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## ON “THE THEORY OF THE CIRCULATION OF LIGHT”

### Sources

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- (1) The Serpent Power (Being the Sat-Cakra-Nirūpana and Pādukā-Pancaka). The Secrets of Tantric & Shaktic Yoga. Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) (also: “TSP”)
- (2) The Secret of the Golden Flower (T’ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih). A Chinese Book of Life. A Harvest Book. Harcourt Brace & Company (also: “SGF”)
- (3) Autobiography of a yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda, Thirteenth edition, 1998, Self-Realization Fellowship (also: “AY”)

### Contents

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The following are some considerations from public sources on the theory of the circulation of light, with particular focus on its circulation within the human body.

On prana (and on light):

In the phenomenal world there is nothing absolutely conscious nor absolutely unconscious. Consciousness and unconsciousness are always intermingled. Some things, however, appear to be more conscious, and some more unconscious than others. This is due to the fact that Cit [*the Consciousness universal principle in Sat-Cit-Ananda*], which is never absent in anything, yet manifests itself in various ways and degrees. The degree of this manifestation is determined by the nature and development of the mind and body in which it is enshrined. Spirit remains the same; the mind and body change. [...] It is this veiling by the power of Consciousness (Śakti) which creates the world. What is then which veils consciousness and thus produces world-experiences? The answer is Power or Śakti as Māyā. Māyā-Śakti is that which seemingly makes the Whole (Pūrṇa) into the not whole (Apūrṇa), the infinite into the finite, the formless into forms and the like. [...] The power of Consciousness is Consciousness in its active aspect. Whilst, therefore, both Śiva and Śakti are Consciousness, the former [*Śiva*] is the changeless static aspect of Consciousness, and Śakti is the kinetic, active aspect of the same Consciousness. [TSP, 30-31]

The one Consciousness is polarized into static (Śiva) and kinetic (Śakti) aspects for the purpose of “creation”. This Yoga is the resolution of this duality into unity again. The Indian scriptures say [...] that the universe is an unfoldment (Srstī) from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, and back to the homogeneous again (Pralaya or Dissolution). There are thus alternate states of evolution and dissolution, manifestation taking place after a period of rest. [...] This the Indian Sāstra affirms in its doctrine that there is no such thing as an absolutely first creation, the present universe being but one of a series of worlds which are past and are yet to be. [TSP, 36-37]

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Prāna, or the vital principle, is the special relationship of the Ātmā with a certain form of matter which by this relation the Ātmā organizes and builds up as a means of having experience. This special relation constitutes the individual prana in the individual body. The cosmic all-pervading Prāna is not Prāna in this gross sense, but is a name for the Brahman as the author of the individual Prāna. The individual Prāna is limited to the particular body which it vitalizes, and is a manifestation in all breathing creatures of the creative and the sustaining activity of the Brahman, who is represented in individual bodies by the Devi Kundalini. [TSP, 73-74]

On the circulation of light:

It is worth mentioning that the expression ‘Golden Flower’ (*Chin Hua*), in an esoteric connection, includes the word ‘light’. If one writes the two characters one above the other, so that they touch, the lower part of the upper character and the upper part of the lower character make the character for ‘light’ (*kuang*). Obviously, this secret sign was invented in a time of persecution, when a veil of deep secrecy was necessary to the further promulgation of the doctrine. [SGF, 9]

[...] The cosmos and man, in the last analysis, obey the same law; that man is a microcosm and is not separated from the macrocosm by any fixed barriers. The very same laws rule for the one as for the other, and from the one a way leads into the other. The psyche and the cosmos are to each other like the inner world and the outer world. Therefore, man participates by nature in all cosmic events, and is inwardly as well as outwardly interwoven with them. [SGF, 11]

The heart (*hsin*), according to the Chinese idea, is the seat of emotional consciousness, which is awakened by the five senses through unreflecting reactions to impressions received by the external world. That which remains as a substratum when no feeling are being expressed, but which lingers, so to speak, in a transcendental, supraconscious condition, is human nature (*hsing*). [...] Human nature (*hsing*), as an idea undoubtedly related to logos, appears closely knit with life (*ming*) when entering the phenomenal world. [...] Man as a spiritual being is made human by his nature (*ksing*). The individual man possesses it, but it extends far beyond the limit of the individual. Life (*ming*) is also supra-individual in that man must just simply accept his destiny; it does not stem from his conscious will. Confucianism sees in *ming*, life, a heaven-made law to which man must adapt; Taoism takes it as the multi-colored paly of nature which cannot evade the laws of the Tao, but which is yet pure coincidence; Chinese Buddhism sees it as the working out of karma within the world of illusion. [SGF, 11]

