

Yoga Psychotherapy: Which Yoga postures can be used to balance which emotions, in the context of psychotherapeutic treatment

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“There are fewer boundaries between body, emotions, and mind than Western psychology assumes. Yoga sees these three as one and inseparable” (Dykema, 1991, p. 47)

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which, to a substantial extent, has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore which Yoga postures can be used to balance specific human emotions, in the context of psychotherapeutic treatment.

It aims to bridge holistic traditions and spiritualities with modern sciences and psychologies, given that despite empirically demonstrated psychological benefits of Yoga, literature on how to apply Yoga to the existing mental health field is scarce.

Emerging literature on Yoga Psychotherapy has been successful in establishing guidelines for the integration of the two disciplines (Yoga and psychotherapy), and in broadly describing how to integrate core aspects of Yoga into therapeutic treatment. Nevertheless, it has failed to provide sufficient detail on how to incorporate the *asana* (posture) element into psychotherapeutic treatment, particularly considering its role in psychological healing.

Drawing on ancient holistic Hindu philosophies, this dissertation explores the concept that particular Yoga postures have a balancing effect on specific chakras (namely, centres of energy that connect the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of our being), which in turn will help balance certain emotions.

This work consists of a literature review, based on thematic analysis, regarding what specific authors (known for their background in Yoga traditions) claim to be the emotions and postures that relate to each of the main chakras.

The primary outcome of this research is a set of proposed postures meant to help balance particular types of emotions, when integrated with the psychological and philosophical elements of Yoga.

1 Introduction

This chapter will start by articulating my background and journey into Yoga, my passions, intentions and biases, and then proceed to explain the aim for this dissertation, the gap it is attempting to cover, and scope constraints.

1.1 My background

Having had a somewhat difficult childhood, I spent a fair portion of the earlier stages of my life iterating between despair, anger and depression. A mix of cultural factors, familial environment and personality traits kept me trapped in a cycle of suffering that I felt powerless to address. With the luxury of hindsight, I realise I was looking for change to happen outside of myself, and my strategy was to expect the external environment to change (and blaming it for my problems), rather than looking for change to happen inside myself¹. The very first teaching I received from Yoga was that life does not tend to change until we do. Namely, once I transformed myself internally (my perceptions, understandings, responses), my external reality started to transform as well. I believe this happened because instead of seeing the world through the lenses of my traumas and pathogenic beliefs, I worked to perceive it more neutrally and mindfully, rather than getting identified with dramas and having self-centred views of reality, and this gave me a more peaceful and less persecutory experience of external events. Consequently, this resulted in internal feelings of empathy and compassion instead of anger and outrage, which were in turn reflected in my behaviour. As a result, other people responded to me more positively, and naturally my experience of their response (and the world) was also much more peaceful and rewarding. This was an example of how I have integrated the Yoga teaching that my internal reality changes my external one (it also goes to show that our internal and external realities are perhaps more interconnected than we think). This was the first of a framework of many, many Yoga teachings to come, which transformed my life as a whole. Through these, Yoga was a powerful tool to rapidly and dramatically shift many of my unhealthy thinking patterns, emotions, values, lifestyle, relationships, environmental connectedness, as well as overall state of being.

As may be apparent by now, I refer to Yoga not as the fitness modality often perceived by the West, but rather a holistic paradigm arising from the Vedic age (4500BC to 2500BC), namely an all-encompassing framework of principles, philosophies, guidelines and practices. Its foundations carry five millennia of ancient Indian wisdom, involving all existential dimensions, such as physical, vital, emotional, mental, social, ecological and spiritual (Feuerstein, 2008). My personal life shift triggered by Yoga led me to become a Yoga teacher, where I witnessed my students going through identically rapid transformations towards joy, peace and fulfilment. This increased my passion about sharing this with those in need, and I became determined to bring this paradigm into the mental health system, hence deciding to become a psychotherapist. So here I am.

¹ When I refer to the concept of inner change, I include elements such as shifting unhealthy thinking patterns, having more balanced emotions, feeling more joyful and at peace (with self and others), being aligned with one's goals, finding meaning and purpose, and deepening mind-body-soul integration.

1.2 My biases

When such a powerful transformation happens, as the one I have experienced through Yoga, it can be a challenge not to idealise the specific tradition that enabled it (in my case Integral Yoga). While over the course of this research, I have tried to assign equal weight to the selected authors and Yoga traditions, my subjectivity (understandings, internal values, feelings, thoughts) has been shaped by Integral Yoga (brief information on MISA, the chain of schools where I learned from, is available in the list of authors in Appendix 1). Other biases influencing me are that I am a 36-year-old white woman, with a mixed socio-economic family history, born in Portugal, with influences from all continents, currently living in Aotearoa New Zealand. For the purposes of this dissertation, I choose to see the mix of privilege that these elements have brought me (e.g. being recognised and accepted in Western societies, as well as having been shaped by Yoga philosophies from Eastern societies), as a richness, rather than a handicap. I want to believe that my experience, allied to the intention of assigning equal value to the different Yoga traditions I will be reviewing throughout this dissertation, will add value to the literature review that is being performed.

1.3 Aim

As a training psychotherapist, I see clients clinically, both under a conventional psychotherapy lens, and through a Yoga Psychotherapy one. Yoga Psychotherapy is a recently emerging discipline that integrates the methods, principles, philosophies and standards from both fields of Yoga and psychotherapy. What I have found in my practice was that positive change happens powerfully and expediently when I bring Yoga into psychotherapy contexts, and realisations or shifts such as the one I described early in this chapter are fairly frequent in clients. Hence, my overarching goal is to make a contribution to the literature that bridges Yoga and psychotherapy.

This contribution will be done through the exploration of a gap in the current Yoga Psychotherapy framework. As I will discuss over the next paragraphs, this framework has been proposed by Anjali (1994), covering the eight limbs (aspects) of Yoga as defined by Patanjali (as cited by Feuerstein, 2008). Having lived sometime between 100BC and 500AC, Patanjali is widely considered to be the father of Classical Yoga, having compiled knowledge that had been scattered across multiple documents and traditions into a reasonably homogeneous theoretical framework known as the Yoga sutras, namely the foundational scriptures of Yoga. Contemporary Yoga schools (e.g. Râja, Hatha, Jnâna, Bhakti, Ashtanga, Karma, Mantra, Laia, Kundalinî, Tantra) generally draw from some (or all) parts of Classical Yoga (henceforth called Yoga).

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the aforementioned gap, performing a literature review on specific Yoga authors, supported by my own knowledge and experience of both Yoga and psychotherapy. This gap (which will be articulated next), will aim to identify emotion-balancing Yoga postures, thereby providing tools for practitioners to augment treatment of clients who are suffering emotionally. I can share a personal example of Yoga helping me shift a particular set of

unbalanced² emotions. Namely, I had been experiencing feelings such as anger, ambition and arrogance for decades, and through the practice of Yoga, these shifted towards different emotions that relate to the same centre of energy (as the literature review chapter will show), such as will-power, self-esteem and a more humble self-confidence. Naturally this had multiple implications in my life (e.g. decreased anxiety, access to humour, increased capacity to take action towards personal aims, better interpersonal relationships).

1.4 Finding the gap

The next chapter will reference empirical research suggesting that Yoga-based interventions have positive short and long-term impacts on mental and emotional health. Namely, a wide range of studies suggest that Yoga can improve depression, stress, anxiety, emotion regulation, emotional well-being, trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, mindfulness and awareness, concentration, addictions, and conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention deficit disorder, amongst others³.

With such promising impacts, I expected to find vast amounts of literature about the application of Yoga into mental health areas, particularly psychotherapy. However, I was surprised to find almost no academic research or other literature on this topic. So, I was determined to build on the little existing literature on the subject, the central piece being Anjali's (1994) thesis proposing a Yoga Psychotherapy framework, which offers a model on how to incorporate the two disciplines (which is what this dissertation builds on). The only other related item was a dissertation by Cooper (1986) regarding the commonalities between disciplines. Even broadening my search, literature showed a very limited number of therapeutic modalities that make use of any type of Yoga practices, such as Trauma-sensitive therapy (Emerson & Hopper, 2015), Meaning-oriented approach to resilience and transformation (C. L. W. Chan, Chan, & Ng, 2006) and Mindfulness-based stress reduction (Salmon, Lush, Jablonski, & Sephton, 2009).

