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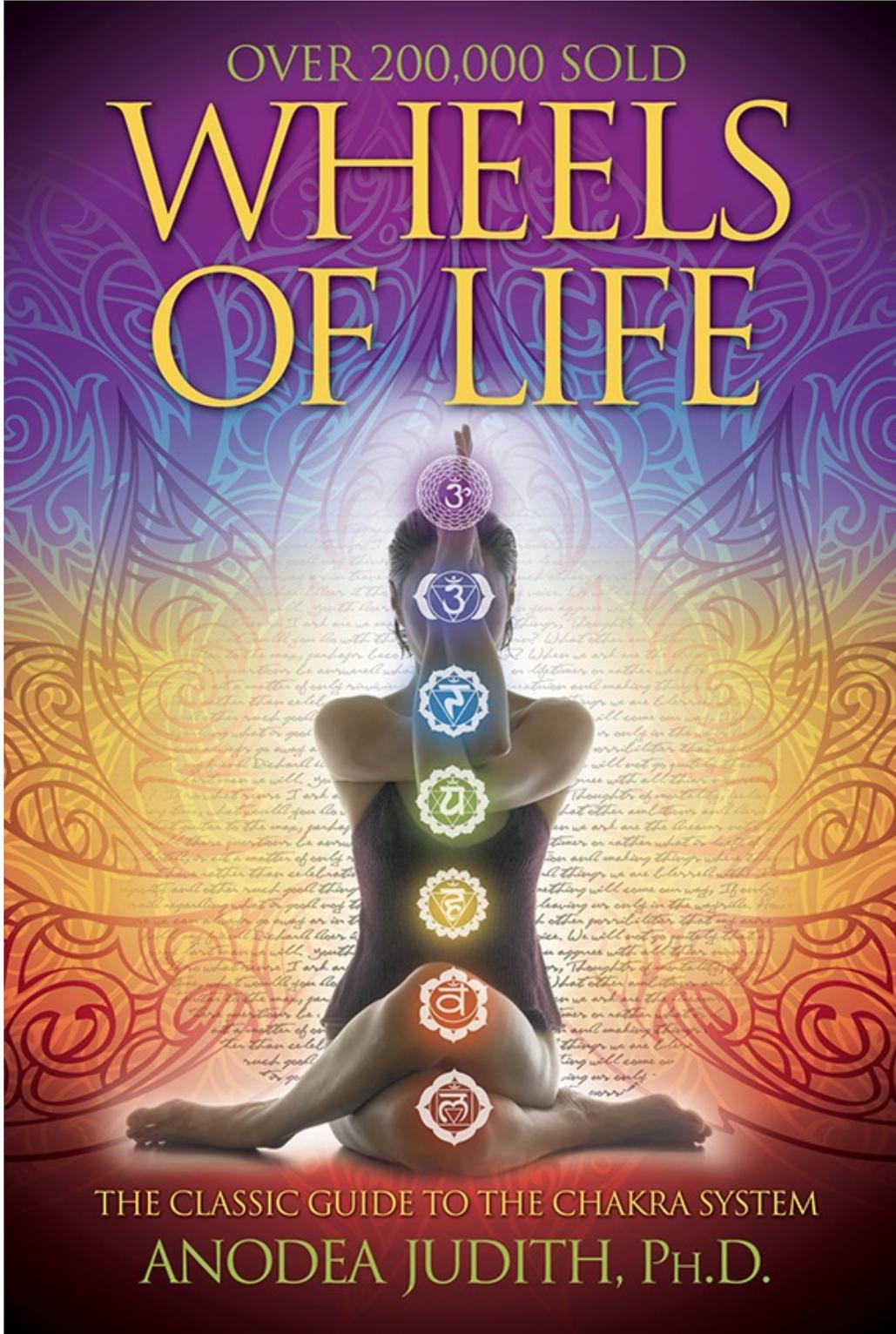
WHEELS OF LIFE



THE CLASSIC GUIDE TO THE CHAKRA SYSTEM
ANODEA JUDITH, Ph.D.

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About the Author

Anodea Judith, Ph.D. is a leading authority on the integration of chakras and therapeutic issues. Somatic therapist, counselor, yoga teacher, and workshop leader, she is the author of *Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self*, and co-author with Selene Vega on *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body, and Spirit through the Chakras*. She holds an M.A. in Clinical Psychology and a Ph.D. in Health and Human Services.

