdic.com/althealth.html>) - Skeptic's Dictionary
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 - *Healing, Hype, or Harm? A Critical Analysis of Complementary or Alternative Medicine*, by Edzard Ernst (Editor) (2008), reviewed in *Metapsychology*. (http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=4690&cn=452)
 - What's the harm? (<http://whatstheharm.net/>) Website listing cases of people harmed by various alternative treatments.
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Energy medicine

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| Energy therapy[1] |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acupuncture • Energy (esotericism) • Polarity therapy • Reiki • Spiritual healing • Therapeutic touch |
| NCCAM classifications |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alternative Medical Systems 2. Mind-Body Intervention 3. Biologically Based Therapy 4. Manipulative Methods 5. Energy Therapy |
| See also |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative medicine |

Energy medicine is one of five domains of "complementary and alternative medicine" (CAM) identified by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) in the United States.^[1] Subfields within the practice of "energy medicine" and even practitioners themselves vary wildly in terms of philosophy, approach, and origin.

NCCAM divides the overall approach to the practice of "energy medicine" into two general categories:

- **Putative**, therapies predicated on theorized forms of "energy" (that is, forms of energy that are unconfirmed by scientific investigation)
- **Veritable**, therapies which rely on known forms of energy (that is, forms of energy such as electromagnetism whose existence has been confirmed and proven by scientific investigation)

A particular variety of energy medicine, known as **biofield energy healing**^{[2] [3]} or **spiritual healing**^[4] encompasses a number of techniques by which practitioners intend to treat illness by the manipulation of healing energy. Healing by **contact healing**, **distant healing**, and **therapeutic touch**,^[5] and other practices like **Reiki**^[6] and **Qi Gong**^[7] are such therapies.^{[2] [7] [8] [9] [10]} Unlike faith healing, spiritual healing is not based on the belief that prayer and religious devotion can be used to obtain divine intervention in order to cure illness.

Some claims of those purveying 'energy medicine' devices are known to be fraudulent.^[11] Their marketing practices have drawn law enforcement action in the U.S.^[11] Clinical trials of contact and distant healing, various experiments on *in vitro* samples and reviews (both systematic and selective) have been conducted. Almost all clinical trials indicate that distant healing is no better than a placebo.^{[12] [13]} A Cochrane collaboration systematic review^[14] of the use of *touch therapies* published in 2008 found that half of recipients did and half did not show a reduction in pain. Concerns about a lack of good quality data are frequently reported by trial reviews and individual studies.

Varieties of energy medicine

The term "energy medicine" has been in general use since the founding of the non-profit International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine in the 1980s. Guides are available for practitioners^[15] and other books aim to provide a theoretical basis and evidence for the practice.^[16] Energy medicine often proposes that imbalances in the body's "energy field" result in illness, and that by re-balancing the body's energy-field health can be restored.^[1]

The US-based *National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (NCCAM) distinguishes between complementary and alternative interventions involving actual, well-known forms of physical energy (termed "Veritable Energy Medicine"), and those involving "energies" of unclear nature, as with the Chinese concept of Qi or the Indian concept of prana, which the traditional medicine of each of those cultures invokes without offering definition in any way that offers ready quantifiability and falsifiability (termed "Putative Energy Medicine").

- Types of "Veritable Energy Medicine" include magnet therapy and light therapy, collectively referred to as electromagnetic therapy. Mainstream medicine involving electromagnetic radiation (radiation therapy) is not accounted "electromagnetic therapy" in the terms of complementary medicine. Cymatic therapy uses sound waves.
- Types of "Energy Medicine Involving Putative Energy Fields" include acupuncture, esoteric healing, qi gong, Reiki, Biofield energy healing^[17] and related concepts involving the notion of Qi, the similar idea of Prana in Indian Ayurvedic medicine as well as Therapeutic Touch ("Distance Healing") and distant healing (under which NCCAM counts intercessory prayer).

Alternative therapies that use veritable energy, such as electromagnetic therapy, may still make claims unsupported by evidence. Many claims have been made on behalf of forms of energy poorly understood at the time and associated with religious ideas of "spirit" which later have been commercially exploited as soon as they became differentiated and associated with scientific technology. In the 19th century, electricity and magnetism were in the "borderlands" of science and electrical quackery was rife. In the early 20th century health claims for radio-active materials put lives at risk. In the 2000s, quantum mechanics and grand unification theory provide similar opportunities for commercial exploitation.

Energy healing

Energy healing is based on the belief that a healer is able to channel healing energy into the person seeking help by different methods: hands-on,^[18] hands-off,^[18] and distant^[18] ^[19] (or absent) where the patient and healer are in different locations. The *Brockhampton Guide to Spiritual Healing* describes contact healing in terms of "transfer of ... healing energy" and distant healing based on visualising the patient in perfect health.^[19] Practitioners say that this "healing energy" is sometimes be perceived as a feeling of heat^[18] although this sensation could also derive from the heat radiating from the healers' body.