Key aspects of Anjali's (1994) thesis are represented in Figure 1.

² A definition of balanced and unbalanced emotions will be shared in the methodology chapter.

³ These facts are based on my analysis of a broad spectrum of clinical trials and scientific literature reviews that compare Yoga practices *versus* no treatment, Yoga practices *versus* medication (e.g. anxiolytic, anti-depressant), and Yoga practices *versus* specific therapies (e.g. dialectical behavioural therapy, psychoeducation), from various sources of international literature, and include both short-term and long-term studies.

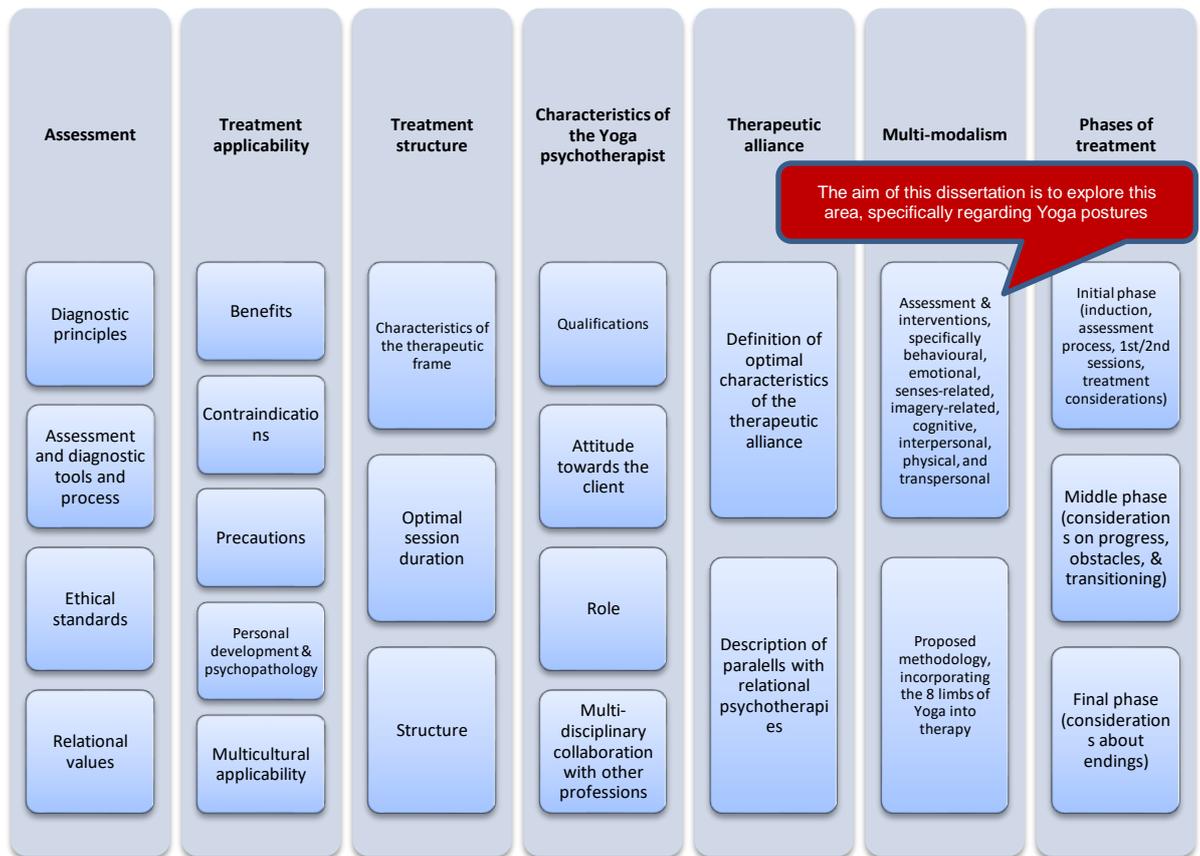


Figure 1 – My summary of Anjali's Yoga Psychotherapy framework, and current gap.

Anjali (1994) uses the concepts behind Yoga Psychology and conventional psychotherapy to propose a detailed Yoga Psychotherapy framework. After describing Yoga Psychology, the author covers elements of this framework such as assessment, treatment applicability, treatment structure, characteristics of the Yoga psychotherapist, considerations about the therapeutic alliance, the need for a multi-modal approach, and suggestions about the phases of treatment (as outlined in Figure 1). I started learning psychotherapy when I was already well established in Yoga, and my initial sense was that Yoga and psychotherapy had seemingly opposing views on some topics. Surprised by this contrast, I have since dedicated years of considerable effort to integrating Yoga and psychotherapy, and now feel like I have worked through those differences and integrated the two disciplines within myself. Anjali (1994), whose work I was unaware of at the time, has also reconciled these differences, and we have come to very similar findings.

While Anjali's (1994) thesis is very thorough in most areas, there is a gap in that the author briefly suggests that the practitioner can prescribe Yoga practices (e.g. postures, breathing exercises, relaxation, meditation techniques) to assist with psychotherapeutic treatment, but does not mention which ones. Upon contact with the author (who lives in the United States), she justified that the West already has too much focus on the *asana* (posture) element, which explains why she focuses essentially on the remaining ones; a point that I strongly agree with. Nevertheless, I believe that literature should contain the whole information, so this dissertation aims to build on the existing Yoga Psychotherapy framework, by addressing this gap. Worth noting that this dissertation intends to draw from and fit into Anjali's (1994) Yoga Psychotherapy framework, rather than reinventing or critiquing areas that have already been researched.

1.5 Scope

While there are many elements that Yoga considers can help balance emotions, as per the eight limbs of Yoga described in the next chapter, the scope of this dissertation will be restricted to the *asana* (posture) aspect, as it is the one that is directly related to the research question. Within *asana*, the focus will be on still postures, rather than the vast amount of movements that can be performed within Yoga postures.

Additionally, given that this dissertation falls under a psychotherapy context, it will focus on how to use Yoga postures to balance emotions only, as per research question (even though the same type of research could be useful for the treatment of physical conditions).

This dissertation will not analyse particular types of diagnosis (e.g. which postures treat depression), instead it is meant to address the underlying layer (e.g. this particular person's depression involves emotions of fear and loneliness, so the postures for fear and loneliness would be suitable).

A critique of the Yoga Psychotherapy framework itself is also out of scope.

Moreover, while there will be a contextualisation of the main chakras⁴ (as it is required for the literature review), an exhaustive description of all aspects and implications of the chakras is also not in scope, given that there is already extensive literature about this.

1.6 Chapter concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have described my background both in terms of the paradigm shift that Yoga brought into my personal life, and my work as a teacher of Yoga philosophy/psychology. I have also mentioned my aim of contributing to the (currently scarce) literature around Yoga Psychotherapy. Additionally, I have described my journey towards the topic of my dissertation, namely having performed preliminary research about the impacts of Yoga for mental and emotional health, and then being surprised to find such scarce literature on the topic despite its proven effects; the discovery of Anjali's (1994) Yoga Psychotherapy framework, and the gap I found in the current literature. Lastly, I clarified elements of the scope of this dissertation.

In the following chapters, I will offer some contextual information about Yoga, and explore its relevance of Yoga to the field of psychotherapy. Then, I will articulate the methodological approach used for this dissertation. Subsequently, I will enunciate the results of the literature review I have performed on the gap that has been identified. Lastly, I will present a discussion, and draw conclusions from the findings.

⁴ A more detailed description about chakras in the Methodology chapter.

2 Relevance of Yoga Psychotherapy to the discipline area

This chapter will start by exploring the relationship between Yoga and psychotherapy. The purpose of this is to set a contextual foundation so that the reader can understand the rest of this research, rather than being a critique or literature review of Yoga. Then, some elements about the relevance of Yoga (and Yoga Psychotherapy) to the psychotherapy field will be explored, as well as some considerations for Aotearoa New Zealand in particular.