WHEELS OF LIFE

A USER'S GUIDE
TO THE
CHAKRA SYSTEM

ANODEA JUDITH

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FOR MY SON ALEX

Acknowledgments

In the many years in which I have worked with the chakras, there have been numerous memorable people who have crossed my path and shared their wisdom. At the top of that list are the students and clients who have undertaken the daring work of healing and personal growth. Your struggles and triumphs, your questions and comments, have all been a guiding force in my work. May the words in this book help guide you in return.

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I would like to thank Carl Weschcke for publishing this book the first time around before chakras were popular, and the many fine folks at Llewellyn who have been part of this re-Vision: Jim Garrison, Christine Snow, Kimberly Nightingale, and Lynne Menturweck. I would also like to thank Mary Ann Zapalac for artwork, and Carlisle Holland, D. O., Robert Lamb, D. C., and Michael Gandy, L. Ac., for sharing their professional expertise.

Most of all I am grateful to the indelible spirit that keeps us alive and to the Chakra System itself, for being such a profound gateway to the mysteries of life.

It is a great honor to be of service to you all.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

IT HAS NOW BEEN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS since I first discovered the word *chakra*. At that time I rarely found the word in an index or card catalog, yet there are now countless references and scores of New Age books on the subject, not to mention tuning forks, colored candles, incenses, t-shirts, and the usual paraphernalia that embellish any archetypal theme awakening in the collective consciousness. While I am duly flattered by those who credit the first edition of this book as seminal in that trend, I believe it is instead part of a larger cultural thirst for models of integration and wholeness. In short, the Chakra System is an idea whose time has come.

As we begin the third millennium of the current era, we are facing a time unparalleled in human development. Our history books have shown us that the systems we use to organize our lives have an enormous effect on our collective reality. This knowledge makes it imperative to innovate systems that serve us intelligently. As we pass through this particular cusp in history, we must build bridges between past and future, not only creating models that fit new realities, but continually updating old models to keep them viable in a rapidly changing culture. If the Chakra System is going to be meaningful in the twenty-first century, it must reflect the underlying fabric that has always existed, while still having the flexibility to be relevant to the demands of modern life. The ancients created a profound system. We can now marry its wisdom with modern information about the natural world, the body, and the psyche to create an even more effective system.

When I first injected chakra theory with such ideas as *grounding*, or proposed the idea of a downward current of consciousness, some were skeptical. Most interpretations of the chakras focused on transcending our physical reality, portraying it as inferior or degenerate. Life is suffering, we are told, and the transcendent planes are its antidote. If life is suffering and transcendence the antidote, the logic of this equation implies that transcendence is counter to life itself—a view that I seriously question in this book.

I do not believe that we need to sacrifice our zest for life and its enjoyment in order to advance spiritually. Nor do I see spirituality as antithetical to worldly existence, or that spiritual growth requires intense domination and control of our innate biological natures, hence of life itself. I believe this is part of a control paradigm, appropriate to a former age but inappropriate to the current challenges of our time. These challenges require models of integration rather than domination.

Since the early eighties, when I first wrote this book, the collective paradigm has shifted considerably. Emphasis on reclaiming the body and acknowledging the sacredness of Earth has increased exponentially, along with a recognition that matter has an innate spiritual value. We have learned that repression of natural forces creates unpleasant side effects and shadow energies. Ignoring the body creates illness. Devaluing the Earth creates ecological crisis. Repressed sexuality can explode in rape and incest.

It is now time to reclaim what we have lost and integrate it with new frontiers. It becomes both a personal and a cultural imperative to reweave the disparate concepts of East and West, spirit and matter, mind and body. As Marion Woodman said, “Matter without spirit is a corpse. Spirit without matter is a ghost.”¹ *Both describe something that is dead.*

The Tantric philosophies, from which the chakras emerge, are a philosophy of weaving. Their many threads weave a tapestry of reality that is both complex and elegant. Tantra is a philosophy that is both pro-life and pro-spiritual. It weaves spirit and matter back into its original whole, yet continues to move that whole along its spiral of evolution.

It is at this time that we finally have the privilege to weave the knowledge of ancient and modern civilization into an elegant map for the evolutionary journey of consciousness. This book represents a map to that journey. Consider it the user’s guide to the chakras. I suspect there will be many more editions, by many more authors in the future, but this is the current update from my perspective.

