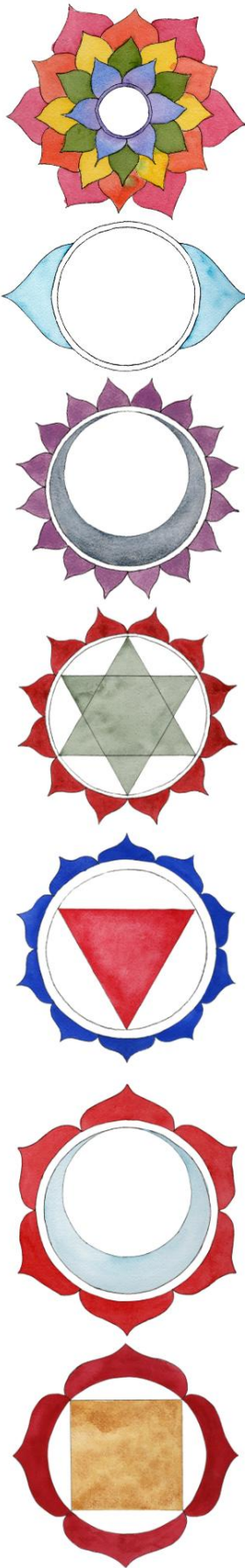


THE
RADIANT
SELF



Using the Chakras as a
Guide to Self-Mastery

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Introduction

We are going on a pilgrimage, an inner pilgrimage to the seven holy temples of the Self. These temples serve as doorways into a deeper experience of ourselves. We can view them as “woo-woo” with no basis in reality, like a gimmick to get people to join a cult. Although, if you are reading this, I doubt that you fall into that category.

Or, we can view the chakras as an internal map guiding us to ultimate freedom.

What does ultimate freedom mean in Yoga?

Walking the bridge between Western and Eastern. Many people have tried this bridge but we lose something in the transition. Instead of the strength of culture, we end up watering down the knowledge in the desire to make things palatable for a mind that exists in a different cultural frame.

This work aims to give the reader a personal experience through an ancient framework. It does come from the perspective of a white woman born and raised in the West who understands her cultural and conceptual limitations. Hopefully this work is a distillation rather than watered down.

In the West, we have our own ideas about the chakras. They are seen and viewed as psycho-emotional energy centers. Many practitioners in the New Age and Metaphysical fields use all manner of tools to “clear” these “clogged” or “clouded” energy centers or set them “spinning in the right direction.”

Have we all been doing it wrong then?

Yes and no.

The no is that there are as many ways to experience the body as there are people who have lived in bodies. Each of us has a different way of understanding our personal experience and our communication is diverse. To say that a chakra is blocked could mean that we are stuck and unable to enter this holy temple within. It could mean that we are unable or unwilling to look at what keeps us from viewing the sacred parts of our experience.

While the colors that we normally associate with the chakras, ROYGBIV from bottom to top, seem to be an invention of the West in the 1900s, it does not negate the experiences of the people who initially saw those colors. The reason that so many of us “see” those colors today is because we expect to see them, that part of the experience has been dictated to us.

If the Western understanding works for us, we do not need to leave it behind. We can, however, develop a deeper understanding and honor the culture that gave us this beautiful methodology for knowing ourselves and awakening our spiritual selves. If it helps, we can think of the Western chakra system as a basic or superficial understanding.

The chakras pronounced “chuh-kruhs” and written *cakras* originate in Hindu philosophy. They are first written about in the Vedas but are suspected to be much older, following an oral tradition that may predate the Aryan invasion of the subcontinent of India.

In 1577, Swami Purananda Yati wrote a text called the *Sat Cakra Nirupana*. This text is seen as the definitive text on the chakras. In 1919, Sir John Woodroffe translated this text into English and called it *Serpent Power*. The *Sat Cakra Nirupana* teaches that the chakras are holy cities within the body. As we meditate upon each energy center, we make an inner pilgrimage which leads us to happiness and joy. These seven inner temples comprise an odyssey to the embodied connection with the transcendental self.

If these last few paragraphs seem dense with information, they are. The purpose of this book is to guide you through a practice of Self-realization, or that embodied connection to your transcendental self. Writing a treatise on the history of Indian texts and their relationship to Western understandings of Eastern concepts is another task for another time. Maybe we can read it together in the future. For now, let us understand that the chakras are a complex subject, and the concepts and teachings originate from India and Hindu philosophy. What comes next is personal.