Energy healing is popular in the nursing professions, which can lend it undeserved respectability.^[20] ^[21] In 2005-2006, the *North American Nursing Diagnosis Association* approved the diagnosis of "energy field disturbance" in patients, reflective of a tendency toward postmodern approaches to nursing care, and away from the scientific, biological approach - a trend that may not provide scientifically reliable care for the patient.^[22]

Believers in these techniques have proposed quantum mystical invocations of non-locality to try to explain distant healing.^[23] They have also proposed that healers act as a channel passing on a kind of bioelectromagnetism which shares similarities to vitalistic pseudosciences such as orgone or qi.^[24] Drew Leder remarked in a paper in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* that such ideas were attempts to "make sense of, interpret, and explore "psi" and distant healing." and that "*such physics-based models are not presented as explanatory but rather as suggestive.*"^[25] Beverly Rubik in an article in the same journal^[26] justified her belief with references to biophysical systems theory, bioelectromagnetics, and chaos theory that provide her with a "*...scientific foundation*

for the biofield...". Writing in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, James Oschman^[27] introduced the concept of healer-sourced electromagnetic fields which change in frequency. Oschman believes that "healing energy" derives from electromagnetic frequencies generated by a medical device or projected from the hands of the healer.

All of these attempted explanations by believers are roundly criticized by physicists and skeptics as being pseudophysics, a branch of pseudoscience which explains magical thinking by using irrelevant jargon from modern physics to exploit scientific illiteracy and impress the unsophisticated.^[28] Indeed, even enthusiastic supporters of energy healing point out that "there are only very tenuous theoretical foundations underlying healing."^[17]

Scientific Investigations

While faith in the supernatural is not the purview of science, claims of reproducible effects for such magical techniques have been subject to scientific investigation. Scientific research into various aspects of biofield therapies is ongoing.

Distant healing

A systematic review of 23 trials of distant healing published in 2000 did not draw definitive conclusions because of the "methodologic limitations of several studies".^[29] In 2001, the lead author of that study, Edzard Ernst published an primer on complementary therapies in cancer care in which he explained that though "about half of these trials suggested that healing is effective" he cautioned that the evidence was "highly conflicting" and that "methodological shortcomings prevented firm conclusions." He concluded that "as long as it is not used as an alternative to effective therapies, spiritual healing should be virtually devoid of risks."^[30] A 2001 randomized clinical trial by the same group found no statistically significant difference on chronic pain between distance healers and "simulated healers" but found an improvement in a health-related quality of life measure in patients.^[31] A 2003 review by Ernst updating previous work concluded that more recent research had shifted the weight of evidence "against the notion that distant healing is more than a placebo." and that "distant healing can be associated with adverse effects."^[32]

Contact healing

A Cochrane collaboration systematic review^[14] of the use of *touch therapies* published in 2008 analysed the results of 24 trials and concluded that the attempted reviewed suffered from "a major limitation: the small number of studies and insufficient data. As a results of inadequate data, the effects of touch therapies cannot be clearly declared."

A selective review of only positive results published by Hodges & Scofield in 1995 recommended on the basis of personal testimony and anecdote that healing as a concept be incorporated into health care programs.^[17] Further research, in a 2001 randomized clinical trial investigated healing distance and face-to-face on the treatment of chronic pain in 120 patients, and, while they could not demonstrate efficacy, they found an increase in the physical functioning component of a quality of life measure in patients who received healing compared to those who received "simulated healing".^[31] A systematic review in 2008 concluded that the evidence for a specific effect of spiritual healing on relieving neuropathic or neuralgic pain was not convincing^[33] and in their 2008 book *Trick or Treatment*, Simon Singh and Edzard Ernst concluded that "spiritual healing is biologically implausible and its effects rely on a placebo response. At best it may offer comfort; at worst it can result in charlatans taking money from patients with serious conditions who require urgent conventional medicine."^[34]

Energy medicine devices

A 2007 investigation by the *Seattle Times* found that thousands of devices claiming to heal via putative or veritable energy, many of them illegal or dangerous, were used in hundreds of venues across the United States. The newspaper described energy medicine as modern-day snake oil, pointing to a lack of regulation and the widespread use of false or unproven marketing claims.^[11] Following this investigation, two such devices, the QXCI or EPTX and the PAP-IMI, were banned in January 2008 by authorities in the USA.^[35]

In February 2009, following a CBC expose featuring an interview with now-fugitive EPTX inventor, Bill Nelson, as his female alter-ego Desiré Dubounet,^[36] the EPTX device was banned by Health Canada from sale in Canada.^[37]

Criticism

There are many, primarily psychological, explanations for positive outcomes after energy therapy such as the placebo effect or cognitive dissonance, and many possible explanations for positive research findings such as experimenter bias or publication bias, all of which must be considered when evaluating claims.

