



Excerpt

THE CHAKRAS

An Authoritative Edition of the Groundbreaking Classic

By C. W. Leadbeater

From the Foreword by Anodea Judith: Blazing the Chakra Trail

It was forty years ago that I first discovered the word *chakra*. I remember saying it aloud several times, letting it roll off my tongue as if I could taste it. I felt a shot of energy throughout my body, knowing that I had found a valuable key to an immense treasure. Little did I realize that it was to become my life's work to revive this ancient system as a map for the new millennium.

I turned to research. There were very few books on the chakras at that time. *Serpent Power*, Arthur Avalon's translation of the ancient texts published in 1919, was one of the few, but it required one's deepest scholastic concentration and a Sanskrit dictionary just to read a few pages. It was a valuable text for those with passionate interest, but not for the general public.

C. W. Leadbeater's book, *The Chakras*, became the classic. I devoured this book, and even today my copy is bound together with paper clips and rubber bands, well worn and thoroughly digested. My heart leaps whenever I see a copy of my own books looking like this—I'm sure Leadbeater would spin his chakras in the grave were he to see my dog-eared copy of his.

I was no stranger to theosophy, having studied everything metaphysical from as young as I could remember. But even forty years ago, such texts were still obscure. They weren't discussed as common parlance at dinner parties. We who read them were met with raised eyebrows, as if we hadn't yet matured into the "real" world of things you could measure and prove. C. W. Leadbeater, back in 1927, was clearly ahead of his time, a pioneer in the field of subtle energies.

Today we have a vastly different cultural landscape. We are undergoing an extensive spiritual revolution and cultural evolution, opening the doors to every spiritual tradition

that has been known or studied. Books that deal with metaphysics, spirituality, and our inner psychology dominate the market. Workshops abound for adult education in self-help and inner exploration. Yoga centers blossom across the land the way Christian churches did in the early centuries of the Common Era. Meditation is no longer the province of monks in a remote monastery but a common practice in everyday life, for everyone from housewives to corporate employees. Some schools employ the concept of taking “time in” rather than “time out” when children get too rambunctious.

We are heading into a new era, one in which humanity is being initiated into a higher state of being. That higher state is not a fairy-tale transformation that happens with the wave of a wand but a slow metamorphosis in how we understand the life force: how it is organized, how it flows through us, what it means, and how best to utilize it.

One aspect of this initiation is to fully *occupy* our bodies and live in the center of our core—our sacred center—the vertical column of energy that rises from base to crown. This *axis mundi*, which Leadbeater calls the “axis of creation” or “rod of Meru,” is our personal connection between heaven and earth. In ancient myths, it is said that doomsday will approach as heaven and earth become disconnected. In a world where doomsday is precariously close, we are called to this core connection as a way of healing, not only ourselves, but also our fractured world in which spirituality and everyday life have become dangerously dissociated.

The core is common to all living things— every blade of grass, every tree, every person’s vertical channel, including the core of our legs, arms, fingers, and toes. To come from our core is to occupy the most direct access to Source that we have: the Source within, aligned between heaven and earth.

The chakras exist as sacred centers strung like jewels along the axis of our vertical core. When the chakras are aligned, we *become* that connection between heaven and earth. From this place we are capable of co-creating heaven *on* earth, from a place of consciousness, wisdom, sensitivity, and compassion. Perhaps with this connection intact, we have a means to avert doomsday and continue the evolutionary experiment into its potential glory.

Few people actually live in their core. Because it is the source of vital, divine energy, we learn at any cost to protect it as we grow up through the twists and turns of childhood. We create necessary defenses, but they come with a cost. Later, our vital life energy becomes more engaged with those defenses than with the precious core we were trying to protect! We no longer feel our aliveness, our vitality, our *raison d’etre*. The chakra system brings us back to our core.

Energy Psychology is a rapidly growing field in mental health, combining knowledge of chakras, meridians, and other subtle energies to heal and transform. Just as we didn't know how germs caused illness before the invention of the microscope (and even then doctors resisted the knowledge, leading to countless unnecessary deaths), we are now discovering that subtle energies contribute to illness and wellness in ways we are just beginning to see. Gradually, new instruments are being developed, such as Kirlian photography, that help us to view these energies and correlate data. In time, there will be more, and the influence of subtle energies will become proven and accepted. Until then, we rely on clairvoyants who can see and sense these energies to guide us in our quest.

Leadbeater was among the first to publish a clairvoyant view of the chakras. For me it was a revelation that such things could be seen without instruments, through the development of our psychic faculties. As a result of his inspiration, I took training in these techniques to develop my own clairvoyance; and for years I conducted readings at New Age fairs and metaphysical centers, seeing a broad cross section of people and their distribution of energy through their chakras. The result was the material for my own books, especially *Eastern Body, Western Mind*, which explores our inner psychology in terms of the chakras.

As we struggle to come to terms with rising health care costs—and how to pay for them—we must ask the question, “Why are so many people getting sick?” Leadbeater explains in these pages about the important link between vitality and health, how we are nourished by the light of the sun from above and the rising serpent power from the earth. It is the confluence of these two forces above and below that energizes and awakens the chakras. In a world where we remove ourselves from the earth and shield the sun's rays with walls and rooftops, spending the bulk of our time indoors, it is no wonder we are ailing.

The chakras come from the Tantric period of yoga philosophy, circa 500–1000 AD. Tantric spirituality is a weaving of dualities: heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, inner and outer, mind and body. The emphasis is on incorporating everything rather than rejecting any one aspect of reality in favor of another. In this way, the chakras represent seven essential elements of our existence—not that the lower chakras are bad and the upper chakras good, but that each level represents both light and shadow and must be balanced in order for us to be healthy, thriving individuals.

The chakras represent a map for our healing, a profound formula for wholeness and a template for transformation. They describe the soul's architecture; just as we study the bones, muscles, and organs of the body's physical architecture, the chakras enable us to study the subtler energies of the soul. Like the human face, this architecture varies from person to person, yet it has elements common to all.

The elements of the chakras—from bottom to top, *earth, water, fire, air, sound, light, and thought*—describe a spectrum of creation from the physical earth to pure consciousness. The energies of the soul run both ways, in the rising current of liberation that comes about as matter transforms into subtler energies of consciousness, and the descending current of manifestation that begins in thoughts or ideas and gains density as they progress downward into the manifested plane. The chakras are stepping stones along this pathway.

As human beings we need to have both the upward and downward channels available. We need to be able to liberate from limiting or destructive patterns, which is a function of consciousness we call *realization*. To *realize* is to see with “real eyes,” to see what is real, the energy behind the material representation.

We also need to be able to manifest our visions into reality, to actualize our life purpose, and take higher consciousness into its full outward expression to evolve the world around us. The chakra system is a map for that process. It is at best an integrative system, one that can bring us back into wholeness once again.

This book is a manifestation of the subtle energies of the chakras. C. W. Leadbeater began that journey as a trailblazer for the rest of us. *The Chakras* is his treatise, an important work that shines like a beacon, letting us know how much more there is to see and learn in the subtle world. Perhaps that is ultimately the “real” world we need to understand.

—Anodea Judith, PhD

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