2.1 Interconnectedness between Yoga and psychotherapy

Yoga translates from Sanskrit (sacred ancient language) as 'union'. This union happens at multiple levels, which are all inter-connected, and they also have subtle links to psychotherapy.

First, the union between the various elements of our self (physical, vital, emotional/mental, supra-mental and spiritual). Dykema (1991, p. 47) raises that "there are fewer boundaries between body, emotions, and mind than Western psychology assumes", and Yoga teaches us that body, mind and spirit are profoundly intertwined.

Second, the union between ourselves and the environment (people, culture, nature). Dykema (1991) describes that in many ways the goals of Yoga are comparable to those of psychotherapy, namely lessening pain and suffering, and gaining access to personal resources (e.g. empowerment, autonomy, joy, peace, love, equanimity). This will be further explored later in this chapter.

Third, the union between the individual spirit and the universal spirit. Whitmore (1991) recognises Yoga's aim to integrate the aforementioned elements of the self, as well as merging with the higher (transpersonal) Self. Anjali (1994) is critical of how science and psychology are quite open to studying and accepting the physical and psychological, yet the spiritual dimension is often neglected. The author claims that it has only been in the last century that we have separated emotional issues from spiritual ones, and performs research that suggests that psycho-spiritual issues have significant impact on mental health and healing. Namely, the author references a number of studies where spirituality had positive effects on physical health, longevity, well-being and mental health, mentioning specific conditions such as suicide, substance abuse, depression, amongst others. Yet despite being a relatively neglected area, spirituality had been present in several forms of psychological therapy, such as humanistic approaches, eco psychology, and indigenous traditions, and even some psychologists, as early as Carl Jung, who deemed spirituality as a necessary component of psychological well-being (Moore, 1992). As Asrani (1977, pp. 1-2) noted: "Neither science alone, nor mysticism (...) alone, can solve (...) human problems; but a cooperation between them may". Ellis points out various aspects of Transpersonal psychology that are similar to Yoga psychology, namely issues concerning:

(a) universal healing energies, (b) the essential oneness of creation, (c) the Higher Self beyond the ego, (d) paranormal and extrasensory experiences, (e) concepts of karma and reincarnation, (f) the mind-body-spirit connection, (g) alternate views of pain and suffering as related to purification, (h) altered and higher states of consciousness, (i) moral values and

ethics foundational to many spiritual traditions, and (j) a view of various psychospiritual approaches as many paths to one goal. (Ellis as cited by Anjali, 1994, p. 20)

Yet Anjali (1994) explains that despite these similarities, the main difference between Yoga and Transpersonal psychology is that Yoga tends to focus on the transcendence of the mind in order to reach the higher Self (a person's spiritual nature, or divine essence, a concept of self beyond ego or materialistic identifications), rather than the intense stand-alone focus on emotional and mental issues.

2.2 Elements that comprise Yoga

The Yoga sutras define eight limbs (elements) of Yoga, to achieve Yoga's goals. Namely, *Yama* (principles for intrapsychic ethical conduct), *Niyama* (principles for interpersonal ethical conduct), *Asana* (postures), *Pranayama* (breath), *Pratyahara* (focusing our senses inwards), *Dharana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (liberation).

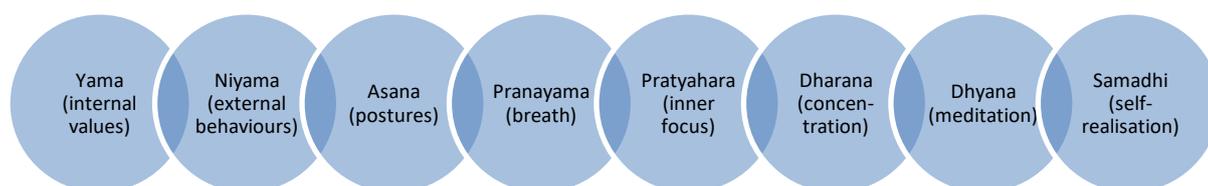


Figure 2 - Eight limbs of Yoga

The *Yamas* consist of: *Ahimsa* (Compassion instead of violence), *Satya* (Honesty), *Asteya* (Non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (Continence) and *Aparigraha* (Non-accumulation). And the *Niyamas* are *Saucha* (Purity), *Santosa* (Contentment), *Tapas* (Spiritual effort), *Svadyaya* (Knowledge of the spiritual truths) and *Ishvara pranidhana* (Consciousness of a superior reality). I have shared a more detailed explanation about these *Yamas* and *Niyamas* in a different publication (Batalha, 2017).

To contextualise all this, Iyengar explains that:

these eight stages as an evolution that takes the human mind from a state of dullness to be first purified by the moral and self-purificatory observances and then brought to a state of action through the asanas or postures. The mind has the tendency toward restlessness when it is active, thus asanas and pranayama help to bring stability. To counteract the tendency of the mind to wander, due to the pull of the senses, restraint is cultivated through the practice of pratyahara and dharana. In the higher stages, the mind is then mastered and transcended through dhyana and in samadhi, Yoga or union is then achieved. (Iyengar as cited by Anjali, 1994, p. 5)

2.3 Relevance of Yoga / Yoga Psychotherapy to the psychotherapy discipline

There is increased research suggesting that Yoga can have positive impacts on emotion regulation, emotional well-being (Auty, Cope, & Liebling, 2015; Buffart et al., 2012; Crews et al., 2016; Emerson & Hopper, 2015; Filley et al., 2017; LaChiusa, 2016; Rhodes, Spinazzola, & Van

der Kolk, 2016), and mental health. These are key elements in psychotherapy, according to Shedler (2010).

Moreover, empirical research posits that Yoga practices assist with recovery from conditions often treated in psychotherapy, such as depression (Arpita, 1990; Balasubramaniam, Telles, & Doraiswamy, 2013; Buffart et al., 2012; Cheung, Park, & Wyman, 2016; Crews, Stolz-Newton, & Grant, 2016; Field, 2011; Filley, McConnell, & Anderson, 2017; Pilkington, Kirkwood, Rampes, & Richardson, 2005), stress and anxiety (Arpita, 1990; Buffart et al., 2012; Cheung et al., 2016; Crews et al., 2016; Field, 2011; Filley et al., 2017; Kirkwood, Rampes, Tuffrey, Richardson, & Pilkington, 2005; Sharma & Haider, 2013), trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (Crews et al., 2016; Descilo et al., 2010; Emerson & Hopper, 2015; Filley et al., 2017; Van der Kolk et al., 2014), mindfulness and awareness (Crews et al., 2016; Field, 2011; LaChiusa, 2016), concentration (Field, 2011; Filley et al., 2017), fatigue (Buffart et al., 2012; Field, 2011), addictions (S. B. S. Khalsa, Khalsa, Khalsa, & Khalsa, 2008), as well as specific disorders such as schizophrenia (Balasubramaniam et al., 2013; Filley et al., 2017), bipolar disorder (Filley et al., 2017), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Koran, Hanna, Hollander, Nestadt, & Simpson, 2007; Shannahoff-Khalsa, 2003), and attention deficit disorder (Balasubramaniam et al., 2013).

In the next few paragraphs, I will explore how the healing factors in psychotherapy align with those of Yoga in general, or Yoga Psychotherapy in particular. To articulate this, I will draw from Petzold's (1993) study of the common healing factors in psychotherapy, and analyse possible similarities with their Yoga counterparts.

First, factors such as empathy, and emotional support (as described by Petzold, 1993), are often a key part of the therapeutic relationship (Tudor, 2011). This empathic therapeutic relationship, with all the qualities it entails, is similarly emphasised by Yoga Psychotherapy (Anjali, 1994).

Second, a factor around fostering physical awareness, self-regulation and relaxation (Petzold, 1993). As will be discussed in the literature review chapter, the *asana* (posture) element of Yoga is an example of how Yoga directly addresses these physical elements.