Critics of healing offer primarily two explanations for anecdotes of cures or improvements, relieving any need to appeal to the supernatural.^[38] The first is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, meaning that a genuine improvement or spontaneous remission may have been experienced coincidental with but independent from anything the healer or patient did or said. These patients would have improved just as well even had they done nothing. The second is the placebo effect, through which a person may experience genuine pain relief and other symptomatic alleviation. In this case, the patient genuinely has been helped by the healer, not through any mysterious or numinous function, but by the power of their own belief that they would be healed.^[39] ^[40] In both cases the patient may experience a real reduction in symptoms, though in neither case has anything miraculous or inexplicable occurred. Both cases, however, are strictly limited to the body's natural abilities.

Alternative medicine researcher Edzard Ernst has argued that although an initial review of pre-1999 distant healing trials^[29] had highlighted 57% of trials as showing positive results,^[30] later reviews of non-randomised and randomised clinical trials conducted between 2000 and 2002,^[32] led to the conclusion that "the majority of the rigorous trials do not support the hypothesis that distant healing has specific therapeutic effects." Ernst described the evidence base for healing practices to be "increasingly negative".^[41] Ernst also warned that many of the reviews were under suspicion for fabricated data, lack of transparency and scientific misconduct. He concluded that "Spiritual healing continues to be promoted despite the absence of biological plausibility or convincing clinical evidence ... that these methods work therapeutically and plenty to demonstrate that they do not."^[41]

See also

- Electrotherapy
- Energy field disturbance
- List of branches of alternative medicine
- Radionics

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External links

- NIH Energy medicine: overview. (<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/backgrounds/energymed.htm>)
- The International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine (<http://www.issseem.org>)
- Miracle Machines: The 21st-Century Snake Oil (<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/medicaldevices/>): a *Seattle Times* series on fraudulent energy medicine devices
- Dedicated To Uncovering The EPTX / SCIO / LIFE System Scam (<http://epfx.blogspot.com/>)

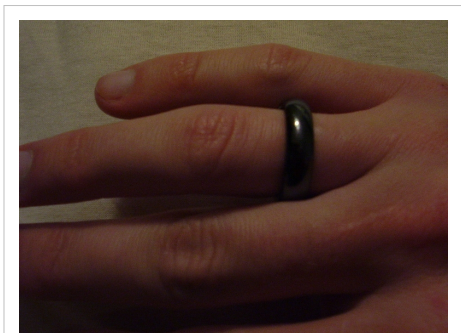
Magnet therapy

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|--|
| Energy therapy[1] |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acupuncture • Energy (esotericism) • Polarity therapy • Reiki • Spiritual healing • Therapeutic touch |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative medicine |

Magnet therapy, **magnetic therapy**, or **magnotherapy** is an alternative medicine practice involving the use of static magnetic fields. Practitioners claim that subjecting certain parts of the body to magnetostatic fields produced by permanent magnets has beneficial health effects. Magnet therapy is considered pseudoscientific due to both physical and biological implausibility, as well as a lack of any established effect on health or healing.^{[1] [2] [3]} Although hemoglobin, the blood protein that carries oxygen, is weakly diamagnetic and is repulsed by magnetic fields, the magnets used in magnetic therapy are many orders of magnitude too weak to have any measurable effect on blood flow.^[4]

Description

Magnet therapy is the application of the magnetic field of electromagnetic devices or permanent static magnets to the body for purported health benefits. These benefits may be specific, as in the case of wound healing, or more general, as for increased energy and vitality. In the latter case, malaise is sometimes described as "Magnetic Field Deficiency Syndrome".^[5] Some practitioners assign different effects based on the orientation of the magnet; under the laws of physics, magnetic poles are symmetric.^{[6] [7]} Products include magnetic bracelets and jewelry; magnetic straps for wrists, ankles, knees, and the back; shoe insoles; mattresses; magnetic blankets (blankets with magnets woven into the material); magnetic creams; magnetic supplements;^[8] and water that has been "magnetized". Application is usually performed by the patient.^[9]



Magnetite ring.