Therefore, you have to made the light circulate: that is the deepest and most wonderful secret. The light is easy to move, but difficult to fix. If it is made to circulate long enough, then it crystallizes itself; that is the natural body spirit. [...] In carrying out this fundamental principle you need to seek for no other methods, but must only concentrate

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your thoughts on it. [...] If one keeps this up for a long time there develops quite naturally, in addition to the body, yet another spirit-body. [SGF, 22-23]

All changes of spiritual consciousness depend upon the heart. There is a secret charm which, although it works very accurately, is yet so fluid that it needs extreme intelligence and clarity, and the most complete absorption and tranquility. People without this highest degree of intelligence and understanding do not find the way to apply the charm; people without this utmost capacity for absorption and tranquility cannot keep fast hold to it. [SGF, 23]

When men are set free from the womb, the primal spirit dwells in the square inch (between the eyes), but the conscious spirit dwells below in the heart. [...] This heart is dependent of the outside world. [...] Ordinary men make their bodies through thoughts. The body is not only the seven-foot-tall outer body. In the body is the anima. The anima adheres to consciousness, in order to affect it. Consciousness depends on its origin on the anima. The anima is feminine (yin), it is the substance of consciousness. As long as this consciousness is not interrupted, it continues to beget from generation to generation, and the changes of form of the anima and the transformations of substance are unceasing. But, besides this, there is the animus in which the spirit shelters. [...] The concentration of the animus is brought about by the circulation of the light, and in this way the spirit is maintained, the anima subjugated, and consciousness cut off. The method used by the ancients for escaping from the world consisted in melting out completely the slag of darkness in order to return to the purely creative. This is nothing more than a reduction of the anima and a completion of the animus. And the circulation of the light is the magical means of reducing the dark, and gaining mastery over the anima. Even if the work is not directed to bringing back the Creative, but confines itself to the magical means of the circulation of the light, it is just the light that is the Creative. By means of its circulation, one returns to the creative. The dark return to darkness and like things attract each other according to their kind. [SGF, 25-26-28]

If one wants to maintain the primal spirit one must, without fail, first subjugate the perceiving spirit. The way to subjugate it is through the circulation of the light. If one practices the circulation of the light, one must forget both body and heart. The heart must die, the spirit live. When the spirit lives, the breath will begin to circulate in a wonderful way. This is what the Master called the very best. [SGF, 29]

When the light is made to move in a circle, all the energies of heaven and earth, of the light and the dark, are crystallized. That is what is termed seed-like thinking, or purification of the energy, or purification of the idea. [...] Only after concentrated work of a hundred days will the light be genuine, then only will it become spirit-fire. After a hundred days there develop by itself in the midst of the light a point of the true light-pole (yang). [...] In the midst of primal transformation, the radiance of the light (*yang-kuang*) is the determining thing. In the physical world it is the sun; in man, the eye. The radiation and dissipation of spiritual consciousness is chiefly brought about by this energy when it

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is directed outward (flows downward). Therefore, the Way of the Golden Flower depends wholly on the backward-flowing method. [SGF, 30-31]

The circulation of the light is not only a circulation of the seed-blossom of the individual body, but it is even a circulation of the true, creative, formative energies. It is not a momentary fantasy, but the exhaustion of the cycle (soul-migration) of all the aeons. Therefore, the duration of a breath means a year according to human reckoning and a hundred measured by the long night of the nine paths (of reincarnation). [SGF, 32]

The light is not in the body alone, nor is it only outside the body. Mountains and rivers and the great earth are lit by the sun and moon; all that is this light. [...] Therefore, as soon as the light is circulating, heaven and earth, mountains and rivers, are all circulating with it at the same time. To concentrate the seed-flower of the human body above in the eyes, that is the great key of the human body. [SGF, 33]

Children, take heed! If for a day you do not practice meditation, this light streams out, who knows whither? If you only meditate for a quarter of an hour, by it you can do away with the ten thousand aeons and a thousand births. All methods end in quietness. This wonderful magic cannot be fathomed. But when the practice is started, one must press on from the obvious to the profound, from the coarse to the fine. Everything depend on there being no interruption. The beginning and the end of the practice must be one. In between there are cooler and warmer moments, that goes without saying. [SGF, 33]