Third, factors around empowerment and strength-building, namely support in coping with problems and life, encouraging learning opportunities and interests, promoting creativity, and developing positive future perspectives (Petzold, 1993). Empowerment is an important element of psychotherapy (The Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2013) as well as Yoga. Namely, the Yoga Psychotherapy practitioner has a key role in empowering and resourcing the client to access their own inner wisdom, by offering skills, tools and knowledge that they can use outside of therapy to accelerate recovery (not only in terms of *asana* practice but also the impact that Yoga philosophy teachings have on insight-generation⁵). Hence Yoga's potential to

⁵ In the literature review chapter, I will share an example of my learning that I did not have to buy into anger. I could have easily spent decades of my life exploring my anger in conventional psychotherapy, and who knows how long I would have needed to eventually come to my own conclusions that I could let anger go. In that situation (which is the type of psychoeducation that would happen frequently in Yoga Psychotherapy), I instantly integrated that I did not have to accept anger, I was shown a different way of living, and I took it. That episode was seven years ago, and I cannot imagine ever going back to my old way of living. In Yoga we compare that to turning a light switch on, rather than getting to know an entire dark room by blindly feeling it with the hands. While there is certainly value in exploring our darkness (negative emotions),

accelerate the learning and recovery process, which can contrast with conventional psychotherapy, which tends to be a long-term and expensive treatment (Chiesa & Fonagy, 1999). My clinical observations suggest that this empowerment can snowball into clients taking ownership of many other areas of their lives, instead of remaining too dependent on the therapist.

Fourth, factors regarding the development of a positive personal value system, fostering of solidarity, and promotion of relational competency (Petzold, 1993). These can be related to Yoga's *Yamas* and *Niyamas*, namely the complex philosophical system of internal values and external behaviours, discussed earlier in this chapter.

Fifth, self-agency strengthening, namely a factor fostering a salient experience of self and identity (Petzold, 1993). Promoting self-agency is another important ethical responsibility in psychotherapeutic practice, especially in a bi-cultural country such as Aotearoa New Zealand, where loss of identity happened because of colonization and cultural disempowerment (Fay, 2005). Yoga advocates for self-awareness, so that we can remove the psychological obstacles that keep us from being grounded in our higher Self and true nature (values and attributes of the higher Self), by purifying and transforming our consciousness through the discipline of the body, breath, emotions and mind. Anjali (1994) compares this to looking at one's image in a mirror, that is clouded by the lower mind and emotions, hence looking ugly and distorted, but when the mind is neutral and clean, one can see the clear image of one's higher Self, experiencing authenticity, integrity, congruence, fulfilment, health, joy, peace and equanimity (Anjali, 1994).

Sixth, a factor related to fostering insight, meaning and understanding (Petzold, 1993). This insight can be related to Yoga's philosophical framework for understanding the universe and our true nature, and in fact Yoga argues that it is the ignorance of these truths that causes human suffering. Namely, Patanjali (as cited by Anjali, 1994) himself posits that the source of suffering is that we forget our true nature (which is joyful and magnificent), and therefore long for that joy and seek it outside of ourselves. This puts pressure on the external world to provide those elements, causing us suffering when it does not. We then respond to that suffering by being angry, resentful, fearful, envious, etc., and react in ways that inflict our suffering into the world. This then leads to the concept of karma, namely that the suffering we have inflicted comes back to us at some stage (in a causal but non-linear way). As Ajaya (1976, p. 109) said, "If we could fully understand and appreciate that we are always creating our own reality... our entire way of experiencing our world would be changed"⁶.

Seventh, a factor relating to fostering emotional expression (Petzold, 1993). As will be argued in the literature review chapter, Yoga has the potential to help a person become in contact with, and balance, emotions. Healthy emotional states can play an important role in human happiness and well-being on multiple levels (Allen, 2006; Cozolino, 2006; DeYoung, 2003; Erikson, 1963; Fonagy, 2001; Kalsched, 2013; Maroda, 1999; McWilliams, 2004; Ogden, 1986; Roth, 1987; Schore, 2008; Stern, 1998; Weiss, 1993; Willeford, 1976), hence a healthy emotional landscape is an important part of psychotherapy and Yoga.

sometimes all we need to do is turn on a light.

⁶ Yoga also acknowledges that external changes can precipitate internal change, nevertheless it places more emphasis on the internal experience, rather than having our internal landscape exceedingly dependent on external circumstances.

2.3.1 Relevance to Aotearoa New Zealand in particular

I have previously referenced empirical research suggesting that Yoga can contribute to the treatment of mental and emotional health issues. This is relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand because mental disorders are the third-leading cause of health loss in this country (11.1% of all health loss), behind only cancers (17.5%) and vascular and blood disorders (17.5%) (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2014). In 2016, 18.8% of the Aotearoa population has been diagnosed with anxiety disorders, 15.4% with depression, and 7% are suffering from psychological distress (Ministry of Health, 2016). Approximately 600 national cases of suicide happen yearly in Aotearoa, as well as 400,000 illicit drug users (Ministry of Health, 2018), and nearly 500,000 incidents of family violence (Ministry of Social Development, 2017).

Additionally, Yoga focuses primarily on strengths rather than weaknesses, and health rather than illnesses (as opposed to the current biomedical system that often seems to have the opposite mind set). While this is probably relevant to all populations, a strength-based approach to mental health is particularly important for Māori, to help people find wellness and resilience (Johnson, Hodgetts, & Nikora, 2012; Whānau Ora Taskforce, 2010).

Moreover, Yoga is a holistic modality with an integrated view of health, which is more aligned with Māori health models. These models, such as Te Whare Tapa Whā (Rochford, 2004), Te Whetu (Mark & Lyons, 2010), Te Wheke (Pere, 1991), amongst others, encompass multiple dimensions of human beings, such as psychical, psychological, social, cultural, ecological and spiritual. This contrasts with the biomedical model that often treats people one-dimensionally (e.g. physical treated separately from emotional). Having more holistic modalities could contribute to a shift towards a mind-set that is more aligned with Māori philosophies and world views.

Yoga also offers tools and information for self-healing, which can resource people. This can serve a social purpose, by giving people ways of self-healing, and therefore enabling them to resolve their own health issues without continuously having to resort to highly-paid experts. This helps mitigate the fact that sometimes long-term psychotherapy is not affordable for lower socio-economic classes, due to its high-cost and long-term nature (Pearlin, Avison, & Fazio, 2007).

2.4 Chapter concluding remarks

This chapter explored the relationship between some elements of Yoga and psychotherapy, and described some foundational concepts that can provide context for understanding the next chapters. It also explored the relevance of Yoga to the field of psychotherapy, namely around Yoga showing positive impacts on elements addressed in psychotherapy (e.g. emotion regulation, emotional well-being), assisting with recovery from conditions often treated in psychotherapy (e.g. anxiety, depression), and being based on similar healing factors as psychotherapy. Lastly, I explored the possible significance of Yoga Psychotherapy to Aotearoa New Zealand in particular.

The impacts and implications of this dissertation's research in particular to the field of psychotherapy will be examined later, in the discussion chapter.

3 Methodology

This chapter will begin by articulating the ontological and epistemological stances that set the foundation for this dissertation. Then, the methodology and method will be outlined. Following that, the data collection process and inclusion and exclusion criteria will be described. Lastly, the application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method to this dissertation will be explained.

3.1 Ontological and epistemological stances

I will start by articulating the ontological stance that underlies this dissertation. An ontology is the philosophical understanding of the nature of reality. This dissertation is based on an **idealist ontology**, which Slevitch (2011) describes as the understanding that there is no single reality, but multiple ones based on one's construction and interpretation. This involves a subjective / intersubjective understanding of what constitutes truth, belonging a more qualitative paradigm, as opposed to seeing reality as objective, which would match a more positivist paradigm (Slevitch, 2011). This dissertation is philosophically located in the more subjective end of the spectrum, understanding reality as subjective, rather than trying to discover the 'real' truth. This aligns with the current research as people's emotions and subjective experiences are quite unique. While experiencing emotions, there is no single perspective, thus why this positioning is aligned with this research.

