

## Does Chiropractic Have Its Roots in Yoga?

Melvin Rosenthal, DC

In one of the early *Green Books*, co-authors Drs. B.J. Palmer and J.H. Craven presented the following quote:

"The union of the East and West, which is coming about, is greatly to be desired. They will learn something from us; we must see to it that we learn something from them. And now that we are beginning to come together, the progress of those portions of humanity who have so long been separated and have carried on their process of evolution isolated from each other, making discoveries of different kinds, will be more rapid than ever before" (From *The Philosophy of Chiropractic*, Vol. V, 1920, pp. 38-39).

What union is coming about, and how should we proceed to learn from each other? What is the relationship between Eastern yoga and chiropractic? To understand the answers to these questions, let us first look at relevant chiropractic and yoga history, and explore some basic definitions.

What are the similarities between yoga and chiropractic? Swami Vivekananda, who brought yoga to the United States in 1893, was a Hindu and a *Vedantist*. Vedanta is one of the main Indian philosophies that looks at God as inseparable from creation. This understanding is quite foreign to Western theology, which generally sees God as the creator, but not the creation. He may be "present" within the creation, but He is still separate from His own handiwork. In Vedanta, God is referred to as "Brahman," and within the human manifestation God is referred to as "Atman." Vedanta sees the individual as misidentifying him/herself as being separate from Brahman, and in search of a God outside of him/herself. The entire purpose of enlightenment or self-realization is to dissolve this separating veil of ignorance through knowledge. In fact, says the Vedantist, the Atman is no different than the Brahman; therefore, we are what we seek. This Vedantic worldview is often referred to as monism, meaning that there is not just one God (monotheism), but only God - a vision of non duality between the Creator and the creation that includes the individual.

Chiropractic philosophy is remarkably similar to Vedanta. Instead of Brahman, the Palmers used the term "universal intelligence." Instead of Atman (the individual's inner manifestation of God), the Palmers refer to "innate intelligence" or the inner innate. Like the Brahman-Atman non duality, universal and innate are also one - although highly misunderstood as such by many chiropractors. Although the word "intelligence" is not used in the yoga-Vedanta model, God is referred to as "the order;" this order is the manifestation of omniscience, infinite knowledge and intelligence. Where did the Palmers find this universal-innate model? It is so different from Western theology, and yet so close to yoga, that it may not be a coincidence that D.D. "discovered" chiropractic just two years following the introduction of yoga in his own backyard.

Why did B.J. use the word "intelligence" rather than "consciousness" as employed in yoga or Vedanta? Both of these words refer to the substratum of all perceived reality; it is the presence of God in the all. According to Joseph Maynard's book *Healing Hands*, it was the Palmers' clear and intentional choice to develop chiropractic into a healing art rather than a religion. Such words as "consciousness," "God," or any other common theological term would have created confusion to

this intention and were avoided. In addition, one of B.J.'s most important teachings was that the educated mind, the seat of the ego, tries to override this inner intelligence, or "God-sense." Both chiropractic and yoga blame the resulting ignorance as the direct or indirect cause of all human suffering. Here again, we see a profound parallel between chiropractic and yoga. What B.J. derogatorily calls the educated man, yoga calls the mistake of the intellect, the trap of the "ego-sense."

How likely was it that Dr. D.D. Palmer was introduced to, or even studied, yoga philosophy? Swami Vivekananda not only gave that famous speech in Chicago, but the mission given to him was to bring yoga to the West. He had many speaking engagements throughout America. While in Chicago, he spoke on September 11, 15, 19, 26 and 27. For the next four years, he lectured extensively throughout the United States, then returned to India. He came back to America in 1899 and stayed three more years, teaching the Vedantic philosophy publicly and privately. Even the great scientist-inventor Nicholas Tesla was intrigued enough to study under this swami. D.D. was an extremely progressive, open-minded, alternative healing-oriented individual. He was a practitioner of magnetic healing, which has some similarities to the reiki of today. He may have studied under such animal magnetism (magnetic healing) greats as J.P.F. Deleuze or one of his disciple-instructors. D.D. was observed visiting Dr. Andrew Still to learn more about Still's discoveries in osteopathy. D.D. was hungry for the truth, wherever it could be found. It's hard to believe the elder Palmer didn't hear Swami Vivekananda firsthand.