So what’s different in this edition? It contains more references to the Tantric teachings, as I have had more time to study them, though I have still tried to keep my words as Western and non-esoteric as possible. I have also revised and shortened it a bit, as so many have told me they felt intimidated by the size of the previous version. Eliminated was the ongoing political rhetoric so important to me in my twenties. Now, in my mid-forties, though my spiritual politics still hold, I prefer to let a system speak for itself. Some of the science has also been updated, as even our models for matter are rapidly changing.

I have tried to retain the original metaphysical flavor of this book, and keep it distinct from my subsequent books. *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body, and Spirit through the Chakras* (written with Selene Vega, 1993) is the workbook that contains the “practice” to this book’s “theory.” It features the daily exercises, both mental and physical, that support personal progress through the Chakra System. My third book, *Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self*, is a look at the psychology of the chakras, their developmental progression, the traumas and abuses that happen to us at each chakra level, and how to heal them. It weaves Western psychology and somatic therapies into the Eastern system of the chakras.

The book you now hold describes the underlying metaphysical theory behind the Chakra System. More than just an assemblage of energy centers located in the body, the chakras reveal a profound mapping of universal principles, intricately nested within each other as progressively transcendent planes of reality. The levels of consciousness that the chakras represent are doorways into these various planes. As these planes are embedded within each other, none can be eliminated from the system and still have it hold together theoretically or experientially. I do not believe that we would be given a system of seven chakras to merely discard the lower three.

This book looks at both outer and inner realities. It looks at the Chakra System as a profound system for spiritual growth, as well as a diagram of the sacred architecture in which we are embedded—the larger structure that holds us. If we are indeed “fashioned in the image of God,” I believe the sacred architecture found in nature is the blueprint for our internal structures as well, both in the body and the psyche. When the bridge is made between our inner and outer worlds, they become seamlessly one, and inner growth is no longer antithetical to outer work in the world. Therefore this book uses many models that are scientific in nature, as a way of illustrating ancient wisdom with modern metaphors.

Tantric scholars and Kundalini gurus often draw a distinction between the chakras as witnessed through Kundalini experiences and the Westernized model of the chakras as a “personal growth system.” Some claim that this distinction is so great that there is no meaningful relationship between the two, using either one to deny the validity of the other. There is without a doubt a marked difference, for example, between having an insight or vision (sixth chakra association) and experiencing the overwhelming inner luminescence associated with a Kundalini awakening. Yet I do not see these experiences as unrelated but existing on a continuum.

I firmly believe that clearing the chakras through understanding their nature, practicing related exercises, and using visualization and meditation, prepares the way for a spiritual opening that is apt to be less tumultuous than is so often the case for Kundalini awakenings. I believe this Westernization is an important step for speaking to the Western mind in a way that is harmonious with the circumstances in which we live, rather than antithetical to it. It gives us a context in which these experiences can occur.

Likewise, there are many who say that the chakras, as vortices in the subtle body, have nothing whatsoever to do with the physical body or the central nerve ganglia emanating from the spinal column, and that a spiritual awakening is not a somatic experience. Because an experience is not *entirely* somatic does not mean that its somatic aspect is negated. Anyone who has witnessed or experienced the physical sensations and spontaneous movements (*kriyas*) that are typical of a Kundalini awakening cannot deny that there is a somatic component. I believe this view is just

more evidence of the divorce between spirit and body that I find to be the primary illusion from which we must awaken.

A man from India came to one of my workshops and told me that he had to come all the way to America to learn about chakras, because it was so esoteric in India that it was “secret knowledge,” barred from anyone with a family and a job. I see “grounding” the chakras as allowing the material to be more accessible to more people. While Eastern gurus might warn that this is dangerous, I have found through my twenty-five years of working with the system that this common sense approach enables many to transform their lives without the dangerous and ungrounded symptoms so often associated with Kundalini. Far from diluting the spiritual base from which the chakras are rooted, this approach enlarges it.

Take your time reading this book. There is much to ponder. Let the chakras become a lens through which you can look at your life and world. The journey is rich and colorful. Let the Rainbow Bridge of the soul unfold before you as you walk your path.