This dissertation's epistemological stance emerges from the ontology described above. An epistemology is a philosophical understanding of what constitutes legitimate knowledge about the truth. This can range from a subjectivist stance, where meaning is entirely subjective and dependant on the researcher, to an objectivist stance where reality can be observed objectively and independently from the researcher (Crotty, 1998). This dissertation is methodologically contextualised somewhere in the middle, in a **constructionist epistemology**. In constructionism,

meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it. (...) The world and objects in the world are indeterminate. They may be pregnant with potential meaning, but actual meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with them. (Crotty, 1998, pp. 42-43)

The reason why this epistemology was chosen was that this dissertation's goal was to collect, interpret and create meaning out of the views of various authors about the research topic. This implies the construction of a reality based on both the researcher's interpretation, and on the perspectives present in the data (which are varied and sometimes contradictory). This dissertation aligns with this epistemology because I am not only reflecting the data, but also making sense of it, uncovering underlying patterns within it, and constructing meaning from it. An example of this is that, as will be shown in the literature review chapter, each of the authors in the dataset recommends different postures, and I create meaning around the commonalities between postures for a particular purpose.

3.2 Methodology and method

The methodology chosen for this dissertation was **interpretive phenomenological analysis**. In this qualitative methodology, the researcher is engaged in constructing reality based on the data, drawing on their own knowledge, theoretical constructions and experience to interpret and make sense of the data (Smith, 2011). This concept recognises that real-life phenomena (lived experience) supersedes a mental explanation, and is hence never fully accessible through the mind. This moves away from the idea of trying to reach a single scientifically-verifiable truth, and allows the researcher the freedom to access the phenomenon through their own subjectivity (Amos, 2016). This was chosen because it catered for both my wish for this research to have a strong focus on literature review, as well as being able to leverage off my personal subject knowledge (of Yoga as well as psychotherapy) to construct meanings, make interpretations and draw conclusions.

Thematic analysis was the method used for this dissertation. This is a widely-used qualitative data analysis method, compatible with a constructionist epistemology, and designed for systematic identification, analysis and reporting of patterns across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was found to be the most suitable method for this dissertation because it supported the systematic approach I aimed for in the literature review (namely reading how each of the Yoga authors has used Yoga postures for emotional balancing), while still fitting a qualitative paradigm and being flexible enough to accommodate the selected epistemology and methodology (particularly allowing the use of my knowledge and experience to make links and draw conclusions).

This dissertation uses a combination of the 'inductive' elements of the thematic analysis method, which as Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, consists of a bottom-up analysis of the data, where themes emerge and are strongly linked to the content of the data, with the 'deductive', namely (as the authors describe) one more driven by the researcher's analytic preconceptions. Namely, it was a construction between a data-led approach, and my own subject knowledge. An example of this was the choice of methodological design. Namely, in my experience as a Yoga teacher I knew to use the framework of the chakras (which will be explain shortly) to explain which emotions relate to each chakra and which postures can balance it. I could have easily created the two strands of data that I will refer to in the following paragraphs just out of my own knowledge. However, the authors in the dataset also had the same approach. I cannot honestly say that I was already looking for these two strands in the data, because I was open to whatever the authors wrote, but equally I cannot say that these strands came solely from the data, because I already suspected that it was the case. This happened because my subject knowledge was so closely aligned with that of the authors in some areas. So, the combination of this constructed knowledge between myself and the authors generated the two strands of investigation represented in Figure 3.

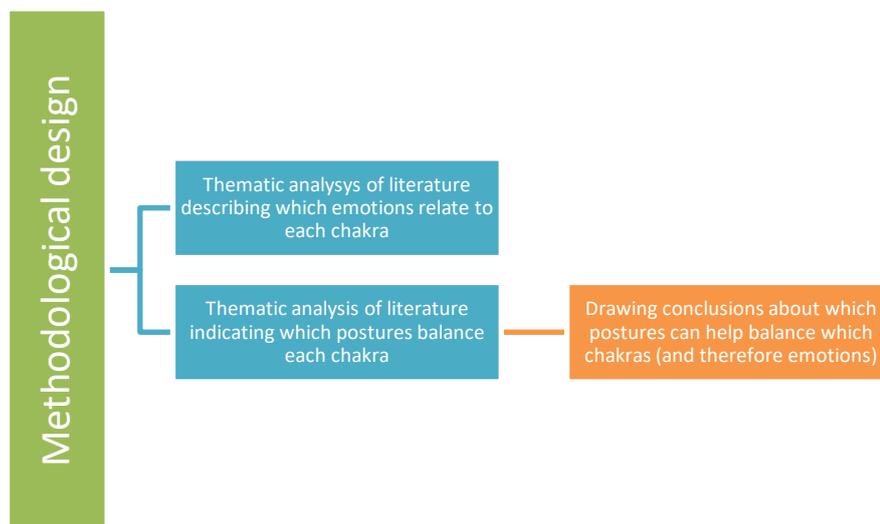


Figure 3 - Methodological design.

The rationale for this methodological design being so focused on thematic analysis of the literature, was the need to compare information from a variety of authors knowledgeable about the topic, so that patterns and meanings could be found in the data. This is where my personal subjectivity was relevant, namely in extrapolating conclusions about the topic.

Additionally, I would like to state that, in line with Yogi philosophies, this dissertation was created under eco-friendly principles (namely being considerate of the environment), meaning I specifically did not purchase any books for this purpose, so with some effort I managed to acquire all resources through physical and virtual libraries, to save paper. Additionally, all documents, notes and references used in the creation of this dissertation were managed in computer applications, rather than printing.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly name some of the concepts required to understand this chapter, and then describe the data collection process as well as inclusions and exclusions, and explain how I have applied the thematic analysis method according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) principles.

3.3 Terminology

The two concepts below may be relevant to understand the terminology in this and future chapters.

3.3.1 The chakras

The concept of chakras originates historically from Hindu philosophy, positing that each human being has a vast amount of energy centres that manage one's physical and psychological energy. Dale explains chakras as follows:

Many scientists and doctors understand the human body only as a conglomeration of tissues, organs, and cells (...) [that] can be measured using current technology. There are aspects of us, however, that (...) are composed of, lie within, or emanate fields of energy that are harder to measure or can't be measured at all. This is subtle energy. (...) At the simplest level, a chakra is an organ of the body that manages energy, just as the heart manages the

circulatory system (...). Each chakra focuses a unique physical, psychological, and spiritual energy in the body to direct and serve your well-being. Each chakra manages an area of your physical body and a set of an emotional and mental concerns, runs specific intuitive or psychic gifts, and highlights aspects of your special spiritual identity. (Dale, 2016, pp. 3-9)

Hindu philosophies or Eastern systems (e.g. acupuncture) posit that chakras impact our physical, emotional and mental layers. The process by which that happens is that each chakra is responsible for the health and balance of certain physical organs, nerve plexus and endocrine glands. This influences one's electromagnetic functions, hormonal functions, nervous system and biochemistry. Thus, changes in these functions impact one's emotional states. Consequently, these emotional states influence one's mind, access to intuition, and spiritual availability (Dale, 2016). Hence, chakras touch all the levels of our existence. This process means that when one performs a specific Yoga posture, it has a holistic impact over body, emotions, mind and spirit⁷.

Hence, a key concept that this dissertation draws on is that Yoga postures can balance and activate a person's chakras. By 'balance', in a psychological context, I mean transforming the 'unbalanced emotions' into more 'balanced emotions' for that chakra (e.g. moving from low self-worth into self-confidence). And by 'activate', I mean amplifying the 'balanced emotions' (e.g. enhancing the intuition).

3.3.2 Balanced and unbalanced emotions

While both Yoga (Anjali, 1994) and psychotherapy (Shedler, 2010) argue for full awareness of the complete range of emotional experience and its use for personal development, from a Yoga perspective there are types of emotions that are considered healthy, or balanced, contributing to a person's well-being, and other types are considered less healthy, or unbalanced. While psychotherapy mostly advocates for expression of one's full range of emotions without necessarily having an aim for the more positive ones (Shedler, 2010), Yoga posits that if instead of feeling fear, anger, jealousy, shame or isolation, the person feels love, meaning, kindness or connectedness, they are believed to result in more joy, peace, equanimity and fulfilment.

