

## Canberra Jung Society Inc.

### “C. G. Jung’s Encounter with Kundalini and his Interpretation of Tantra”

*Presented by Dr. Richard Barz*

Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, 8pm

In October and November 1932 at the Psychological Club in Zürich, Carl Jung gave a series of four lectures on the variety of tantra called Kundalini Yoga. These lectures reflected Jung’s view of yoga- which included tantra- as “**a psychological discipline and therefore a method of psychic hygiene**”.<sup>1</sup> He left the discussion of the Indian origins of yoga and tantra to a specialist in Indian studies, J.W. Hauer, who gave six presentations on that subject in tandem with Jung’s lectures. In 1996 all four of Jung’s lectures were edited by Sonu Shamdasani and published for the first time unabridged and in English.<sup>2</sup>

When Jung gave his lectures tantra and yoga were obscure, exotic and imperfectly understood phenomena from mysterious India. Today both tantra and yoga have become familiar as part of global culture. They are no longer obscure, exotic or confined to India. But there is still confusion about exactly how each of them should be understood and how they relate to each other. This uncertainty is not surprising since yoga and tantra are often practiced independently of one another and yet are just as often in practice intimately intertwined. This intertwined practice has existed ever since the oldest known Hindu, Buddhist and Jain tantric texts were composed in India some 1400 years ago.

#### **Yoga and Tantra**

Although intertwined, yoga and tantra are quite distinct. *Yoga* is a Sanskrit word describing the act of joining one thing to another. It can be defined, using half of Jung’s own definition, as a **psychological discipline** with the understanding that yoga is a discipline of union which can be mental or physical as well as psychological. Said concisely, yoga is a discipline.

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<sup>1</sup> C. G. Jung, “Yoga and the West”, quoted in C. G. Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, edited by Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton University Press, Princeton:1996), p. xxviii.

<sup>2</sup> C. G. Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, p. 20.

*Tantra*, also a Sanskrit word, originally meant “a loom” or “framework” and in time came to refer to a text or book of instruction in a particular method of mental, physical or magical practice. The second half of Jung’s definition of yoga as a **method of psychic hygiene** serves very well as a definition of tantra. Put concisely, tantra is a method.

The discipline of yoga and the method of tantra are connected in that a *tāntrik*, a person who cultivates tantra, may practice yogic discipline to control the body and mind in order to develop a tantric method to accomplish particular goals.

If we are to appreciate what Jung found in tantra, the key question is: What is a tantric method? In the global tantra of modern life, there is no uncertainty about what a tantric method is. Anyone who puts the word “tantra” on a search engine like Google will soon discover that a tantric method is either a means for emotional and especially sexual satisfaction and success or a quest for spiritual fulfilment. Whether the tantra one finds is primarily sexual or spiritual depends on whether one happens on a secular self-improvement tantric site or a Hindu or Buddhist religious site. To quote a secular website which claims no direct descent from an ancient Indian source:

**“Sexual energy is the most potent force of our being and Tantra helps us channel this immense resource by learning to be more sensitive. Ultimately, we can learn to control it, sublimate it... and invest it in whatever aspect of worldly life we choose- becoming more successful, self-confident, loving, communicative, bright, sexually attractive and satisfied, even enlightened.”<sup>3</sup>**

And then according to the site of Siddha Yoga<sup>4</sup>, a Hindu religious organisation dedicated to promulgating a tantric method descending directly from an ancient Indian source:

**“Imagine looking at the world you live in, and recognizing divinity in everything you see and everyone you meet. Imagine facing every situation in your life with the unwavering strength and delight that come from the certainty of the divine presence within you. The Siddha Yoga teachings assert that this attainment is not only possible, it is our**

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<sup>3</sup> *The Soul Heals* <<http://thesoulheals.com/tantra/>>

<sup>4</sup> Siddha Yoga means in Sanskrit ‘the yoga of those who have attained their goal’.

**birthright. The goal of the Siddha Yoga path is Self-realization- the unceasing experience of yoga, or unity with God.”<sup>5</sup>**

The two versions of a tantric method agree that one who embarks on the tantric path- perhaps through yogic discipline- will achieve a physical and spiritual liberation, a nirvana in this world. Since it’s a truism that a picture is worth a thousand words, one can offer no better definition of this nirvana than this picture from a secular tantric website of a man and woman who have attained it:



A Modern Couple in Tantric Bliss<sup>6</sup>

But is global tantra the same as traditional Indian tantra? Everyday experience with global culture causes some suspicions to arise. To take the very mundane example of food, does a taco, a pizza or a chicken tikka masala bought in Canberra give a good idea of what might be served for dinner in a Mexican, Italian or Indian home? Superficially yes, but essentially no.

Like chicken tikka masala there is no doubt that global tantra is Indian but both are developments from Indian roots that would never have been made in India.

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<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.siddhayoga.org/teachings>>

<sup>6</sup> *The Soul Heals* <<http://thesoulheals.com/tantra/>>

Since Carl Jung encountered tantra in its traditional form before the rise of global tantra, it makes good sense to ask what traditional tantra was like.