Navigating this Book

It is my great privilege to bring you this book, started in 2021 as a basic 7-page handout for an online Chakra Yoga series, blooming to a larger handout for the Chakra Yoga Retreats that I lead with Valeria Soares in Yachats, OR. The origins reach further back in my history, from my first Yoga class in 1994, to my Yoga Teacher Training in 2005, to every Yoga teacher under whom I studied. Some of the information in this book comes from ancient texts to studies I have done with teachers along my path. The bulk, like keywords, affirmations, mudrās, practices, and balancing projects were born from my meditation practice. I visited those holy cities and found precious teachings that I want to share with you.

Is there more? Absolutely! Am I an expert on chakras? No way!! But I do think my 31+ years of practicing and 21+ years of teaching gives me a perspective worth sharing. You probably do too, since you are here.

I invite you to set aside what you know and what you think you know to try on a different perspective. Just like any journey, you will have moments of ease, beautiful vistas, boredom, and discontent. I can tell you from the number of times this butt has crossed the United States in a car that each journey has its highlights and lowlights. The only sketchy places will be those of your own devising.

If you stick with it, the destination is well worth the striving. At the end of the line is the embodied wholeness you have been seeking.

You will not find the Hindu deity associations in this text. While I love this information and have my own experience, it feels inauthentic to include it, especially since I am not Hindu. This should not stop you from continued explorations. Harish Johari has an excellent book with illustrations about the chakras which includes the deities and so much more.

Each chapter is a chakra. There is no final chapter to summarize the book. That is up to you to write and to live.

At the beginning of each chapter, you will find an image of the chakra. I have tried to stay as close to the traditional image as possible. My vermilion might be more of a scarlet, my yellow a little golden, such is perspective. As already mentioned, the gods and goddesses are missing, as are images of animals (you would not want to see my drawings of those anyway).

You will find the English chakra name, the Devanāgarī (deh-vah-nah-gah-ree), “divine script,” and the Sanskrit (sahn-skriht) transliteration. Also included is the pronunciation, to be read literally, try and read them aloud as you go, and the generally accepted translations of the word. While not required for understanding the chakras, the Sanskrit words honor the origins and the tradition of Yoga.

For me, using Sanskrit is a doorway to the sacred experience of Yoga. Yes, the physicality of Yoga is wonderful, but there is so much more to the practice. I want to live in the “so much

more” of my Yoga practice. Using the ancient language of Yoga links us through time to the practitioners of Yoga. They are like words that jump off the page and find their life and expression within me.

Following the Sanskrit are seven key words. These words are meant to be a doorway into the experience of the chakra. You can use these words to help you build a connection to the energy center. Key words also help in developing intentions, visualizations, and physical sensations to transport you to each holy city within.

I have included the traditional aspects associated with each chakra, like the basic location, sense, etc. This leads to a write up of the chakra. There is basic information as well as things that others do not always include when speaking or teaching about the chakras. Think of this as information to explore and expand while you are beginning the process of exploring your own chakras.

Following the write up, there is a chart, which requires a little introduction:

Vṛtti (Constriction)	Bhāvanā (Opposite)	Practice
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Vṛtti (vrrih-tee) means a vortex, or a whirlpool, an unending circular activity of the mind. It is a wave within the mind that causes a disturbance. The goal of Yoga, according to Patañjali (author of the Yoga Sūtras) is to still the waves of the mind and in the stillness experience the wholeness characterized by union, or absorption, with the Divine. Sounds lovely! In the case of these tables, the vṛttis referred to are the ones keeping a practitioner in a clouded or unbalanced state. I suggest using the chart as a reference point (they can also be found at the back of the book for easy access) for what you are feeling in the moment.

Bhāvanā (baah-vah-naah) is the opposite, which brings freedom. There is a whole chapter on *bhāvanā* in my first book, *Awakening Your Inner Radiance with LifeForce Yoga*, if you would like to delve into the practice a bit more. For the sake of this work, according to Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras when experiencing a constriction, cultivate the opposite. This is not Monty Python’s “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life,” it may be the first instance of cognitive behavioral therapy. Whatever the case may be, cultivating the opposite is redirecting the mind. It is taking control of the inner narrative and personal story. Everyone wants control in their lives, some do it by trying to control others, which never works, and others do it by trying to control themselves. My personal path includes a lot of mental redirection and working to control my thoughts to create peace in the world. Face it, the only peace we can know is personal and when there are enough people with peace of mind, the world will know peace.

After the suggested *bhāvanā* are suggested practices. Some are from Yoga, and some are not. If a pose, or *mudrā* (moo-drah) “hand gesture,” or breath is suggested, you will find it in the section.