I would like to clarify that this is not about spiritual bypass (meaning the intellectual identification with spiritually evolved states in order to avoid working through psychological difficulties, as described by Cashwell, Glosoff, & Hammond, 2010). In fact, the concept of balancing emotions is not advocating for the idea of dissociation, but one of integration. Namely, Yoga enables difficult memories and feelings to be integrated into (as opposed to dissociated from) the psyche (by reducing the physiological arousal states associated with their stress response), and because those feelings are not dissociated, one can observe, process and transcend them (LaChiusa, 2016), consequently being able to access more positive emotions.

My favourite example regarding how unbalanced emotions keep us trapped in self-created suffering, hiding the innate and effortless joy of our true nature, is as follows:

A woman was basically content and happy as she walked home from work. One day, as she passed a shop she glanced in and saw a beautiful ring that really caught her eye. She walked on past the shop because she was in a hurry to get home to her children. All through

⁷ The inverse flow is also accurate, that Yoga philosophy (teachings about life and the universe) helps balance the mind, which translates into healthier emotions, having a direct impact on the chakras and the body.

the day and into the next, all she could think of was the ring she had seen. Her mind became more and more agitated. She finally went into the shop several days later and purchased the ring. She now felt so happy and content. What the woman didn't realize was that originally she had been happy and content [until] the desire for the ring came. (Anjali, 1994, p. 83)

The classification of balanced and unbalanced emotions is linked into the literature, so it will be constructed in the literature review chapter.

3.4 Data collection process, inclusion and exclusion criteria

This research included publications in the English language (including translations from Indian books) about Yoga in the context of psychological healing. For this purpose, I initially researched combinations of the keywords 'Yoga', 'Psychology' and 'Chakras' (as well as their synonyms) to search literature any sources on Web of Science, PsycINFO, PeP, and AUT Library and Google Scholar. Surprisingly, I found these searches too restrictive, as almost no results were turning up. In the end, I decided to search for 'Yoga', as the number of results was relatively small and I managed to browse through the titles relatively easily to see if any suggestive results appeared regarding Yoga-based interventions for mental or emotional health.

I used these channels to research a multiplicity of journals, books, research papers, book chapters, audio-visual resources and conferences, to identify the core publications on the subject. Interestingly, I found mostly books on the topic, rather than other types of sources. The output of my search was a list of 13 authors, some with more than one publication. Publications were obtained through the aforementioned electronic databases, as well as Auckland libraries, and Inter-library loans.

Then, exclusion criteria was applied. Namely, first, excluding authors with unidentifiable credibility in the Yoga lineage⁸. This assessment was performed based on the information publicly available regarding the authors. Second, insufficient years of experience (e.g. no documented experience, or under 2 years). Third, insufficient level of detail of publications relevant to the topic of this dissertation (by 'relevance' I mean publications about the topic of how to use Yoga *asana* for emotional healing; and by enough 'level of detail' I mean having extensive depth of information, such as a whole book or large article). Based on the exclusion criteria, I eliminated 6 of those authors, added the leader of my own Yoga tradition (who does not have publications available for the public but I have class documentation), and the remaining ones formed the base of my dataset (see Appendix 1). The selected authors were: Cyndi Dale, Alan Finger, Anodea Judith, Patricia Mercier, Satyananda Saraswati, Carl Jung, Pauline Wills, and Gregorian Bivolaru. A brief biographical description of each author and their selected publications is in Appendix 1.

⁸ Similarly to Māori whakapapa, Yoga has a specific lineage that dates back through generations; this helps ensure that we are in fact using the teachings of Classical Yoga, as opposed to a new fitness modality that does not trace back to these origins.

3.5 Application of thematic analysis

This dissertation followed the six-stage process of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, a familiarisation and immersion in the data, reading and re-reading, searching for meanings and patterns. Second, the generation of the initial codes, namely browsing through the entire dataset, and identifying relevant aspects within the data. Third, searching for themes, meaning essentially grouping similar codes into themes. Fourth, reviewing the themes, refining them, evaluating their coherence, and rethinking them if necessary, and considering themes both within authors, and across the whole dataset. Fifth, defining and naming themes, by identifying their essence and what they capture. Sixth, final analysis and production of the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Figure 4 is a high-level representation of the application of thematic analysis to this dissertation, which will be described over the next paragraphs.

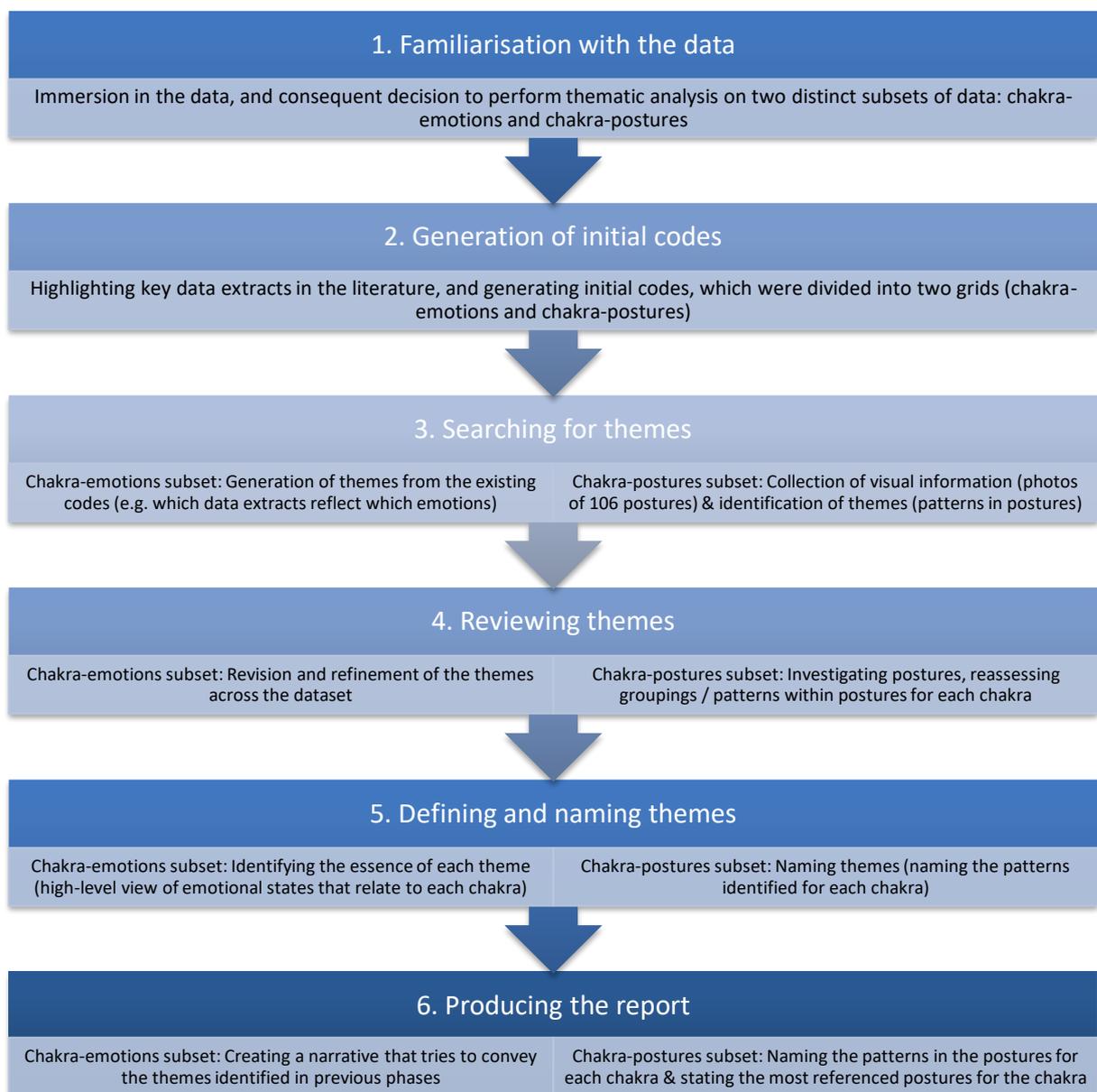


Figure 4 - Diagram that illustrates this dissertation's application of thematic analysis.