As mentioned above, tantric texts have been produced in India and nearby countries from ancient to recent times. Normally, one would go to such texts for an idea of traditional tantra. However there is with tantric texts the problem of secrecy and dissemblance. Some of the practices of tantra violate the social and sexual mores of all Indian religions and involve rituals that are terrifying and abhorrent to ordinary people. In order to conceal such activities from *hoi polloi*, tantras tend to be written in obscure language with double meanings and terminology intelligible only to *tāntriks*. As a result, tantric texts can't be relied upon to provide a straightforward view of tantra. On the other hand, the very notoriety of tantra has fascinated Indian authors and their readers from antiquity so that it is in works of literature that tantra and *tāntriks* appear most vividly. It is in these works that a reliable impression of traditional tantra may be gained.

One of the best of these literary works is the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 'the ocean of the streams of story'. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* is a voluminous collection in Sanskrit of stories, many of them originating from folk tales, compiled by a Brahman named Somadeva around the year 1070 CE at the behest of a Kashmiri queen. A very good portrayal of an ancient Indian *tāntrik* and his motivations is found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* tale of the King and the *Vetāla*. The story goes like this:<sup>7</sup>

### **The King and the *Vetāla***

Once in that time outside of time so typical of fairy tales and folk stories there was a noble king ruling in a city in India. Every day the king set aside a period when any subject could come into the throne room to make a complaint, ask for help or just pay his or her respects to the monarch. The only requirement was that anyone who came before the king should offer a gift of a value commensurate with his or her station in society.

One day there appeared at the gates of the throne room a wandering Hindu ascetic, a *sadhu*, gaunt from a life of austerities. He was naked except for a g-string. His moustache and beard were tangled and unkempt. Uncombed dreadlocks hung down to the middle of his back and his body was smeared with ash. A tattered bag was slung over one shoulder.

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<sup>7</sup> The King and the *Vetāla* in English translation is given on pages 11-13, 61-64 in J. van Buitenen, *Tales of Ancient India* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago:1969).

This photograph of a modern t̄antrik engaged in yogic discipline gives some idea of what the sadhu in the story would have looked like:



T̄antrik Sadhu in Mahābandha Yogic Posture  
Pl XIII in Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (1918, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1964)

Uttering not a word, the sadhu strode through the hall to the foot of the throne. There, without the customary prostration and salutation, he took an ordinary mango from his bag and placed it in the king's open palm. Then he turned and left the hall as silent as he had come. The king gave the mango to his chief minister standing beside the throne. The chief minister at the end of the day took the mango with the day's other gifts and deposited it in a small storeroom in the royal treasury.

The sadhu was an impressive sight, but not an unusual one. India was haunted then as now by such men. Nor was his gift peculiar since it was all that one would expect from a sadhu who should have no possessions beyond his clay pipe, a bit of marijuana to smoke in it and whatever scraps of food had been given to him that day. What was very odd, though, was the fact that every single day for the next ten years the sadhu repeated the same performance. And every day the king would accept the mango as the proper gift of such a subject and hand it to his chief minister to place in the royal treasury storeroom.

And then one day after the sadhu had given a mango to the king and gone out of the hall, instead of handing the mango to his chief minister the king tossed it to the royal monkey. But as soon as the ape had bit into the mango, he dropped it with a howl and rolled on the floor clutching his jaw in pain. The chief minister picked up the half-eaten fruit to see what had caused the monkey such distress. There in the mango he, the king and all the court were astounded to behold a precious gem. Biting down on that gem the monkey had injured his tooth. At once, the king rose and proceeded with the chief minister to the treasury storeroom. There they found a heap of valuable jewels on the floor where they had fallen over the past decade from the rotted fruit.

When the sadhu came again the following day and offered a mango as usual, the king refused to accept it until the sadhu had explained why he had hidden a priceless gem in each of the mangoes. The sadhu told the king that he wanted to perform a certain rite for which he needed a brave man. He implored the king to be that brave man and help him. Moved by the sadhu's words and the many jewels he had given, the king agreed. The sadhu then said that he would meet the king under a banyan tree in the city's main cremation ground at nightfall on the very next day.

As night fell on the next day the king, sword in hand for protection in such a fearsome place, entered the burning ground. When he came upon the sadhu under the banyan tree he found him engaged in drawing a circular mandala for the performance of a tantric rite. When the king inquired how he could help, the sadhu asked him to go some distance into the cremation ground until he found a lone tree. On a limb of that tree would be hanging the corpse of a man. The sadhu asked the king to bring that corpse to him so that he could use it in his ritual.

The king followed the sadhu's directions, cut the corpse down from the tree and hoisted it onto his shoulder. When he did so, the corpse shrieked in ghastly laughter. At that the king knew that the corpse had been possessed by a *vetāla*, a fierce kind of spirit that animates dead bodies.

As the fearless king proceeded through the night, the *vetāla*, speaking through the dead man's lips, informed the king that he would tell him a riddle in the form of a story to lighten the journey. He stipulated, though, that the king would have to give the answer to the riddle if he knew it. Otherwise, the *vetāla* assured the king that his head would burst. When the king answered the riddle correctly, the *vetāla* vanished. The king returned to the tree and found the *vetāla* in its corpse again hanging from the tree. The king cut the corpse down again and put it back on his shoulder. Again the *vetāla* told a riddle story and again the king answerd

correctly. Again the *vetāla* and its corpse went back to the tree. This went on 22 more times. Finally, the 25<sup>th</sup> riddle story was too difficult. The king could not answer and walked on in silence.