—December, 1998

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1. Lecture given at the “Fabric of the Future” conference, November 7, 1998, Palo Alto, CA.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

ONCE UPON A TIME, WHILE SITTING ON my sheepskin rug in deep meditation, I had a strange experience. I was quietly and consciously counting my breaths when suddenly I found myself outside of my body—looking at another me sitting there in full lotus. No sooner did I realize who I was looking at (though she looked somewhat older) than I saw a book fall into her lap. As it landed, it jarred me back into my body and I looked down and read the title: *The Chakra System* by A. Judith Mull (my name at the time).

That was 1975. I had only recently read the word “chakra” for the first time but it had obviously registered with some significance. I crawled out of my meditation and went to find the passage—a mere paragraph in a book by Ram Dass,² yet I turned almost directly to it. I read the passage several times and felt an immediate swirling of energy in my body—a deep inner churning—like the feeling a detective might have when finding an important clue. It was a feeling of conception, of something new starting to grow. I knew then I was to eventually write this book.

It took many years before the word chakra started appearing in book indexes and card catalogs. Information was scarce, so I was forced (fortunately) to develop my own theories through self-experimentation and the scrutiny of others to whom I taught yoga and administered bodywork. Before long, everything I saw seemed to fall into this neat little pattern of “sevenness”: colors, events, behaviors, days—yet I could find little actual information to correlate my theories.

I gave it up, moved to the country, and began an earnest study of ritual magic—most notably working with the elements: earth, water, fire, and air. My meditations continued, my theories grew, and so did I. I still didn’t have the words I wanted, so instead of writing about chakras, I found myself painting them. The process of visualization helped develop my thinking in a nonlinear way.

Two years later, forced to return to civilization, I found that the use of the word *chakra* had grown. I became part of a consciousness research group and went back to school. I returned to my bodywork practice. I underwent clairvoyant training and discovered others had independently come to see some of the same patterns. I was validated, and with my new-found clairvoyant sight, returned to this work.

Over the past ten years, I have developed these theories from the hundreds of clients I have seen for bodywork, psychic readings, counseling, and teaching. I have delved

into Sanskrit literature, quantum physics, theosophy, magic, physiology, psychology, and personal experience to patch together a coherent system that bridges the old and the new. Both my work and I have undergone many changes.

Today, eleven years later, I finally give up being pregnant. Fully formed or not, this baby has decided to be born. I feel like I'm having septuplets—lots of pushing, long labor, yet impossible to stop once begun.

Each of these seven babies, called chakras, deserves to be a book of its own. I've given them English names—survival, sex, power, love, communication, clairvoyance, and wisdom—yet they go by many names, and most often, by numbers. In this work, however, they are represented as a family, an integral unit, working and growing together. The chapters couldn't possibly approach all there is to say about sex, power, or any of them—only what's relevant to follow branches of this particular family tree, with its roots in the Earth and its leaves in the heavens.

This book is a practical guide to a subject that is normally considered very spiritual. As “spiritual subjects” are so often considered impractical or inaccessible, this book attempts to re-examine the spiritual realms, showing how deeply they are embedded in each and every aspect of our daily lives. It is my belief that people will understand and value their spiritual natures only when it becomes practical to do so. Far more is accomplished when we want to do something than when we think we should.

When times are such that billions of people face the possibility of nuclear disaster, when men and women fear walking the streets at night, when alienation and disorientation are at an all-time high, then spirituality becomes very practical. The search for unifying factors in our daily existence, the search for understanding and direction, and the inevitable pull toward consciousness brings us to a critical evaluation of our spiritual natures. Too pragmatic and scientific to accept things on faith, Western peoples have lost touch with the world of spirit and the sense of unity it can bring. Ancient systems, couched in language and culture so different from ours, are often too alienating for the Western mind.

This book attempts to validate the needs facing us today physically, mentally, and spiritually. It contains theories for the intellectual, art for the visionary, meditations for the ethereal, and exercises for the body. Hopefully, it has something for everyone providing practicality without stifling the more important underlying essence.

To satisfy the Western mind (and my own), I've included some scientific theories, but my own background is not scientific, and I find that when you come right down to it, few people really think that way in their personal lives. For me, discovery of the chakras first came from an intuitive sense, later to grow and join with the rational. I would like to impart this order to the reader as well.