Looking further through the *Green Books*, I find that the words "yoga" or "yogi" (a yogi is a practitioner of yoga) are mentioned only in *Palmer's Law of Life*, Volume XXXIV, pages 22-23. B.J. discloses his reverence for yoga science when he discusses the question: "Want to let innate contact you?" He demonstrates the philosophical sameness of yoga and chiropractic in pointing out, "The sincere yogi would make an excellent chiropractor for getting sick well. If he had knowledge and ability to correct the intermediary adjustment to restore power of internal innate, to perfect greater understanding." However, his scant use of these terms is well compensated for by his obvious interest in Indian culture, religion and mythology as expressed in many of his texts, especially *Around the World With B.J.*, *Upside Down and Right Side Up with B.J.* and *The Bigness of the Fellow Within*.

There is another relationship worth mentioning: an offshoot to chiropractic called "concept-therapy." In 1939 or so, a chiropractor by the name of Thurman Fleet apparently became aware of this yoga-chiropractic connection. It's unclear whether he was motivated by the universal-innate philosophy of the Palmers, by Willard Carver's focus on adverse suggestion as a cause of "dis-ease," or by his own spiritual pursuit. Although his philosophy is somewhat uniquely fashioned, Dr. Fleet developed a series of texts and a teaching organization that brought yoga theosophy, chiropractic and psychology together. Initially, it served to prepare chiropractors to help their patients by using a psycho-spiritual treatment mode in addition to the physical removal of vertebral subluxations through chiropractic adjustments. Later, it also became a personal growth tool for non-chiropractors. Because I was trained as both a concept-therapy instructor/practitioner and a yoga teacher, I came to recognize concept-therapy as a bridge to yoga and Eastern thought. This seems to be a natural evolution from the study of chiropractic philosophy.

In addition to Vedanta, another branch of yoga that has many similarities to chiropractic is *kundalini* yoga, also known as *raja* yoga or *laya* yoga. Neither kundalini nor its related *chakras* are mentioned in the *Green Books*. In spite of this, there are some interesting parallels between kundalini and chiropractic philosophy with its application to vertebral subluxations and their corrections. Before explaining kundalini, it is important to point out that chiropractic's universal-innate philosophy and the vertebral subluxation relate to three very different *levels of reality*. This

fact has been the basis of many intraprofessional conflicts. Without getting too detailed, reality can be divided into three basic levels: physical, energetic and spiritual. This is carefully addressed within yoga, which breaks down these three planes into even more subdivisions. It is important to note that these planes are not distinctive layers, but dimensions that coexist. The physical plane is roughly what can be objectified by the senses. Anatomy, physiology and all of the other life and material sciences fall under what is called physical reality. The energetic level of reality deals with subtle energies that cannot be objectified by our five senses. It includes the Chinese model of the *chi* (life force) running through the body's meridians (subtle channels) and the yoga counterpart of the *prana* running through the *nadis*. Energy medicine pioneers such as Robert Becker, MD, have brought this nonphysical energy reality to the mainstream of the Western world. The third level, spiritual reality, refers to the underlying absolute, the higher power, from which the physical and energy levels manifest.

Kundalini deals with both the energy and spiritual levels. Caroline Myss' *Energy Anatomy* helps bring all this into focus. Various medical doctors and other researchers over the years have attempted to make the kundalini model both understandable and useful to us on the physical plane. The connection between kundalini and anatomy has its limitations because it seeks correspondences that are not empirical in nature. In my opinion, chiropractic suffers this same problem, in that we try to weld the spiritual-level philosophy of universal-innate with the physical-level pathology of the subluxation with its correction methodologies. ("Subluxation" in this case is defined as a vertebral misalignment producing nerve interference). Showing that the physical-level subluxation interferes with the more subtle energy and spiritual bodies has frustrated many dedicated chiropractic researchers, not least of whom was B.J. Palmer. The subluxation is a multilevel phenomenon, with only a portion of its effects demonstrable through empirical process on the physical plane. Understanding kundalini may help to alleviate some of this frustration, by increasing understanding of the energy dynamics of the subluxation.

