

My Spiritual Journey Around the Sun

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Hinduism is the oldest religion known to all of mankind; it's been around since 5500-2600 BCE. Likewise, the center of our universe, the sun, has been around since the very beginning of time, as we know it. I wanted my work to help me connect the similarities between these two extremely influential and important factors in the history of this world. Hinduism can be considered the base of all main religions; others branch off from, and relate to it. Similarly, the sun is the base and source of all human life. It has been worshiped all throughout history; without it we would cease to exist. Both Hinduism and the sun are based on cycles and rebirth. Time is not linear, but cyclical. Things that happen will happen again, and history will repeat itself. By looking into the spiritual connections between the sun and my inner beliefs, I create a better understanding of who I am.

Understanding who we are, and what we are made to do, is a task so many of us struggle with. It is hard to place oneself in a category because naturally there are so many components to the way we live our lives, and many elements to our personalities. To find oneself, one must look within. Emotions and personal ties tell us, deep down, who we are. This process of finding the inner self develops over time; one finds things he or she likes, or doesn't like. They find what makes them truly, un-materialistically happy and what allows them to enjoy their lives to the fullest.

This process of becoming myself blossomed when I started reading about Hinduism. For me, I needed to find a base for my understanding and belief in the world. I needed to dig my spiritual roots deep into the ground, so I could grow and have faith in some greater divine spiritual power. One weekend I wandered into the Copperfield's bookstore and went to the religion section. There I found hundreds of books about various religions; I knew I wanted to begin looking in the Eastern cultural section. On the bottom shelf, in the last bookcase, sat a few books about Hinduism. I don't read very often, so I wanted to read something that was succinct and made sense, something that was simple and would teach me all the basics. Then I found the perfect book – The Complete Idiot's Guide to Hinduism by Linda Johnsen.

I started reading the book right away, eager to find a new place within myself. The more I read, the more things connected and made sense. Hinduism explained my spiritual thoughts. I am sure that in a previous life I was heavily immersed in Hindu culture, and now I am finding my center again. I learned that Hindus ultimately worship one divine Godly spirit, but they break that being up into Gods and Goddesses. By doing this, one can much more easily wrap their mind around the greatness and vast complexness of God. This is a concept that makes a lot of sense to me.

Shiva, the liberator and destroyer, is part of the supreme trinity of Gods, along with Vishnu the protector, and Brahma the creator. Shiva is especially important to me because at this time in my life I am trying to take excess things out of my life; I am trying to clear out my mind, so the universe can come in. By taking away materialistic items, and clearing away negative emotions, I will be able to be freed from my mental ties. Shiva represents pure consciousness, always deeply engaged in meditation. It is said that when this universe is blown into dust by the pure awareness Shiva puts inside the sun he, the destroyer, will be the only one left in existence. After that, Brahma will create a new universe and Vishnu will be in control of the law and order. It is beautiful that combined in unity the thousands of Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism make up the divine being that is within all of us.

In Hinduism, the spirit in our centers connects us all. The time wheel, *Kalachakra*, keeps everything revolving and turning. Reincarnations of universes and ourselves will continually turn and revolve. The seven chakras within our bodies are individual to each of us; they are our energy centers, the life that turns within. They explain our spiritual center, and by balancing them through meditation, we balance ourselves.

Karma is another way the world goes round. Karma pushes the reincarnation wheel; it determines where, when and how we will reincarnate next based on the choices we make in this life. It is a complex system with many side notes, but at a basic level there are three types – *sanchita*, *prarabdha* and *kriyamana*. *Sanchita* is the karma we have collected in our previous lives as an individual soul. *Prarabdha* karma is the collective karma that will unfold in this lifetime and *Kriyamana* karma is the type that is new and that we are producing in this incarnation; it is what we experience due to living now.¹

Through this belief system it makes sense that everything is connected. By learning more about Hinduism I become more in tune with myself, and the world around me – things come together and make sense. Ubuntu is one of my favorite African words, which stands for, “I am because we are,” and it teaches “humanity towards others.” In my opinion, it is one the most influential and powerful words. I relate it to Hinduism because it also represents the links between all beings, and the effects from one person to the next.

In my view, the sun links everything in the whole universe together. The sun is our central life source, and the living object everything revolves around. There is an inner divine in each of us. It is a light that is waiting to be found, a presence of kindness, selflessness and generosity. By finding that presence inside myself, and opening it to other people, I help the world’s goodness glow. To find this center I must meditate and search myself internally, and I also must search the world around me for truth and understanding about why things happen, and why things are the way they are. Truth and knowledge bring out the divine light. By knowing myself and living my life I find out answers about the universes and what I am made to do.