The *vetāla* was pleased with the courage and honesty of the king and decided to reveal to him that, as soon as he delivered the corpse to the t̄antrik sadhu, the sadhu was going to murder him. To do this, he explained that the sadhu would ask the king to go down on his hands and knees over the corpse. Then he would decapitate him with his own sword and offer his body as a sacrifice to the *vetāla*. The *vetāla* would then be compelled to grant the sadhu dominion over all the world and its wealth.

In order to avoid this fate, the *vetāla* instructed the king that, when the sadhu asked him to put himself over the corpse, the king should require the sadhu to demonstrate exactly how he should do this. As soon as the sadhu did so, the *vetāla* told the king to strike off his head so that the sadhu would become the king's offering. The king did just as the *vetāla* had said. As soon as he had cut off the sadhu's head the *vetāla* gave him mastery over the entire world and all of its riches.

### **Traditional Indian Tantra**

The story illustrates the six elements that are fundamental to the traditional tantric method:

1. **Tantra is secret.** The sadhu performed his tantric rite at night in a cremation ground because the tantric method is an occult one and its rituals are performed in secret in places full of terror and death.
2. **Tantra is not for everyone.** It is only for heroes. Both the king and the sadhu are depicted as braver than common people because the tantric method can only be cultivated by heroic individuals. These individuals have removed themselves from the masses of people by rigorous discipline and self-denial.
3. **The goal of tantra is power.** The tantric method is cultivated for the acquisition of supernatural but worldly powers like the sovereignty and wealth sought by the sadhu and obtained by the king from the *vetāla*. Other powers obtained through tantra include the ability to fly, invisibility, immortality and the capability to disappear and reappear at will.
4. **Tantric powers are acquired from violent spirits.** These unpredictable spirits are contacted through tantric rites that involve hazardous bargains. Generally, as in the story of the king and the *vetāla*, these bargains must be sealed with blood sacrifice. Of all the spirits sought by the t̄antrik by far the

most powerful, but also the most dangerous, are female spirits- sometimes with a bird's head- called *yoginīs* 'female joiners' because they can join a seeker to his goal. A *tāntrik* who offers meat, liquor, semen and other sexual fluids to a yogini may receive in return awesome powers but he also may receive death. He makes his offerings and takes his chances.

5. **Tantra is for men.** The main actors in the story, the king and the sadhu, are men. This is no accident. In ancient tantric thought women are important as vehicles of power, called in Sanskrit *shakti*, but they are not seen as the heroes who practice the tantra that brings power. A few women are known, mostly from non-tantric literature, to have achieved the heroic status necessary for tantra. Such women are called *tāntrikās* or *bhairavīs* 'women belonging to the dreadful god'. Never, as far as I am aware, does any tantric text or teaching explain how a *bhairavī* might negotiate for power with a yogini or other spirit. Such texts and teachings are presented from an exclusively male point of view in which the only place for women is that of a *tāntrik*'s *shakti*. In traditional Indian tantra we are a very long way from the global secular and religious tantra in which women have an integral role.
6. **Tantra was popular with kings.** Although it was never restricted to royalty, tantra's association with power made it especially popular in India and Nepal with kings- like the king in the story. From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century special temples to the yoginis were built with royal patronage in central and northern India. Because the yoginis could fly, these temples were constructed around a courtyard open to the sky. The yoginis could fly down into these courtyards for nocturnal bargaining rites. Most of the yogini temples were round to form a *chakra*, the Sanskrit word for 'circle' or 'wheel'. The *chakra* consisted of 42, 64 or 81 cells situated around the central courtyard. In each cell was the image of a yogini identified by name and iconography.

### **Traditional Tantric Method**

Traditional tantra was a method for gaining supernatural power. The power most sought after was held by the intangible aerial yogini spirits. But in order to obtain power from the yoginis, some way had to be found to make the yoginis flesh. This the *tāntrik* accomplished through his *shakti*, *Shakti* is always feminine as the power to act and create is a feminine power in Indian thought. Shiva, the supreme being for many *tāntriks*, and every other Hindu god has a goddess who embodies the god's power. She is his *shakti*. A *tāntrik* also must have a *shakti*. His *shakti* is a woman who embodies his power. She should not be his wife but should be a woman forbidden to him by the Hindu rules of caste and social propriety. The *tāntrik*'s *shakti* would accompany him to the courtyard of the yogini temple and



there she would be possessed by a yogini. After rites involving the drinking of liquor and the eating of meat, the t̄antrik would engage in ritual sexual intercourse with the yogini within his shakti. In that act he would make the exchange of sexual fluids that hopefully would persuade the yogini to give him extraordinary power.

The 10<sup>th</sup> century Temple of the 64 Yoginis at Khajuraho in central India is an example of a yogini temple, though for an unknown reason the cells of the yoginis are arranged around the open courtyard in a rectangle rather than a chakra:<sup>8</sup>



photo: R. Barz

Temple of the 64 Yoginis at Khajuraho (c 950 CE)

The bargaining rituals, especially those involving sexual exchange, between t̄antriks and yoginis were particularly esoteric and concealed from the public at large. Nevertheless, paradoxically, these rituals are often openly illustrated, as on this carved strut from the 15<sup>th</sup> century temple to Shiva as Pashupatinath ‘lord of the master of beasts’ in the royal precinct of Bhaktapur in Kathmandu, Nepal. In this carving the yogini Rudrāyaṇī, standing on a bull is shown presiding over the ritual copulation of a t̄antrik guru and his shakti while a novice t̄antrik underneath them collects sexual fluids for his initiation.