While kundalini energy is the internal flow of life force, it also manifests as a spiritual desire for transcendence, becoming one again with the so-called "Godhead." To accomplish this, a massive amount of kundalini energy must move up through a central third channel to reach the seventh chakra. This process is ongoing, even without our knowing it. A forced, unnatural, or premature rising of the "kundalini *shakti*" (energy) can result in serious problems, not least of which being emotional disorders. In the book *Spiritual Emergency*, psychiatrist Dr. Stanislav Grof and others suggest that a substantial percentage of the patients in mental hospitals may be suffering not from mental illness, but from this kundalini phenomenon. When transcendence is completed, the individual lives out the rest of his or her life as an enlightened being. The same issues that cause life force energy blockages and distortions within the chakras hold back this enlightenment process.

What are the causes of these chakra obstructions? Ancient Vedanta, yoga and tantra texts explain that these obstructions can have their origins at the spiritual, energetic and/or physical levels. Contrary to logical Western thinking, the more subtle the interference, the more profound the affect. The subtlest is the spiritual reality, followed by the energetic reality, and finally the gross physical reality. Actually, by correcting issues in the spiritual plane you automatically alter manifestations in the energetic and physical planes; this is why meditation has been shown to be such a powerful tool (refer to many of the books which have emerged out of the Transcendental Meditation movement). By attempting to alleviate physical issues alone, at best you provide some temporary relief, with little effect on the subtle causative levels. Does this sound familiar? Our motto in chiropractic is that we "correct the cause." Going by the above model, can we accomplish this by only physically adjusting subluxations? This has not been B.J.'s position, or the position of any of the other chiropractic pioneers. Some of the more philosophically oriented chiropractors

have, knowingly or unknowingly, employed "spiritual remedies" in addition to their mechanical skills. They have accomplished this through lay lectures, "laying on of hands," and through their own understanding. With this in mind, it appears that intention is sometimes much more important than technique.

How do yogis spiritually unblock chakras? Vedanta contends that ignorance of the self is the cause of all human suffering. If everything is God in manifestation, and one sees him or herself as not only separate from God, but as a searcher for God, then only frustration, unhappiness and disappointment are possible. Have you ever pushed your eyeglasses onto your forehead, only to later spend time and frustration running feverishly around the house trying to find them? You are what you seek. We look outside of ourselves for God when this "consciousness" is with us all the time. This was why B.J. was so emphatic about breaking out of the bondage of being trapped by the educated mind; the educated mind is egocentric. The more we look at the ego as our self-identity, the more we close our eyes to the universal intelligence that is who we are under the name of innate. Studying the mystical scriptures of all great traditions provides the understanding and motivation necessary to eventually dissolve that veil of ignorance. In yoga, we accomplish this through the study of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanisads* (practical portions of the Indian scriptures called the *Vedas*), the *Sutras of Patanjali* and the tantric texts, all under the direction of a qualified teacher. In addition to study, various forms of meditation, ritual and prayer are taught. Although the *Green Books* are quite spiritual, there is a great deal can be learned from the East.

On a spiritual level, what can a chiropractor do for his patients? As the saying goes, "Doctor, heal thyself." As parents, we know that our actions speak so loudly that our children may not hear what we say, but will learn from what we do. By getting your own house in order, you help others by your wholeness of mind, by your intention, and by your example; truth is contagious. In addition, lay lectures and meditation classes are remarkably effective ways to start moving patients in the right direction, and helping them make a profound difference in their lives. Meditation, as esoteric as it seems, is now even taught by some HMOs and hospitals. The patient lectures must be done tastefully and professionally, with sensitivity to each person's religious background. I remember when I tried to emulate a lay lecture format taught at a popular philosophy workshop back in the 1970s. The instructor carried over his fire-and-brimstone religious orientation to the lay lecture. When I used it, it backfired. I could feel the audience's tension.