3.5.1.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe this step as the bedrock for the analysis, consisting of an immersion in the data envisioning a familiarisation with the depth and breadth of the content, reading the data repeatedly and searching for patterns. Specifically, I immersed myself in the books from the dataset (Appendix 1), to get an understanding of how they were structured, and identifying what type of information they contained, looking out for possible high-level patterns. From this global standpoint, I found that all authors structured their topic (how to use Yoga *asana* to heal emotions) according to the philosophical Hindu framework of the seven main chakras (which matched my knowledge too). This revealed the two strands of investigation that became relevant to this dissertation. First, which emotions relate to each chakra (henceforth called the 'chakra-emotions' data subset). Second, which postures can balance each chakra (henceforth called the 'chakra-postures' subset).

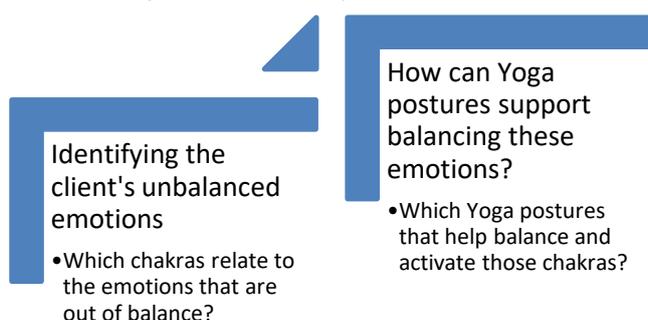


Figure 5 - Two strands of investigation in the literature, and their relationship to the research question.

Some authors shared other interesting information that falls outside the scope of this dissertation, such as how other elements such as foods, colours, incenses, essential oils, sounds, crystals (amongst others) can balance each chakra.

Given these two strands of investigation, as I have described in the methodological design, I performed independent pieces of thematic analysis on each subset of information (chakra-emotions and chakra-postures). Additionally, for clarity purposes, and because the authors differentiate between balanced and unbalanced emotions for each chakra, the chakra-emotions subset was also broken down as illustrated in the bullet points below. So essentially, this phase defined the structure of the work, in which the 'report' (literature review chapter) was also organised, hence for each chakra, it would explore:

- Which emotions it relates to
 - Balanced emotions
 - Unbalanced emotions
- Which postures can help balance it.

3.5.1.2 Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe that this phase consists of systematically reading the dataset in search for interesting aspects in the data (namely, aspects that are relevant to the two aforementioned subsets of information), which will result in the creation of initial codes from the

data. A code is “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). As I was reading the literature, I started to highlight some of the data extracts that seemed to contain key messages (not by writing notes on paper as the authors suggest, but digitally instead, as per the eco-friendly philosophy of this dissertation). An example is below:

considered as starting at the **mooladhara chakra**.

Attributes

This is the centre where people are almost entirely **self-centred**, where the **predominant drives, thoughts and actions are directed towards attaining some measure of security** in the world. Even children are produced often with a strong motive of ensuring security by **continuing one's family line in the future**. People **surround themselves with material objects, money, friends, etc.** in order to feel secure. All things and all people are regarded as a means to obtaining the desperately sought after security.

Figure 6 - Example of the highlighting of relevant data extracts.

I then proceeded to code these data extracts, namely reducing them to basic segments that represent their key message. Table 1 is an example of the coding relating to the sample text in Figure 6, which is an extract of emotion-related data regarding Muladhara chakra:

Data extract	Code(s)
people are almost entirely self-centred	self-centredness
predominant drives (...) are directed towards attaining some measure of security	security
continuing one's family	procreation
surround themselves with material objects, money, fiends, etc. in order to feel secure	safety security materialism

Table 1 - Coding of data extracts.

This coding process resulted in two lists of initial codes (one for the chakra-emotions subset of data, and one for the chakra-postures one), which are illustrated in Figures 7 and 8. Namely, the top column has the name of each of the seven main chakras, the left column has the name of the authors, and the rest of the table contains the codes that correspond to what each author said about each chakra. The complete list of codes is in Appendixes 2 and 3.

Book	Muladhara	Svadhithana	Manipura	Anahata	Vishuddha	Ajna	Sahasrara
Mercier, P. (2009)	grounding	sexual health	power	agape	expression	balance higher & lower self, intuition	divine love, super-consciousness
Dale, C. (2016)	safety, security, physical ease, prosperity, grounding, common-sense, in control of body drives, sensual, reliable, motivated, adventurous, calmness, energetic. joy, bliss, oneness	friendliness, vitality, satisfaction, compassion, sexual expression emotional attachment, sensuality, feeling-sensitive, empathy, creativity, caring	power, self-worth, assertiveness, cooperation, dynamic energy, intelligence, decisiveness, productivity, mental focus, healthy work relationship. ability to carry out decisions.	love, empathy, compassion, friendliness, motivation, nurture, acceptance, sense of wholeness. appreciation, generosity, self-care, ethical & individual yet communal, ego transcendence	creativity, expression, positive communication, active-listening, contentment.	keen intellect, intuition, positive use of imagination, ability to see the big picture, perceive & influence spiritual panes, establish goals and take action. perspective	freedom from ego-based desires, increased self-trust, selflessness, superior consciousness, refined sense of empathy, ability to see big picture, humanitarianism, inner peace, joy, present-moment living, crown compassion, ability to be perceptive & communicative. expand our perspective to understand all others, spiritual, highly conscious, expressive of universal truths, positivity
Saraswati, S. S. (2004)	security	pleasure-seeking, enjoyment	active, extroverted, powerful	emotions, devotion, ego-transcendence, acceptance, unconditional love, creativity	feeling-at-home, openness, seeking understanding, flow in-tune with the current-of-life, magical-feel cosmic-connection, intuition, compassion, peace, bliss	mind, subtle intelligence, discernment, wisdom, intuition to tune into the underlying essence of things, intuitive perception of meaning & symbolism, extrasensory perception, mental resolve, awareness, detachment,	divinity

Figure 7 - Examples of codes for each chakra, regarding the chakra-emotions subset.

Book	Muladhara	Svadhithana	Manipura	Anahata	Vishuddha	Ajna	Sahasrara
Mercier, P. (2009)	sexual, lust, obsession	relationships, violence, addictions	power, fear, anxiety, introversion	passion, tenderness, inner-child, rejection	self-expression, communication, will	unbalance-between-higher&lower-self, distrust-inner-guidance	inner wisdom, death of the body
Dale, C. (2016)	lack of grounding, hurt, resentment, victim mentality, lack of follow-through, self-destructiveness, sense of being unlovable, suicidal tendencies, addictions, anxiety, depression, passivity, financial lack, poor/rigid boundaries, greed, hoarding, materialism, hypochondria, paranoia, laziness, fatigue, fear of change, survival, anger, sadness, fear, disgust, rage, resentment, futility, despair, terror, abandonment, rejection, shame, guilt, longing, distrust, disconnection (from	rigidity, frigidity, self-denial, fear-of-change, poor-social-skills desire & creativity, addictions, irresponsibility, emotionalism, seductive manipulation, unhealthy co-dependency, obsessive attachments, emotional abuse. envy, jealousy, rage, greed, prejudice, guilt, shame, resentment, fear, martyrdom	low-self-esteem low-self-confidence, contracted energy, dissatisfaction, low-self-discipline, manipulation, propensity for being manipulated, victimisation, unreliability, passivity, blame, controlling, aggressive dominating behaviour, stubbornness, selfishness, hyperactivity, pride, competition, anger, fear, prejudice, judgement, oversensitivity to criticism, control, self-aggrandising, mental chatter, anxiety, self-sabotage, neglect & praise-seeking	inability-to-forgive, loneliness, lack of empathy, lack of self-love, apathy, indifference, withdrawal, aimlessness, jealousy, co-dependency, martyrdom, self-aggrandisement, egotism, self-centeredness, tribalism. drama	fear of speaking, inability-to-speak-own-truth, perfectionism, overbearing, gossip, stuttering, loudness, overactive-thyroid, lack-of-consideration, fragmentation, compulsive-behaviours, withdrawal.	obliviousness, denial, gullibility, chaos, co-dependency, abuse, difficulty-planning, poor-memory, joylessness, anxiety, perception-issues, fantasizing, hallucinations, difficulty-concentrating, obsessiveness, delusions, nightmares, self-centeredness, turmoil, irritation, refusal-to-change, inability-to-look-forward-with-joy.	lack-of-purpose, lack-of-ethics, lack-of-joy lack-of-trust; loss-of-meaning, loss-of-identity; apathy, materialism, selfishness, inability-for-closure, fear-of-spirituality, spiritual-obsession, religious-obsession, spiritual-cynicism, lack-of-wisdom, learning-difficulties, fear-of-death, feeling-of-separation (from others, body, self), intellectualisation, lack-of-humility, spiritual-pride, manic-depressive or hysterical behaviour.