Literature tends to be linear and rational, while the states induced by the chakras require a different mode of consciousness. As a result, the information is presented in a variety of ways. To satisfy the rational mind, I have presented these theories with

concrete scientific metaphors, popular paradigms from the fields of consciousness research and modern therapy techniques. This is the intellectual part. Its purpose is to transmit information and stimulate the thinking process.

To call to the other side of the brain, I have included guided meditations, exercises, artwork and personal anecdotes in hopes of making the chakras come more alive. This is the fun part. Its purpose is to bring the experience of being intuitively connected to the information at hand.

The meditations are written to be read slowly and poetically. I have not included a deep relaxation phase before each meditation for the simple reason that they are boring to read and would take away from the literary impact. However, if you plan to use the meditations yourself, or for a group experience, I strongly suggest taking time to relax the body and prepare yourself for entering slowly into a meditative state. The deep relaxation exercise or grounding meditation outlined in Chapter Two can be used as preparation, or you may wish to use your own technique. The meditations, professionally recorded with a musical background keyed to the chakras, can be obtained through Llewellyn Publications.

The physical exercises are of varying degrees of difficulty. Most of them can be done by the average person. A few, such as the headstand or the chakrasana³, are for more flexible or developed bodies. It is strongly stressed that any physical exercises given in this book be done slowly and carefully, and that you take care not to push or strain muscles, or coerce the body into positions that are painful or uncomfortable in any way. If you experience discomfort, STOP.

If you are previously unfamiliar with chakras, or with metaphysics in general, give yourself time to assimilate each level. The associations are both broad and subtle. It cannot be attacked, like information in other disciplines. The most important thing is to enjoy the exploration. I know I did in writing this book.

—1987

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2. Ram Dass, *The Only Dance There Is*.

3. *Author's Note: These exercises are not featured in the Second Edition.*

PART ONE

EXPLORING THE SYSTEM

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

Time is—

Love is—

Death is—

And the Wheel turns,

And the Wheel turns,

And we are all bound to the Wheel.

And the Sage said:

Lo, that which binds you to the Wheel

Is of your own making,

And the very Wheel

Is of your own making.

And the Wheel turns,

And the Wheel turns,

And we are all bound to the Wheel.

And the Sage said:

Know that we all are the One.

Know that the Wheel is of your own making

Know that the Wheel is of your own making,

And we are all bound to the Wheel.

And the Sage said:

Free yourself from the Wheel.

Know you are the One,

Accept your own work,

Free yourself from the Wheel.

Know that the Wheel is of your own making,

And we are all bound to the Wheel.

And the Sage freed himself from the Wheel,

And became the One,

The immortal God,

Freed from the Wheel,

Freed from illusion,

And knew then why the One had created the Wheel.

And the One became many,

And the One became we,

And we are all bound to the Wheel.

Time is—

Love is—

Death is—
And the Wheel turns,
And the Wheel turns,
And we are all bound to the Wheel.

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CHAPTER 1 AND THE WHEEL TURNS

*We are a circle within a circle . . . With no beginning and never ending.*¹

FROM THE GREAT SPIRAL GALAXIES, thousands of light years across, to the trillions of atoms swirling in a grain of sand, the universe is composed of spinning wheels of energy. Flowers, tree trunks, planets, and people—each is made of tiny wheels turning inside, riding upon the great wheel of the Earth, spinning in its orbit through space. A fundamental building block of nature, the wheel is the circle of life flowing through all aspects of existence. (See [Figure 1.1](#) and [Figure 1.2](#))

At the inner core of each one of us spin seven wheel-like energy centers called chakras. Swirling intersections of vital life forces, each chakra reflects an aspect of consciousness essential to our lives. Together the seven chakras form a profound *formula for wholeness* that integrates mind, body, and spirit. As a complete system, the chakras provide a powerful tool for both personal and planetary growth.

Chakras are organizing centers for the reception, assimilation, and transmission of life energies. Our chakras, as core centers, form the coordinating network of our complicated mind/body system. From instinctual behavior to consciously planned strategies, from emotions to artistic creations, the chakras are the master programs that govern our life, loves, learning, and illumination. As seven vibratory modalities, the chakras form a mythical *Rainbow Bridge*, a connecting channel linking Heaven and Earth, mind and body, spirit and matter, past and future. As we spin through the tumultuous times of our present era, the chakras act as gears turning the spiral of evolution, drawing us ever onward toward the still untapped frontiers of consciousness and its infinite potential.