On an energy level, the foods we eat and the mind we keep are major contributors to a healthy energy system. Ayurveda is the ancient yet "modern" energy healing system associated with yoga. In Deepak Chopra's book *Perfect Health* (an instructional book on ayurveda), he points out that there are three basic mind-body types, and that each of them has its own specific dietary needs. The right foods will create homeostasis. The wrong foods will create physical and emotional stress. A lifestyle in alignment with one's value system will create inner harmony. A lifestyle in conflict with inner ideals will create "dis-ease." This is why Dr. D.D. Palmer listed three causes of subluxations: trauma, poisons (wrong foods) and adverse suggestion (emotional stress). Chiropractic was on target from its inception. It was and is the chiropractor who, by seeing the self only through the veil of ignorance, has limited his vision and his effectiveness by restricting himself to physical reality.

Sound and breathwork are also important tools for working on the chakras on an energy level. In the Bible, it is the word that God used to create the universe. In the Vedas, sound is the first perceivable creative action. We can use sound as a healing force for ourselves and for others. In yoga, chanting and reciting mantras (holy sounds, words or phrases from a scripture), either out loud or silently within meditation positively affects the energy level of reality. Each of the chakras has a specific mantra that helps to clear obstructions. Prayer, inspirational singing and classical

music (i.e. "the Mozart effect") are the ways of the West. Yoga is alone in the ancient discovery that certain highly unique and specific breathing techniques, called pranayama, can subtly and profoundly affect the body and mind.

In *The Chakras* by C.W. Leadbeater (1927, but reprinted), and in the essay entitled "Anatomical and Physiological Basis of Raja Yoga," by Dr. J.K. Sarkar, from Appendix II of Swami Tapasyananda's *Saundarya Lahari of Sri Sankaracarya* (Indian publisher), possible anatomical parallels between the physical level and the nadis and chakras are demonstrated. These authors project how the two main nadis that run along the spine in the subtle body may be analogous to afferent and efferent spinal cord tracts. The seven chakras may be analogous to the ganglion of impar (1<sup>st</sup> chakra); hypogastric plexi (2<sup>nd</sup> chakra); coeliac or solar plexus (3<sup>rd</sup> chakra); cardiac plexus (4<sup>th</sup> chakra); the plexus, which connects the cervical ganglia (5<sup>th</sup> chakra); and the pineal body (6<sup>th</sup> chakra). Most sources place the 7<sup>th</sup> chakra at or just above the top of the head. This may have turned into the halo of Christianity. The two *nadis*, which run from the sacral region to the pineal body and cross the spine three-and-one-half times, are the basis for the Caduceus in medicine. Although many of the books available on kundalini are misleading, I have found that the books written by Gopi Krishna, Swami Rama and Joan Harrigan, PhD, are quite helpful. Dr. Harrigan's book, *Kundalini Vidya*, is privately published and available from her website; Swami Rama and Mr. Krishna's books are available from most booksellers.

To physically affect the chakras, yoga and its close cousin ayurveda utilize yoga postures and *panchakarma*. The postures (yoga exercises) gently stimulate and remove some obstructions to specific chakras by increasing flexibility and removing local spinal fixations. In my opinion, a chiropractic adjustment can be looked at as *instant yoga*. Not everyone can or will do yoga regularly. In addition, injuries, poor lifestyle habits and spiritual issues keep these physical blockages (subluxations?) from resolving, thereby requiring more aggressive intervention (adjustments). Panchakarma literally means "five actions." These ancient yoga physiotherapy and massage therapy treatments have retained their value and are still effectively used today.

How can chiropractic physically assist in the kundalini process? Changes at the spiritual level profoundly affect the energetic and physical levels. Changes at the physical level will have an effect on the energy body, but to a lesser degree. Adjusting subluxation certainly inter reacts neurologically with the sympathetic plexi. When Dr. D.D. Palmer restored Harvey Lillard's hearing, thereby discovering modern chiropractic, this mechanism was employed. As mentioned earlier, there is assumed to be a bridge between the chakras and the sympathetic nervous system. If this bridge is a reality, subluxations can be either an effect or a cause of chakra obstructions; therefore the adjustment may very well have an effective impact. Symptoms related to chakras can be helpful to chiropractors as a part of their chiropractic analysis in a similar way to *nerve tracing*. There are also correspondences between the spinal analysis used in structural approaches to chiropractic and chakra obstructions. An example is found in Dr. Mortimer Levine's book, *The Structural Approach to Chiropractic*. Here, we find that the areas of the spine most at risk for subluxation are the apical and crossing vertebrae of the a-p curves; they are similar to the locations of the vulnerable chakras. Additionally, the Logan Basic technique that involves placing pressure indirectly on the ganglion impar may be stimulating the kundalini shakti flow, helping the entire organism both in restoring day-to-day life force distribution, and for assisting in our ultimate goal of transcendence or enlightenment.