Wherever the eyes look, the heart is directed also. [...] Only when the eyelids are lowered properly halfway is the tip of the nose seen in just the right way. [...] The main thing is to lower the eyelids in the right way, and then to allow the light to stream in of itself; without effort, wanting the light to stream in concentratedly. Looking at the tip of the nose serves only as the beginning of the inner concentration, so that the eyes are brought up into the right direction for looking, and then are held to the guide-line: after that, one can let it be. [SGF, 34-35]

Fixating contemplation is a Buddhist method which has not by any means handed down as a secret. One looks with both eyes at the tip of the nose, sit uprights and in a comfortable position, and holds the heart to the centre in the midst of conditions. (The 'conditions' are the circumstances, the environment, which, in conjunction with the causes, set going the circulation of delusion). [...] It is only a matter of fixing one's thinking on the point which lies exactly between the two eyes. Then all is well. The light is something extremely mobile. When one fixes the thought on the mid-point between the two eyes, the light streams in of its own accord. It is not necessary to direct the attention especially to the central castle. in these few words the most important thing is contained. [SGF, 35]

Fixating contemplation is indispensable; it ensures the making fast of the enlightenment. Only one must not stay sitting rigidly if wordly thoughts come up, but one must examine

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where the thought is, where it began, and where it fades out. Nothing is gained by pushing reflection further. One must be content to see where the thoughts arose, and not seek beyond the point of origin; for to find the heart (consciousness, to get behind consciousness with consciousness), that cannot be done. Together we want to bring the states of the heart to rest, that is true contemplation. What contradicts it is false contemplation. That leads to no goal. When the flight of the thoughts keeps extending further, one should stop and begin contemplating. Let one contemplate and then start fixating again. That is the double method of making fast the enlightenment. It means the circulation of the light. The circulation is fixation. The light is contemplation. Fixation without contemplation is circulation without light. Contemplation without fixation is light without circulation! Take note of that! [SGF, 36]

Now the method is described whereby the conscious spirit can be subjugated and the primal spirit protected; that is impossible if one does not begin by making the light circulate. [...] The circulation of the light is to be compared with the foundation of the building. When the foundation stands firm, how quickly can be build upon! [SGF, 36-37]

Sit down daily to meditate with legs crossed. Let the light in the eyes be stopped; let the hearing power of the ear be crystallized and the tasting power of the tongue diminished; that is, the tongue should be laid to the roof of the mouth; let the breathing through the nose be made rhythmical and the thoughts fixed on the dark door. If the breathing is not first made rhythmical it is to be feared that there will be difficulty in breathing, because of stoppage. [SGF, 37]

The decision must be carried out with a collected heart, and not seeking success; success will then come of itself. [...] Breathing comes from the heart. (The Chinese character from breath (*hsi*) is made up of the character *tsu*, of, and the character *hsin*, 'heart' or 'consciousness'. Thus, it can be interpreted as 'coming from the heart', 'having its origin in the heart' but at the same time it describes the conditions in which 'the heart is at one with itself', i.e., quietness.) What comes out of the heart is breath. As soon as the heart stirs, there develops breath-energy. Breath-energy is originally transformed activity of the heart. Since heart and breathing are mutually dependent, the circulation of the light must be united with the rhythm of breathing. [SGF, 40]

One should not be able to hear with the ear the outgoing and intaking of the breath. What one hears is that it has no tone. As soon as it has tone, the breathing is rough and superficial, and does not penetrate into the open. Then the heart must be quite light and insignificant. The more it is released, the less it becomes; the less it is, the quieter. All at once it becomes so quiet that it stops. Then the true breathing is manifested and the form of the heart comes to consciousness. If the heart is light, the breathing is light, for every movement of the heart affects breath-energy. If breathing is light, the heart is light, for every movement of breath-energy affects the heart. In order to steady the heart, one begins by taking care of the breath-energy. The heart cannot be influenced directly. Therefore, the breath-energy is used as a handle, and this is what is called maintenance of the

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concentrated breath-energy. [...] The great holy ones who knew how the heart and breath energy mutually influence one another have thought out an easier procedure in order to help posterity. [SGF, 40-41]

Although the breath that flows in and out through the nose is not the true breath, the flowing in and out of the true breath take place in connection with it. [SGF, 43]

While sitting, one must therefore always keep the heart quiet and the energy concentrated. How can the heart made be quiet? By the breath. Only the heart must be conscious of the flowing in and out of the breath; it must not be heard with the ears. If it is not heard, then the breathing is light; if light, it is pure. If it can be heard, then the breath-energy is rough; if rough, then it is troubled; if it is troubled, then indolence and lethargy develop and one wants to sleep. That is self-evident. [SGF, 43]