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<sup>8</sup> One possible explanation for the rectangular form is that it mimics the shape of the *yoni*, vulva, of Shiva’s shakti. Images of the yoni in which Shiva’s phallus is set are often square or rectangular in shape.

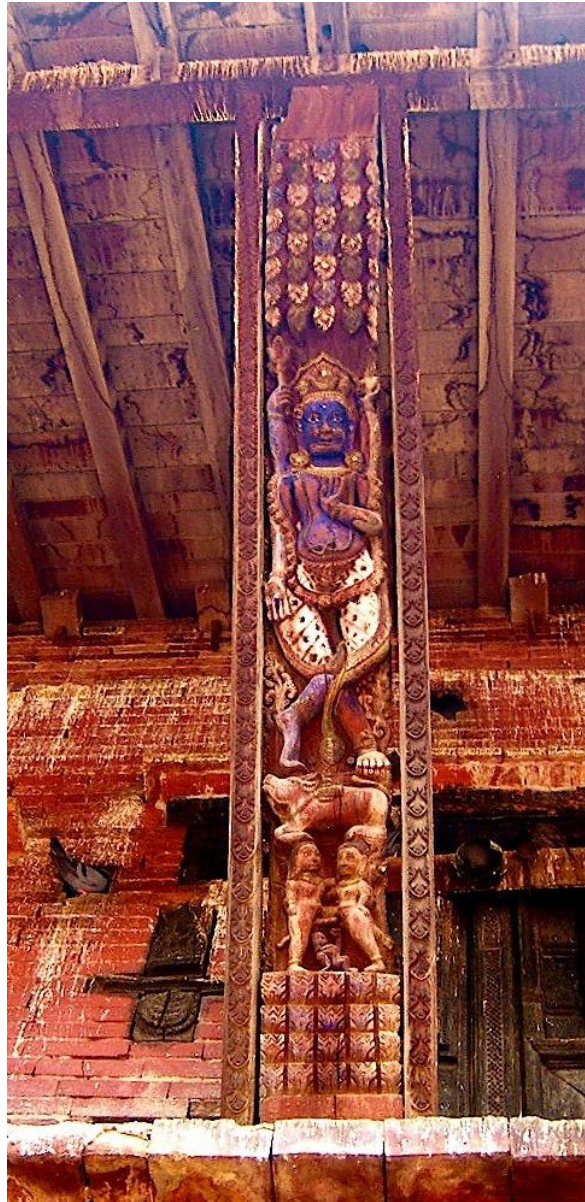


photo: R. Barz

Tantric Carving from Pashupatinath Temple at Bhaktapur in Kathmandu, Nepal (c 1475 CE)

That traditional tantra may still be alive, though practiced outside the sphere of mainstream Indian culture, is indicated by signs of the continuing use of ancient tantric sacred sites. For example, this 2007 photograph of the main cell in the Temple of the 64 Yoginis at Khajuraho reveals probable tantric paraphernalia and evidence of ritual observances:



photo: R. Barz

Modern Shrine at the Temple of the 64 Yoginis at Khajuraho

### **The Transformation of Tantra**

Although traditional tantra evidently continues to be practiced in India away from prying eyes, another form of tantra has come to predominate there. This is the transformed tantra created by ancient Hindu scholars, of whom the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE Kashmiri Abhinavagupta was the most influential. This transformation clothed tantra in respectable Hindu philosophical garments. In transformed tantra the goal of the *tāntrik* shifted away from the acquisition of supernatural powers and focused on union with the supreme being Shiva.

This shift had six major consequences:

1. **The chakra of yoginis in the yogini temple was moved into the body of the *tāntrik*** where it was visualised as a series of five, six or more chakra centres. The six-chakra arrangement is as follows: the *mūlādhāra* ‘root

support' chakra at the coccyx, the *svādhiṣṭhāna* 'one's own abode' chakra at the genitals, the *maṇipūraka* 'full of jewels' chakra at the navel, the *anāhata* 'unstruck [sound]' chakra at the heart, the *vishuddha* (*viśuddha*) 'purified' chakra at the throat and the *Ājñā* 'command' chakra between the eyes. These six chakras are in the body. A seventh chakra, the *sahasrāra* 'thousand-spoke' chakra at the fontanelle at the top of the head, is considered to be different from the six bodily chakras. It is the tāntrik's objective. It is transcendent.

2. **The feminine power of the yoginis was subsumed into the shakti of Shiva conceived of as a female snake called *Kuṇḍalinī*, a word that means in Sanskrit 'something female that is coiled'. Kundalini was said to lie asleep coiled three and a half times around the penis (*lingam*) of Shiva in the root support chakra of every human being. In the photograph taken at a temple in Himalayan India are two Shiva lingams, each set in the vulva, *yoni* in Sanskrit, of Shiva's shakti. One yoni in the picture is round and one is rectangular.**



photo: R. Barz

Shiva Lingams at Lākhā Maṇḍal, Uttarakhand, India

3. **The goal of the tāntrik in transformed tantra was to awaken *Kundalini* and rise with her through the chakras along the spine to the thousand-spoke**

chakra. There the t̄antrik would lose his individual identity in participation in the cosmic orgasm of Shiva and his shakti Kundalini in union.