If, after reading this paper, you are moved by Dr. B.J. Palmer's directive, and the supporting evidence which demonstrates that yoga and chiropractic are two pieces of the same puzzle, you may want to take the next step to incorporate these ideas into your practice. The "Universal-Innate-

subluxation" philosophy of the Palmers was and is the most holistic approach to health available if employed at all three levels of reality. Conventional opinion makes it appear difficult for yoga, Kundalini, consciousness and God to play an active role in 21<sup>st</sup> century chiropractic. This is because once we use the phrase "healing art profession" we are expected to restrict ourselves to the physical plane where double-blind studies prevail as the governing factor for validity. But by restricting ourselves in this way, we are not only cheating chiropractic, but we are cheating our patients and ourselves. Besides, as mentioned above, some hospitals and HMOs are already providing such esoteric practices to their patients. A local Pennsylvania gynecologist has been giving holistically oriented patient lectures and has been teaching meditation to her patients for years.

Yoga has been in the spiritual and energy field longer than anyone else has. They have made it a science. You do not have to go to India (like the Beatles) to develop your spiritual path. There are many excellent yoga study and retreat centers (called "ashrams") in the USA and throughout the world (a list of ashrams in your area is available from the author). When I retired from practice I moved near an ashram in Pennsylvania in order to be close to this teaching. Two excellent Western-oriented books on consciousness (another name for Universal Intelligence) are *The Physiology of Consciousness* by Robert Keith Wallace (1993), PhD, and *Quantum Healing* by Deepak Chopra, MD. As a yoga instructor, I am always bewildered as to why more chiropractors are not rushing to become yoga teachers. Yoga postures are mostly about the spine and may be the best exercise program to strengthen and increase flexibility of the spine, thereby helping patients hold their adjustments. In her book *Back Care Basics*, orthopedic surgeon Mary Pullig Schatz, MD, includes story after story about how yoga postures dramatically helped patients with failed back surgeries.

Yoga, Vedanta and kundalini are not religions; they are mystical paths, similar to the kabbalah, Sufism and Christian mysticism. In Western mysticism, you are not invited to learn this more esoteric wisdom until you first prove yourself to be a true devotee and scholar of the Bible. Eastern mysticism is made available to all, with or without any Hindu or Buddhist affiliation. These Eastern religions are non-proselytizing and do not seek converts. They actually can help you to better understand and practice your own religion. When I first started to teach yoga to patients in the 1980s, some patients were discouraged from participating by their ministers because the churches did not understand yoga. Today, yoga is a household word; it has been recommended on "The Oprah Show," countless articles have appeared in popular magazines, and it is even taught in some churches and synagogues.

B.J. Palmer loved the Indian culture, as we can tell from his expansive descriptions and recollections of his travels to the Indian subcontinent. Chiropractic philosophy is yoga philosophy, flavored by the genius of both Palmers and other great chiropractic pioneers. The kundalini and Vedanta models not only give us a body of knowledge to draw from; they help us to bring our own development and that of our patients to a higher level. Chiropractic has moved too far toward the physical level of reality in our focus and has abandoned the more causal levels where transformation happens; attention and proficiency on all three levels are our ideal objectives. Miracles can still take place, but we must first learn to feed the *roots* and not the leaves.

"The East has very much to instruct the West in ... they can instruct us in things related to the soul and meditation ... the progress of those portions of humanity who have so long been separated and have carried on their process of evolution isolated from each other, making discoveries of different kinds, will be more rapid than ever before" (a quote by Sir Oliver Lodge, from *The Philosophy of Chiropractic*, by Drs. Palmer and Craven, 1920, pp. 38-39).

We are living in a world ready and hungry for the truth: that the spiritual and energy aspects of chiropractic are as important as its physical approach. This holistic vision will bring peace and healing to the bodies and minds of chiropractors and their patients. The resulting opportunities for the profession and for humanity are limitless.

*Melvin Rosenthal, DC*  
*Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania*

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