Safety and efficacy

These devices are generally considered safe in themselves, though there can be significant financial and opportunity costs to magnet therapy, especially when treatment or diagnosis are avoided or delayed.^{[9] [10] [11]}

Perhaps the most common suggested mechanism is that magnets might improve blood flow in underlying tissues. The field surrounding magnet therapy devices is far too weak and falls off with distance far too quickly to appreciably affect hemoglobin, other blood components, muscle tissue, bones, blood vessels, or organs.^{[1] [12]} A 1991 study on humans of static field strengths up to 1 T found no effect on local blood flow.^{[4] [13]} Tissue oxygenation is similarly unaffected.^[12] Some practitioners claim that the magnets can restore the body's theorized "electromagnetic energy balance", but no such balance is medically recognized. Even in the magnetic fields used in magnetic resonance imaging, which are many times stronger, none of the claimed effects are observed.^[14]

Several studies have been conducted in recent years to investigate what, if any, role static magnetic fields may play in health and healing. Unbiased studies of magnetic therapy are problematic, since magnetisation can be easily detected, for instance, by the attraction forces on ferrous (iron-containing) objects; because of this, effective blinding of studies (where neither patients nor assessors know who is receiving treatment versus placebo) is difficult.^[15] Incomplete or insufficient blinding tends to exaggerate treatment effects, particularly where any such effects are small.^[16] Health claims such as longevity and cancer treatment are implausible and unsupported by any research.^[11] ^[12] More mundane health claims, most commonly pain relief, also lack any credible proposed mechanism, and clinical research is not promising.^{[9] [10] [17]}

Effects of magnet therapy on pain relief beyond non-specific placebo response have not been adequately demonstrated. A 2008 systematic review of magnet therapy for all indications found no evidence of an effect for pain relief, with the possible exception of osteoarthritis.^[10] It reported that small sample sizes, inadequate randomization, and difficulty with allocation concealment all tend to bias studies positively and limit the strength of any conclusions. In 2009 the results of a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled crossover trial on the use of magnetic wrist straps (a leather strap with a magnetic insert) for osteoarthritis were published, addressing a gap in the earlier systematic review. This trial showed that magnetic wrist straps are ineffective in the management of pain, stiffness and physical function in osteoarthritis. The authors concluded that "*[r]eported benefits are most likely attributable to non-specific placebo effects*".^{[18] [19]}

Recent experiments at MIT have demonstrated the effects of transcranial magnetic stimulation on moral thinking.^[20]

Reception

The worldwide magnet therapy industry totals sales of over a billion dollars per year,^{[11] [12]} including \$300 million dollars per year in the United States alone.^[15]

A 2002 U.S. National Science Foundation report on public attitudes and understanding of science noted that magnet therapy is "not at all scientific."^[21] A number of vendors make unsupported claims about magnet therapy by using pseudoscientific and new-age language. Such claims are unsupported by the results of scientific and clinical studies.^[17]

Legal regulations

Marketing of any therapy as effective treatment for any condition is heavily restricted by law in many jurisdictions unless all such claims are scientifically validated. In the United States, for example, U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations prohibit marketing any magnet therapy product using medical claims, as such claims are unfounded.^[22]

See also

- Bioelectromagnetics
- Electrical devices in alternative medicine
- Franz Mesmer
- Magnetic water treatment
- Pseudoscience
- Quackery
- Rife machine
- Hologram therapy

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- Magnet therapy (<http://skepdic.com/magnetic.html>) in the Skeptic's Dictionary by Robert Todd Carroll
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- Magnet Therapy: A Skeptical View (<http://www.quackwatch.org/04ConsumerEducation/QA/magnet.html>) by Stephen Barrett — Quackwatch

Vibrational medicine

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|--|
| Energy therapy[1] |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acupuncture • Energy (esotericism) • Polarity therapy • Reiki • Spiritual healing • Therapeutic touch |
| NCCAM classifications |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alternative Medical Systems 2. Mind-Body Intervention 3. Biologically Based Therapy 4. Manipulative Methods 5. Energy Therapy |
| See also |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative medicine |

Vibrational medicine is an alternative therapy based on the belief that illness is caused by energy imbalances.

The concept is based on the premise that human bodies are made up of interconnected fields of putative (not empirically observable) energy and that when a human body is not well that it is the result of one or more of these fields of energy being unbalanced^{[1] [2]} and that the re-balancing of these esoteric energies will help to re-establish a person's good health. Proponents hypothesize that disease within the physical body occurs at the cellular and bimolecular levels. In vibrational medicine, healing is said to extend from the bimolecular level to the cellular and finally, to the anatomical. According to Hwaa Irfan, praying to Allah can help raise the vibration from negative to positive.^[3]

Reputation and efficacy

There is no scientific evidence that the energy fields that vibrational medicine is based upon exist, and therefore vibrational medicine is generally viewed as pseudoscience. It is not recognized in medical academia and has been described as "the weirdest of New Age therapies".^[4]

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External links

- The International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine (<http://www.issseem.org/>)
 - NIH Energy medicine: overview (<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/backgrounds/energymed.htm>)
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