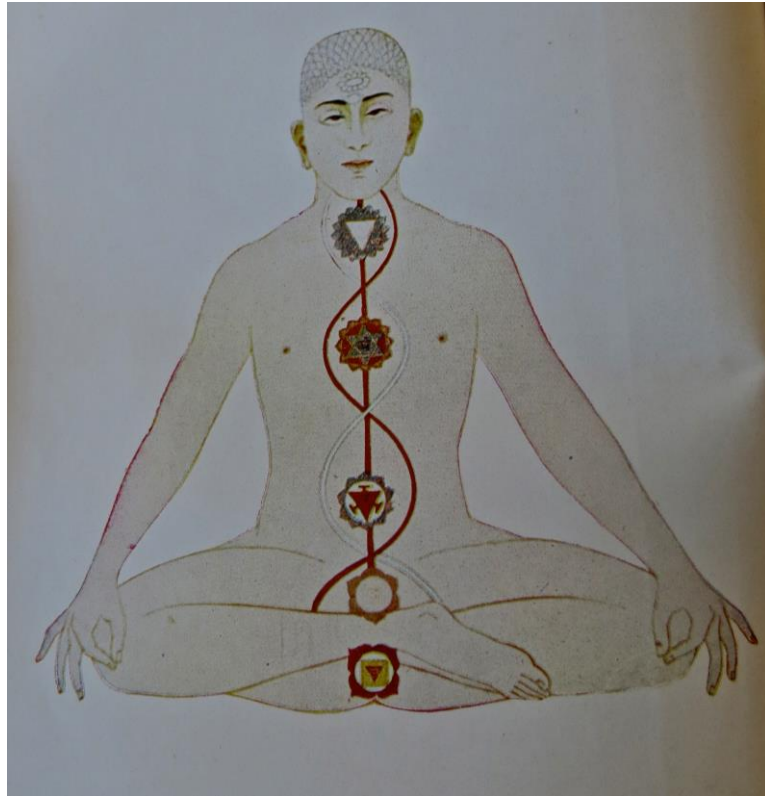
4. **Philosophically, transformed tantra saw the body of Shiva's shakti as simultaneously the universe, the body of the woman who is the t̄antrik's shakti and the feminine Kundalini in the t̄antrik's own body.** Enlightened access to any one of these bodies by the t̄antrik adept would bring access to all of them.<sup>9</sup>
5. **Most importantly for the social redemption of tantra, in transformed tantra the t̄antrik could engage in tantric rituals either in deep meditation or with harmless substitute substances.** He need not actually eat meat, drink liquor, engage in sexual intercourse, or perform any of the other acts of traditional tantra that Indian society found so revolting.
6. **At the same time, transformed tantra did not invalidate the rituals of traditional tantra.** The t̄antrik could outwardly confine himself to meditation or rites with substitute objects while in secret engaging in all the rituals of traditional tantra.

As in traditional tantra, the presentation of the philosophy and rites of transformed tantra always assumes a masculine audience only.

This diagram illustrates the arrangement of the six chakras of the body with the transcendent seventh chakra at the top of the head:

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<sup>9</sup> Paraphrased from David White, *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in Its South Asian Contexts* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago:2003), p. 163.



The Six Chakras with the Seventh  
Frontispiece in Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (1918, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1964)

### The British Connection

The sophisticated tantric system produced by scholars like Abhinavagupta might have remained forever part of the esoterica of Hinduism and Buddhism had it not been for two men. One was Sir John Woodroffe (1865-1936), Judge of the High Court at Calcutta (now Kolkata) in British colonial India. Woodroffe was a distinguished man very much in the public eye who made his interest in tantra through his writings plain for all to see. The other was a Bengali lawyer and Sanskrit scholar named Atal Bihari Ghose (1864-1936), a man who craved anonymity and wanted his association with tantra to be unknown.

Both Woodroffe and Ghose were initiated into tantra by the same two gurus. It is nothing out of the ordinary for a t antrik to be initiated into tantra, especially if it is transformed tantra, by two gurus. But the second guru to initiate the two men was a bhairavi, a woman tantra practitioner. That was unusual.<sup>10</sup>

Once initiated, both Sir John Woodroffe and Atal Bihari Ghose worked together for decades to make the teachings and principles of tantra available to the world

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<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: 'An Indian Soul in a European Body'?* (Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey:2001), p. 109.

in English. The tantra in their works is clearly the transformed tantra of abstract philosophy and spiritual enhancement. Whatever their inner feelings might have been, they showed no outward interest in the traditional tantra of bargaining with spirits for power.

They also endeavoured to publish and publicise tantric texts not just in English translation, but in their original Sanskrit as well. The books they collaborated on together they published under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon. This collaboration was unknown until revealed by Kathleen Taylor in a book published in 2001. Until then it was assumed that Arthur Avalon was the pen name of Woodroffe alone. Those books written by Woodroffe by himself appeared under his name. Ghose wrote only a handful of articles under his own name.