The releasing constrictions section is a list of things you can do that is different from the

chart. This includes the practical to the woo-woo (crystals and oils). Do what you want, I am doing my best to give you the best support. This list is by no means complete and you may find yourself adding things from other books or what you learn along the way.

The affirmations that follow are perhaps what gave birth to this book. I wanted to lead a Chakra Yoga series, so I started with some meditation. My notes from my meditations turned into key words, which turned into papers covering one wall of our tiny bedroom in Sodaville, OR. I started painting and even working on a deck of cards, which has yet to see the light of day (fingers crossed for 2026). I wanted to give people an opportunity to absorb the key principles of the chakras through affirmation rather than discourse. There is a list of seven because some may fit for you and some may not. Use the space to write down more when they come to you.

The chakra balancing projects were Valeria's idea. She said she wanted our retreat participants to have something tangible to do with the chakras. Sometimes all it takes is a simple statement. The light bulb started turning on and I had all seven in what seems like moments. I hope you find them fun and engaging. These projects are another way to experience the chakras beyond me telling you what they are.

A guided meditation is included with each chakra. It is a script, which does not make it easy to meditate, but you get the idea. By the end of November, these scripts will all be recorded and available on streaming platforms for you. I encourage you to read them into your phone's voice recorder and meditate with them. Or if you are a Yoga teacher, read them in class!

You are going to find a lot from Patañjali in this book. There is not much to say about him, other than he wrote the Yoga Sūtras down around 200 B.C.E – 200 C.E. The assumption is that this was an oral tradition. The only other thing he seems to have written (or at least receives credit) is a text on Sanskrit grammar. The Yoga Sūtras was my doorway into the philosophy of Yoga. The translations in this book are my own.

The practices for each chakra include breathwork, hand gestures, and postures. I have noted when a breathing practice is considered a *prāṇāyama* (prah-nah-yah-mah), meaning it can be found in various older yogic texts, or something that is an invention of the West. The pictures come from my first book, *Awakening Your Inner Radiance with LifeForce Yoga*. When a practice is repeated, I have copied and pasted the practice with a slight adjustment for the chakra. I wanted to save you the time of flipping through pages to find the directions again.

The hand gestures, *mudrās*, are ones I have used to connect with, energize, balance, or release a chakra. You will find simple directions and a picture of the *mudrā*. Use these to enhance your meditation or even in Yoga poses. I have a book about the *mudrās* in first draft stages, which will hopefully grace your bookshelf soon.

There is a list of Yoga poses with some basic instructions. This is not a Yoga *Āsana* (ah-sah-nah) Manual and not intended to teach you how to do the postures. There are number of

wonderful books about Yoga Poses, like *Yoga: The Practice and Myth of Sacred Geometry* by Rama Jyoti Vernon. If you have never done Yoga, thank you for picking up my book, go to a Yoga class with a certified Yoga instructor. I would not want you to get hurt because my instructions were lacking. As with any exercise, you will want to consult with a doctor before taking it on.

One of the hallmarks of these Yoga pose instructions is the inclusion of directions for back breathing as taught to me by Rama Jyoti Vernon. It is the way I practice the poses and teach the poses. My first retreat with Rama was a revelation. I had been struggling with teaching the breath in my classes for about a week because of an experience I had that was contrary to my teachings. I was leading a breath sensing centering practice when my mind put forth the statement “we should be lengthening the spine when we exhale instead of relaxing because muscles are engaging and we are emptying.” I got so confused, I did not know how to lead the breath anymore. I fumbled my way through classes not sure what to do with this information.

I went to the In-Town Retreat with Rama, as it was billed, and she led us through the most amazing Om. Then she led us through some breathwork, which was the back breathing. Inhaling the breath into the back body and exhaling to lengthen the spine and engage muscles (if we are still engaging them). It was the answer I had been looking for and I have not looked back since. In this book I call the back breathing Therapeutic Back Breathing to give a sense of the difference. This is of my own devising after discovering it helps Yoga students to understand a little better. You will see these instructions in the text.

After the Yoga there are self-inquiry questions. *Svādhyāya* (svaahd-yaah-yah) is the practice of studying sacred scriptures and studying the self. When you spend time in reflection after a Yoga pose, you are practicing self-inquiry. These are about knowing and understanding yourself better. This is the kind of book you are supposed to write in. Grab your markers, pens, colored pencils, stickers, Washi tape, and anything else you use to make these pages your own. There is no right way to answer these questions and you may find it changes over time. 95% of the paintings were created, by me, for this book.