Many ancient cultures understood the power of the sun, and worshiped it as the highest mighty spiritual force. In ancient Egypt the sun God, Ra, was the supreme God. Many myths and stories involve him combining with another God to become one unity. Ra is represented as a scarab when he is the rising sun, a symbol of creation. It is said that each day Ra sails through the sky on his boat, accompanied by many other Gods and Goddesses, as he attempts to defeat the evil serpent, Apep; on rainy days Apep is victorious. During the night Ra brings light and guides souls through the darkness of the underworld.²

In Aztec and Mayan traditions the sun was a ruler that required human sacrifice. The offering was seen as a source of energy for the sun. If the sun did not receive his blessing he would not rise the next day, and life would be lost. The Aztec’s main sun God was Huitzilopochtli; he led the Aztecs to the land where they built their empire, and was also the God of war. The Mayans worshiped Kinich Ahau, who was associated with poetry and music, and represented the passing of time. The Incan sun God Inti was the

¹ Johnsen, Linda. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Hinduism*.

² <http://www.egyptartsite.com/ra.html>

father of all Emperors, and therefore their source of direction and order. In these cultures and many others, the sun is seen as the timekeeper, the leader and the liberator, freeing us from this world so we are able to be at peace.^{3 4 5}

With an absence of the sun nothing would exist; this world would end. There are many obvious scientific reasons that explain our worship and connection to the sun. It all has to do with energy, and the food chain, links from one soul to the next. The sun feeds us vibrant energy and life, literally, through photosynthesis. During this process plants take the sun's radiant beams of light and turn them into sugars. This energy is then transferred into our bodies when we eat these plants, or consume animals that ate those plants. The sun is also our main source of vitamin D, a nutrient that is essential for our skin. The sun removes darkness, heats the earth, represents the arrival of a new day and keeps our solar system in gravitational balance. Our lives revolve around the sun.⁶

A Hindu guru, Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, or Amma, says, "God's grace is the sunlight; it shines on all without discrimination." I admire Amma's words very much. I see the sun as the power that nourishes our spirits. The sun is the essence of what makes me happy. The sun contains infinite divine energy and consciousness that is contained in every being. When I bathe in the sun's comforting, warm, loving, rays I feel my inner self being released; it is my inner sun shining out to the world. Its fierce rays radiate throughout my body and liberate me. I feel free, at peace and in tune with my inner harmony. Worshiping and loving the sun as much as it selflessly cares for me is perfectly reasonable.

Surya is the Hindu sun God. He is *prana*, life energy. Surya is the balance between the inner divine consciousness and knowledge. He heals and blesses, guides and enlightens. Surya brings out the presence of the divine within us. The sun is the soul of all worlds that brings us closer to higher levels of consciousness. I am trying to remove excess things in my life; Surya, like Shiva takes away evil and encourages the change I need.

The Hindu myth is one that personifies him nicely. The story is about Surya and his wife, Sanjna. Sanjna was mad at Surya because he was so bright that she couldn't stand looking at him, so she ran away down to earth disguised as a mare. Fortunately Surya noticed she was missing, so he transformed into a stallion and went looking for her. When he found her, he impregnated her by breathing on her. Their sons became *Ashvins*, medicine men of the Gods. Later Sanjna confessed that Surya was too bright, so he dimmed down so they could live peacefully.

In all Hindu myths there are layers of deeper meaning. In this story Surya represents true inner divine light, and Sanjna, whose name means "one with knowledge," embodies a wise soul. Sanjna fled from her overwhelming divine place of the Gods, to the material world in horse form (in Hinduism horses represent life energy). By leaving the peaceful place Sanjna's spirit was freed, but entered a superficial world. This story

³ <http://home.freeuk.com/elloughton13/aztecgod.htm>

⁴ <http://www.crystalinks.com/mayangods.html>

⁵ <http://www.about-peru-history.com/inca-gods.html>

⁶ "Importance of the Sun." *Free Articles Directory* | *Submit Articles - ArticlesBase.com*.

shows that when spirit acts through life force, healing powers are produced. The further I learn to let my inner being free, the more healing powers I will receive.⁷

Gaining healing properties comes from meditation, and getting in touch with my innermost soul. A form in which one can meditate is through the arts – chanting, painting, dancing, singing, writing, instrument playing, acting and much more, are all forms of worship. *Mandala* and *yantra* creating are admired in Hinduism as a way to contemplate the divine being. Mandalas are used to teach peace and unity. They are usually circular images with symbolic shapes and figures inside of them. They represent wholeness, and can be viewed as a cosmic model that reminds us of our relations with the never-ending universe within. They represent all aspects of life, including energy circles, social circles and cosmic circles.