In 1918 *The Serpent Power*, including an English translation of a 16<sup>th</sup> century tantra explaining the chakra system, was published under the name Arthur Avalon by Luzac and Co. in London. That book reached world-wide circulation and remains in print today. The key to the success of *The Serpent Power* is its exposition of the chakras and Kundalini which aroused wide-spread interest among the sophisticated in the English-speaking world. Moreover, the tantra in *The Serpent Power* and the other books by Woodroffe and Woodroffe and Ghose using the pseudonym Arthur Avalon is not aimed at men alone. Unlike the texts and practices of traditional and transformed tantra, there is nothing in these books that either by statement or implication excludes women from studying tantra. These traits have made *The Serpent Power* both the foundation upon which global secular and religious tantra was to take shape and a source of inspiration for Carl Jung.

### **Jung's Encounter with Kundalini**

During the year 1918 Carl Jung had a young woman patient whose case in his own words “caused me no end of trouble”.<sup>11</sup> For Jung the most perplexing development in this case came with one of the patient's dreams in which a white elephant emerged from her vagina. In addition to this dream she had a series of puzzling and incurable urogenital maladies involving an excessive amount of fluid in her body. Finally, the woman's symptoms culminated with a powerful conviction that a bird with a long beak had pecked through the fontanelle at the top of her head and had met something coming up from her body below. After that hallucination, she recovered from her illness and wanted no further treatment. She was satisfied with her treatment and credited Jung with bringing her back to

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<sup>11</sup> C. J. Jung, “The Realities of Practical Psychotherapy” in *The Practice of Psychotherapy, Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 16 (Bollingen, New York:1966), p. 330.

health. Jung, on the other hand, was deeply disturbed by his inability to understand and explain the meaning of the woman's dreams and visions. He felt that he had not been successful in the case and thought that his patient had been cured spontaneously.

The next events in the case are better related in Jung's own words:

**“About the time when the fantasy of the fontanelle appeared, I came upon an English book which was the first to give a thorough and authentic account of the symbolism of Tantric Yoga. The book was *The Serpent Power*, by Sir John Woodroffe, who wrote under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon. It was published about the time when the patient was being treated by me. To my astonishment I found in this book an explanation of all those things I had not understood in the patient's dreams and symptoms.”<sup>12</sup>**

In *The Serpent Power* Jung discovered that each chakra contains particular symbols and images. The first chakra, the root support chakra at the coccyx, contains an elephant. This explained his patient's dream of an elephant coming from her vagina:

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<sup>12</sup> Jung, “The Realities of Practical Psychotherapy”, pp. 334-335.





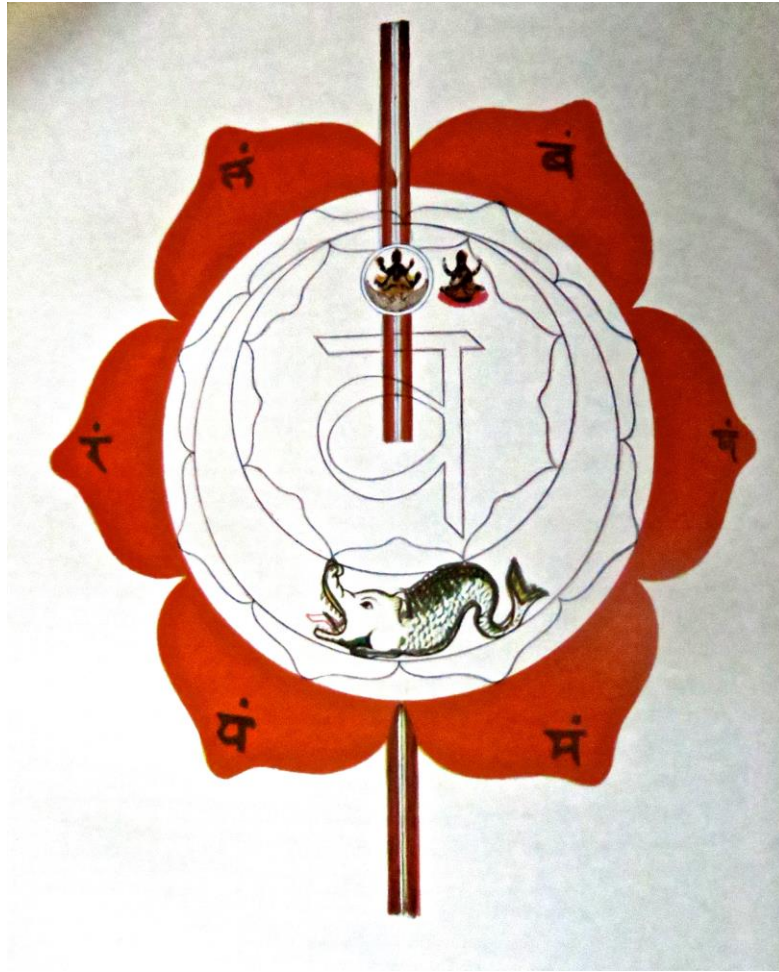
The First or Mūlādhāra (‘root support’) Chakra  
Pl II in Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (1918, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1964)

The second chakra, *svādhiṣṭhāna* (‘one’s own abode’), located at the genitals contains a sea monster and is full of water. The aquatic nature of the second chakra led Jung to link it to the woman’s urogenital problems. Jung described the importance of this chakra in this way:

**“So the progress into the second cakra<sup>13</sup> is possible only if you have aroused the serpent, and the serpent can only be aroused by the right attitude. Expressed in psychological terms, that would mean that you can approach the unconscious in only one way, namely by a purified mind, by a right attitude, and by the grace of heaven, which is the Kundalini.”<sup>14</sup>**

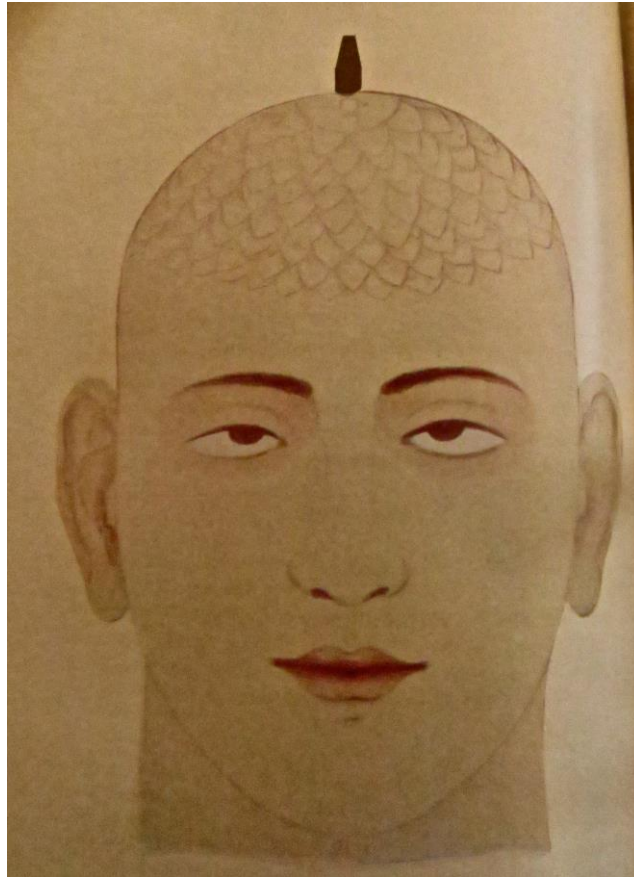
<sup>13</sup> Jung used the standard academic transliteration *cakra* while the usual English spelling, and the pronunciation of both forms, is *chakra*.

<sup>14</sup> *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, p. 20.



The Second or Svādhiṣṭhāna ('one's own abode') Chakra  
 Pl III in Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (1918, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1964)

The seventh, transcendent chakra called Sahasrāra ('thousand spoke') located at the fontanelle at the top of the head is where the tāntrik rising with Kundalini through his spine emerges into liberation in the cosmic union of Shiva and his Kundalini shakti. That clarified for Jung why his patient had imagined a bird pecking through her fontanelle to extract something- her Kundalini- for her final cure. At this time, Jung was not aware of the bird-headed yogini in traditional Indian tantra. Had he known of it he would have realised that his patient had perceived the bird-headed yogini pecking through her head at the seventh chakra.



The Seventh or Sahasrāra (‘thousand spoke’) Chakra  
Pl VIII in Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (1918, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 1964)

From his reading of *The Serpent Power* onward, Jung continued to find help in Kundalini yoga in interpreting the dreams and symptoms of his patients. In his 1936 article “Yoga and the West” Jung stated that **“important parallels with yoga [and analytical psychology] have come to light, especially with Kundalini yoga and the symbolism of tantric yoga, Lamaism, and Taoistic yoga in China. These forms of yoga with their rich symbolism afford me invaluable material for the interpretation of the collective unconscious.”**<sup>15</sup>

### **Jung and the Tantric Method**

At the beginning of this talk I quoted Jung as describing yoga, in which he included tantra, as **“a psychological discipline and therefore a method of psychic hygiene”**. In saying this Jung was not identifying himself as a tāntrik or a teacher of the tantric method. In fact, Jung believed that in his day European

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<sup>15</sup> “Yoga and the West”, paragraph 875 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 11 *Psychology and Religion: West and East* quoted (translation modified) in Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, p. xxix.

civilisation suffered from a lack of direction bordering on psychic anarchy.<sup>16</sup> In such a disoriented situation he considered it very hazardous for people of a European Christian background to try to practice tantra.

If Jung was not interested in teaching or practicing tantra and if he discouraged his patients from taking up tantra, then what did he see as the benefit of the tantric method? The supernatural powers of flight and world domination sought by the traditional Indian t̄antrik would have had no appeal for Jung. Nor would he have been attracted by the loss of self in spiritual liberation that is the goal of transformed traditional tantra and of global religious tantra. Finally, though Jung would have acknowledged the importance of the sexual satisfaction and worldly success promised by global secular tantra, those were not the be-all and end-all of life in his view.

For Jung a successful life should proceed through individuation to the development from the unconscious of a balanced, mature and integrated individual person. He saw in the images and symbols of the tantric chakras a universal human language akin to his concept of the archetypes that could lead his patients out of distress and despair rooted in the unconscious. Through the images and symbols of the chakras patients could be assisted on the path of individuation.

Although Jung found meaning in all of the chakras, it was the chakra most deeply embedded in the unconscious, the first or *mūlādhāra* ‘root support’ chakra, that he found most effective for his patients. It is the imagery of that chakra that seems most often to be reflected in the mandalas that Jung encouraged his patients to draw.