Finally, from the bottom of my heart I thank you for picking up my book. Please excuse any typos, misspellings, and tense changes as I self-published. I did get copy editing help from AI towards the beginning of the editing process but became more and more anti-AI after I had a deadline and was thus unable to secure a copy editor in time. Hopefully those errors are few and far between and not too jarring for you, dear reader. Enjoy!

At this point, feel free to get started. There are a couple of more things I want to share with you, and they may help your understanding and absorption of the material. They are not key to understanding the text.

Special Note:

While writing this book, I took into accessibility and trauma-informed into account, as I try to

do with all my efforts. However, the Yoga poses and mudrā are basic in their approach and serve more as examples than a set practice and are therefore not as accessible as they could be (I was cognizant of the length of this book).

The meditations and rest and integration practices are on a spectrum of trauma-informed, meaning they do contain words that may trigger someone. If at any point you feel triggered by something you have read, go back to some of the Root Chakra practices to ground yourself. Skip over what does not work for you. Every Yoga practice is not for everybody. If you are working with a professional, bring the triggering practice with you to your next session, there might be much to learn for both of you.

My intention is always empowerment. As the saying goes, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” I chose to make my language inclusive and left out as many examples, beyond the generic, to help you find your way to specifics that work for you. If you find places where the language was not inclusive, please feel free to reach out to me. I would rather learn and grow than continue to unconsciously cause harm. Let me offer my apologies for any ignorance.

Chakra System

The chakra means “wheel” or “disc” and are sometimes called “energy centers.” Using energy center is more accessible; we understand the energy of love resides at our heart centers. The chakras sit in the energy body, which is a concept not built into the Western Newtonian understanding of the world. The Newtonian/Scientific Method of knowing the world is based on what we can see. But there are other ways of knowing and there are other ways of understanding the world beyond our own. Belief in God, a Higher Power, or the Divine is a perfect example of another way of knowing. We call this faith.

Based on archaeological findings, Yoga is at least 5,000 years old, and likely older. In India, Yoga is referred to as a science, because of the longevity of the practice. It does have a rather large sample size. The belief in an energy body is primary to understanding the chakras from an Eastern perspective. These spinning vortices are beyond the ability of our eyes to perceive, which does not mean we cannot feel nor experience them.

The seven main chakras sit along the spine. Often pictured from the front of the body, they are internal. They do spin, with the first two spinning counterclockwise, and the rest spinning clockwise.

The chakras are connected to the Prāṇā Body, energy body. Prāṇā (prah-nah) means “energy” or “life force.” Rama defined it as “bringing forth the eternal cosmic vibration.” Without bogging us down with details, the Prāṇā Body is one of five bodies that surround our transcendental self (a write up of this can be found in *Awakening Your Inner Radiance with LifeForce Yoga* by Rose Kress). In some images the chakra system looks like the caduceus without the wings. They rest along *suṣumnā nāḍī* (suh-shuhm-naah naah-dee), meaning “most gracious river.” The nāḍīs are the channels, like hollow tubes, through which the prāṇā travels in our bodies. *Suṣumnā nāḍī* is the central channel which is correlated with the spinal column. It begins at the center of the tailbone and extends to the crown of the head.



Alongside *suṣumnā nāḍī* are *idā* (ee-daah) and *pingalā* (pihn-gah-laah) nāḍī, meaning “comfort” and “tawny,” *Idā* is the channel to the left of the spine. It begins on the left side of the first chakra at the tailbone and ends in the left nostril. This nāḍī is connected to lunar energy, meaning it is quiet, calm, creative, and at rest. We use left nostril breathing to calm ourselves. *Pingalā nāḍī* is the channel to the right of the spine. It begins at the right side of the first chakra at the tailbone and ends at the right nostril. This nāḍī is connected to solar energy, making it energized, focused, and moving. These nāḍīs are normally straight, but when we start doing things with our energy bodies, they cross and form the caduceus like shape. Where they cross is a chakra.

The snake imagery is important because *kundalinī* (koon-dah-lih-nee) is the serpent coiled at the base of the spine. The practice of Yoga awakens this energy, and it moves along the spine towards the crown of the head where this creative essence awakens a radical shift in

the consciousness and welcomes the Divine nectar. When this happens, we are awake and aware, at all times, of our connection with the Divine. This is beyond the logical understanding of this connection; it is the felt experience. We do not need to force the movement of this energy, it will happen on its own, when we are ready. If we do force it, as the energy moves it will awaken all the things which we have not resolved within our chakras. This can be very painful as can anything when we force it. If, instead, we do the work the movement of the serpent energy will be like the passing of a light breeze.