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Body, Mind & Spirit

The Chakras: An Authoritative Editon of the Groundbreaking Classic
Charles Webster Leadbeater
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Although the seven chakras are now accepted concepts among yoga practitioners and those who study and engage in meditative or other "alternative" spiritual practices, they were exotic when C. W. Leadbeater set pen to paper in the 1920s. Leadbeater, a clairvoyant, claimed to be able to see the chakras on the etheric plane where a "double" of each person exists: "When awakened and vivified they are seen as blazing coruscating whirlpools much increased in size and resembling miniature suns."

Today, many people believe that when the chakras become "blocked" they can impede one's physical, emotional, and spiritual health, and many books seek to introduce the energy vortices, explaining their roles, dominant colors, and the stones and crystals that balance them within the body. However, a reader new to this ancient Hindu practice may find Leadbeater's classic more confusing than clarifying. His text mingles seemingly exclusive modes of belief (Hinduism and Christianity) with chemistry (the weights and compositions of atoms), implying that religion and science are simply different points on the same continuum.

Those already familiar with this spiritual practice and its terminology, however, will undoubtedly find the book an accessible, if somewhat quaint, artifact that adds depth to the story of how Westerners experienced the spirituality of the Eastern world during a time when the line between science and mysticism was not as clear as it is for most people today. Even a novice to the concept of chakras will find that the text opens up once Leadbeater begins to describe the individual chakras and their functions, although certain passages may remain perplexing.

Leadbeater warns that the etheric and astral planes pose many dangers for the untrained or unhealthy person, and he devotes entire sections to the importance of abstaining from tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. "Selfless service" is essential, as is indifference to "whether such development comes in this incarnation or the next…The Masters…will unquestionably give Their directions when They think the right time has come." This comprehensive

“introduction” contains much that is thought-provoking and mysterious: explanations of the Hindu “pranas,” the “spiritual fire” that lies dormant in the lower chakras, and the Laya yoga practices that can awaken it. Although there are differences between Leadbeater’s presentation of the chakras and how they are generally explained today, this republished volume adds historic depth to a spiritual practice that many people are only now discovering.

Elizabeth Breau