In closing, I will give the mandalas drawn by three of Jung’s patients together with his analysis of the mandalas in terms of the first chakra. Jung’s analysis of these mandalas makes clear that he found tantric symbolism valuable in identifying the problems of his patients, but that he never allowed his investigation of that symbolism to stray into any attempt to apply the method of tantra in treating his patients.

### **The Mandalas of Three of Jung’s Patients**

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<sup>16</sup> C. G. Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, p. xxviii.

The first mandala was dreamt<sup>17</sup> and then drawn by a middle-aged woman patient who had absolutely no knowledge of Indian symbolism. She said that the square in the centre is a stone. Winding around the stone she drew a spiral.

In his interpretation of the mandala Jung saw the spiral as a snake and noted that it, like Kundalini in the *mūlādhāra* chakra, is wrapped three and a half times around a central object. He identified the snake, being a creature both earthly and spiritual, as symbolising the unconscious. The snake's coils around the central square were perceived by Jung as a circumambulation of, and a way to, the centre. For him the square that the woman called a stone is the philosopher's stone by which base metal is changed into gold. In this patient's case he said it signified the new centre of personality, the self.<sup>18</sup>



The First Patient's Mandala Reminiscent of the *Mūlādhāra* Chakra  
*The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Volume 9, Part 1 (Routledge, London:1990), Figure 4.

The next mandala was drawn by a young woman. Jung identified the snake coiled around the middle point as Kundalini trying to get out of confinement after awakening. This he saw as the patient's earth-bound nature becoming active, an

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<sup>17</sup> The importance that Jung encouraged his patients to give to their dreams parallels the great value of dreams in the initiation and later experience of the traditional tāntrik, see White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>18</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Volume 9, Part 1 (Routledge, London:1990), pp. 362-363.

interpretation reinforced by the arrows pointing outwards. He also found the outward-pointing arrows indicative both of the young woman's becoming conscious of her instinctual nature and, perhaps, of protection of the inside from danger.<sup>19</sup>



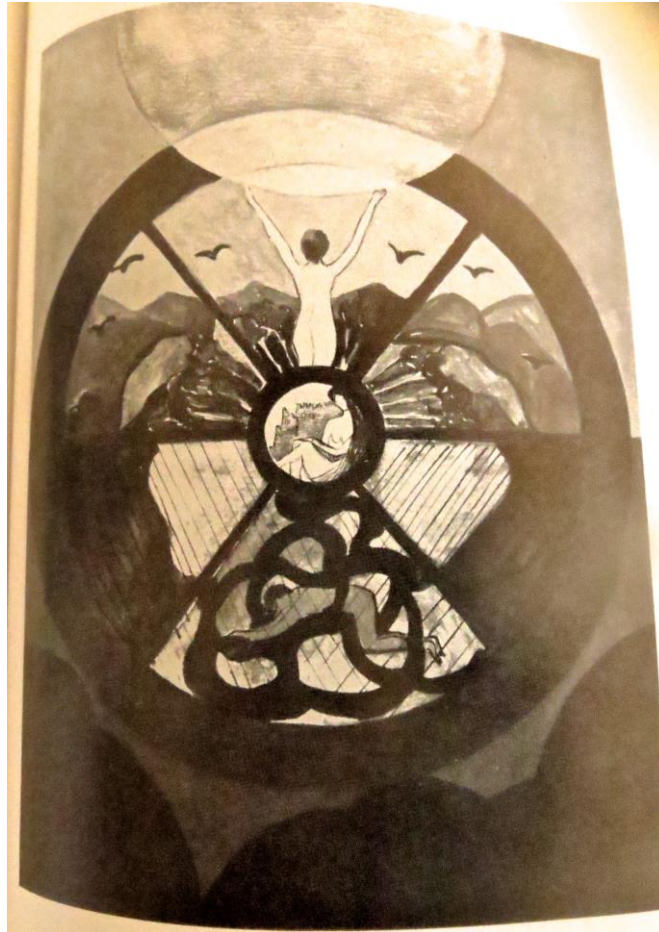
The Second Patient's Mandala Reminiscent of the *Mūlādhāra* Chakra  
Jung, *Collected Works*, 9:1, Figure 17

The third mandala was made by another middle-aged woman. In it Jung found various phases of the individuation process represented. In his own words, **“Down below [the woman] is caught in a chthonic tangle of roots [which is] the *mūlādhāra* of Kundalini yoga. In the middle she studies a book, cultivating her mind and augmenting her knowledge and consciousness. At the top, reborn, she receives illumination in the form of a heavenly sphere that widens and frees the personality, its round shape again representing the mandala in its ‘Kingdom of God’ aspect, whereas the lower, wheel-shaped mandala is chthonic. There is a confrontation of the natural and spiritual totalities...this picture demonstrates the not uncommon fact that the personality needs to be extended both upwards and downwards.”**<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jung, *Collected Works*, 9:1, p. 368.

<sup>20</sup> Jung, *Collected Works*, 9:1, p. 372.



The Third Patient's Mandala Reminiscent of the *Mūlādhāra* Chakra  
Jung, *Collected Works*, 9:1, Figure 25

In his interpretation of all three of these mandalas the tantric symbols which Jung refers to are always considered in a universal sense and are subservient to his own concepts. Never does he refer to the symbols as elements in tantric method.