When there is a gradual success in producing the circulation of the light, a man must not give up his ordinary occupation in doing it. The ancients said: When occupations come to us, we must accept them; when things come to us, we must understand them from the ground up. If the occupations are properly handled by correct thoughts, the light is not scattered by outside things, but circulates according to its own law. Even the still invisible circulation of the light gets started this way; how much more, then, is it the case with the true circulation of the light which has already manifested itself clearly. When in ordinary life one has the ability to react to things by reflexes only, without any admixture of a thought of others or of oneself, that is a circulation of the light arising out of circumstances. This is the first secret. [...] How does it happen than the Master just at this point speaks of the fact that a man ought not to give up his ordinary way of life? [...] The Master is concerned lest the pupil may not have fulfilled his karma, therefore he speaks in this way. Now if the work has already led into the blissful fields, the heart is like an expanse of water. When things come, it mirrors things; when things go, spirit and energy spontaneously unite again and do not allow themselves to be carried away by externals. That is what the Master means when he says that every entanglement in thought of other people and oneself must be completely given up. When the pupil succeeds in concentrating with true thoughts always on the space of energy, he does not have to start the light rotating, the Elixir is made spontaneously, and the performance of wordly tasks at the same time is not of hindrance. [...] The living manner of the circulation of the light has just this meaning: to live mingling with the world and yet in harmony with the light. [SGF, 51-52-53]

One single turning means one heavenly cycle. [SGF, 62]

If we reflect on this, we see that ancients really attained long life by the help of the seed-energy present in their own bodies, and did not lengthen their years by swallowing this or that sort of elixir. [SGF, 62-63]



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## On the circulation of light and Kriya Yoga:

Kriya Yoga is a simple, psychophysiological method by which human blood is decarbonated and recharged with oxygen. The atoms of this extra oxygen are transmuted into life current to rejuvenate the brain and spinal centers. By stopping the accumulation of venous blood, the yogi is able to lessen or prevent the decay of tissues. [AY, 263]

Kriya Yoga is twice referred to by Lord Krishna, India's greatest prophet, in the Bhagavad Gita. One stanza (IV;29) reads: "Offering the inhaling breath into the exhaling breath and offering the exhaling breath into the inhaling breath, the yogi neutralizes both breaths; thus, he releases prana from the heart and brings life force under his control." The interpretation is: "The yogi arrests decay in the body by securing an additional supply of prana (life force) through quieting the action of the lungs and heart; he also arrests mutations of growth in the body by control of apana (eliminating current). Thus neutralizing decay and growth, the yogi learns life-force control." Another Gita stanzas (V;27-28) states: "That meditation-expert (muni) becomes eternally free who, seeking the Supreme Goal, is able to withdraw from external phenomena by fixing his gaze within the mid-spot of the eyebrows and by neutralizing the even currents of prana and apana that flow within the nostrils and lungs; and to control his sensory mind and intellect; and to banish desire, fear, and anger." [AY, 264]

Kriya Yoga is mentioned twice by the ancient sage Patanjali, foremost exponent of yoga, who wrote: "Kriya Yoga consists of body discipline, mental control, and meditating on Aum." (Yoga Sutras, II;1). Patanjali refers a second time to the Kriya technique or life-force control thus: "Liberation can be attained by that pranayama which is accomplished by disjoining the course of inspiration and expiration." (Yoga Sutras, II; 49). [AY, 265-266]

"Kriya Yoga is an instrument through which human evolution can be quickened." Sri Yukteswar explained to his students. "The ancient yogis discovered that the secret of cosmic consciousness is intimately linked with breath mastery. This is India's unique and deathless contribution to the world's treasury of knowledge. The life force, which is ordinarily absorbed in maintaining heart action, must be freed for higher activities by a method of calming and the ceaseless demand of the breath." The kriya Yogi mentally directs his life energy to revolve upward and downward, around the six spinal centers (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral and coccygeal plexuses), which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One-half minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in the evolution; that half-minute of Kriya equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment. The astral system of a human being, with six (twelve by polarity) inner constellations revolving around the sun of the omniscient spiritual eye, is interrelated with the physical sun and the twelve zodiacal signs. All men are thus affected by an inner and an outer universe. [AY, 265-267]

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In man under maya or natural law, the flow of life energy is toward the outward world: the currents are wasted and abused in the senses. The practice of Kriya reverses the flow; life force is mentally guided to the inner cosmos and becomes reunited with subtle spinal energies. By such reinforcement of life force, the yogi's body and brain cells are renewed by a spiritual elixir. [AY, 269]