Chakras are colored circles at the core of the spine, the core of our soul and consciousness. While meditating on them I envision each of their colors and emotions. My body becomes not present and only my mind exists. It is a state of purity, and nothingness. I do not think, I just float in darkness; I search for the divine and everlasting liberation from the ties to material earth. Meditation brings an inner peace and happiness, a place where nothing matters or exists. It is calmness and positive vibrations that ring and tingle throughout the body. Meditating brings within the feelings I receive when I absorb the sun. It is my soul connecting to Shiva and Surya, the greater beings.

There are thousands of chakras throughout the body, but the seven most important are along the spine. The first, located at the base of the spine is the Root chakra or *Muladhara*. This energy field relates to what grounds us, and our physical needs and desires. My bond with this chakra is the earth- leaf, rich soil, trees the vast ocean. Nature comforts me and it is a place where I find refuge and security. The Sacral chakra, found just below the naval, is known as *Svadhithana*. Relating to emotional balance and sexuality, this chakra communicates with my expressions of letting out my emotions and becoming comfortable around others. When I feel relaxed around other beings I am able to cry in front of them and be open about my emotions to them. However, at the same time, I try not to become attached to possessions or people because when I am, I am more susceptible to emotional heartache. If past memories or past lovers tie me down it is very difficult to focus on the present. By not closely connecting myself to anything I am able to clear my mind during meditation and become closer to Shiva.

The Solar Plexus chakra, *Manipura*, has to do with energy and personal power. Located between the sternum bone and the navel, this field to me is the sun. It is central and gives me life; it is the energy inside that keeps me going and living. It is the feeling of overwhelming joy I receive when I am genuinely peaceful and happy. It is the strength deep down that shines through and radiates liveliness. *Anahata*, the Heart chakra, at the center of the chest, relates to love and healing. This energy connects to coexisting relationships. One of my internal parallels is the battle between who I really am, and who others want me to be and who I am told to be. I have my natural true self, that I am still trying to find, but I also have my material self that changes and tries to fit into my surroundings.

The Throat chakra, located at the base of the neck, has to do with communication, self-expression and sound vibrations. Also known as, *Vishuddha* this energy field links to

⁷ Johnsen, Linda. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Hinduism*

OM, the sound of cosmic consciousness. OM is the sound of life and creation; its vibration brings together planes of consciousness, and unites all beings. OM connects all beings on a spiritual level. When I communicate with people, or talk with them, a lot of the time I do not know what to say, or I am at a loss for words. Due to this loss of words I say, “um” a lot, and I sometimes make noises that better fit my emotions because I cannot find words to match with what I am trying to express. It is almost easier for me to connect with people on a deeper spiritual level, when words do not need to be used, than on a basic level.

Anja, the Third Eye chakra between the eyebrows, opens our spirits and minds to the universes. Dealing with intuition and wisdom, this chakra opens us up to the world around us and brings insight into what is happening and going on. With this knowledge we are able to gain understanding about the way things work, and why people do the things they do. This chakra is partly open at this time in my life; I am sometimes aware of what is going on around me, but I do not raise awareness and I am oblivious to many things.⁸

At the top of the head, *Sahasrara*, the Crown chakra pours out infinite spirituality and transcendence connected with greater levels of consciousness. It is my belief that this energy is found all around us. Once I open my eyes to the greater vastness of the world, and gain knowledge of my incarnated lives; I actually open up myself to harmony with the divine. When I am able to love everything for what it is, and live my life selflessly, I will be in tune with the sun, and *Bhagwan*, God.

By creating a physical image of my chakras I tie and connect together all of my beliefs in Hinduism. The symbols embody characteristics and ideals of the religion, and they give images to some complex concepts. The process of generating the illustration will also be an act of glorification of the divine being. By meditating on the conceptual meaning behind what I am painting I am ultimately honoring Shiva and Surya, the Gods I relate to most at this time in my life. By releasing my inner divine through my art I better understand who I am.

⁸ "Sacred Centers - The Chakra Portal - Pathways for Personal and Global Transformation - Chakras, Videos, Workshops and Books by Anodea Judith."

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