Figure 8 - Examples of codes for each chakra, regarding the chakra-postures subset.

By the end of this phase, the data was collated and coded, although I was not yet concerned about tensions or inconsistencies between what each author was claiming for each chakra, because as Braun and Clarke (2006) state, all datasets will have contradictions.

3.5.1.3 Phase 3: Searching for themes

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89) state that this phase “involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes”. This implied analysing the codes that had been generated in the previous phase, which were in the tables I described, and sorting them into potential themes. For the chakra-emotions subset,

this consisted mostly of grouping similar emotions within individual authors (e.g. ‘selfish’ and ‘self-centred’; or ‘rage’ and ‘fury’), as well as grouping similar concepts into themes (e.g. ‘seductive manipulation’ and ‘sexual exploitation’, as per Table 2). As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, at this level sometimes relationships between codes or themes start to emerge, and at the end of this phase there may be a collection of candidate themes or sub-themes. At this stage of this dissertation, themes started to emerge, such as in the examples in Table 2.

Codes	Theme
Jealousy Envy Unhealthy dependence Possessiveness Control Manipulation Suspicion Obsessions	Unhealthy attachment (from a Yoga perspective)
Seductive manipulation Sexual exploitation Sexual frigidity Uncontrolled sexuality	Sexual disturbances
Impaired social skills Craving for social validation Chameleonic personality Disharmony between inner and outer world Excessive concern about self-image	Social anxiety

Table 2 - Relationship between codes and themes.

Regarding the chakra-postures subset, it very soon became obvious that grouping would not be as straight forward. Nevertheless, I streamlined similar codes across authors, which meant streamlining names of postures (e.g. ‘Naukasana’ is known by some authors as ‘Nabhiasana’ and even ‘Paripurna navasana’). Figure 9 is an example of this work.

Sanskrit name	English name	Photo	Other names
Padahastasana	Hand to foot / Forward fold		Uttanasana
Bhadrasana	Butterfly		Poorna Titali Asana
Paschimottanasana	Seated forward bend		
Virasana	Hero		Dhyana Veerasana
Ardha chandrasana	Half-moon		Hasta Utthanasana
Trikonasana	Triangle		Utthita trikonasana

Figure 9 - Example of the streamlining of the names of the postures.

Once I had a coherent list of postures according to each author, it was clear that the recommended postures for each chakra were different across authors. The only theme I could find was that they were all Yoga postures, which is too large and not relevant or useful. Hence, I realised that the themes could consist of patterns within the postures for a particular chakra (e.g. different postures may have in common the elongation of the pelvic area). However, these would have to emerge from my own analysis of the data (e.g. commonalities in the descriptions of the postures), rather than from the explicit content (as the authors typically write about the posture's instructions, contraindications, or benefits, as opposed to articulating every possible detail about the shape of the body in the posture). The challenge that this presents for thematic analysis, is that this method typically relies on finding themes based on texts, and written descriptions were not a viable option. Hence, if I was to rely on the written word, it would have been impossible to look for themes or patterns. This may possibly be a limitation of thematic analysis itself, as Braun and Clarke (2006) describe it, as my interpretation is that it focuses mostly on the written word, whereas to find patterns in this data I would have to resort to multi-dimensional aspects in the data.

To address this issue, I contacted one of the authors (Braun), who advised me that to overcome this limitation, some authors have started to extend thematic analysis to include visuals, having generated a variation of the method called 'visual thematic analysis'. This is based on the precept that the analysis of datasets "is applicable to the study of images given that patterns of meaning can be observed across a visual corpus just as they are observable across a textual corpus" (Nerlich & Jaspal, 2013, p. 260), and has been applied in multiple recent publications (e.g. Clarke, Bennett, & Liu, 2014; Nerlich & Jaspal, 2013; Ponnamp & Dawra, 2013). Hence, I

have chosen to analyse photos of the Yoga postures to find themes about the chakra-postures subset of this dissertation. Hence, I gathered photos from all 106 individual postures referenced by the authors, in order to visually try to detect patterns in the photos⁹.

So I started to analyse the photos I had arranged, allowing for new themes to emerge from the underlying data. I hypothesised about the postures' commonalities in the human body, such as what parts were stretched or contracted in the postures proposed by each individual author, and gradually the themes for each chakra started to emerge. Figure 10 (purposely blurred) shows an example of two themes I found for Svadhishthana chakra, namely the elongation of the pelvic area, and hip stretches.

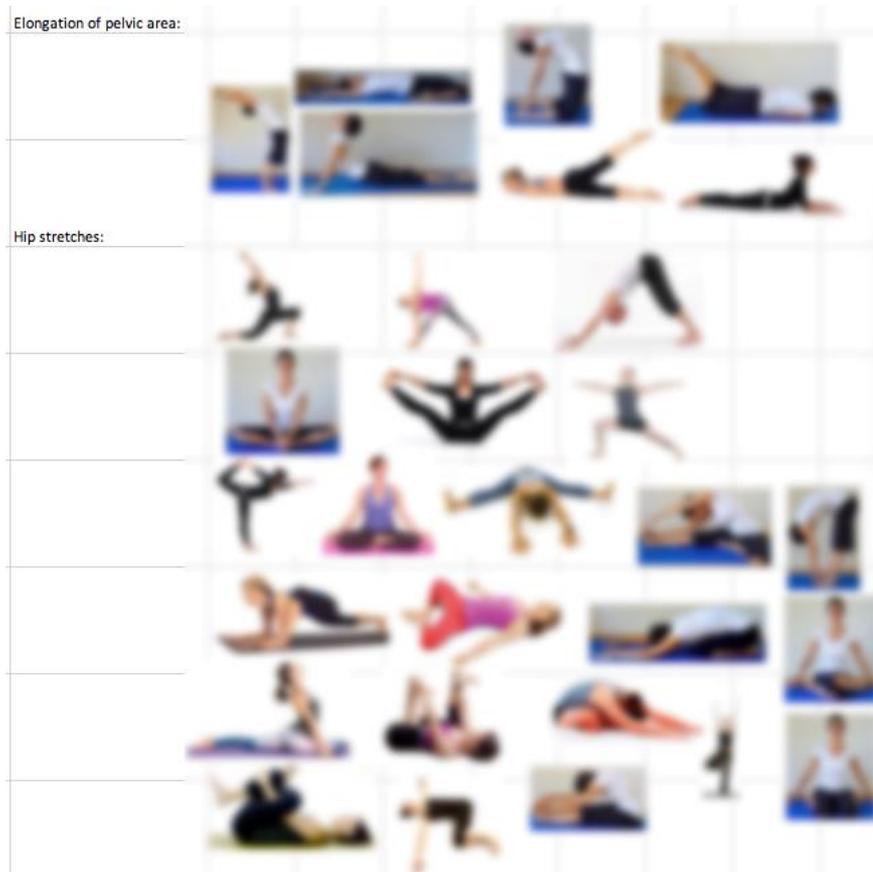


Figure 10 - Example of finding themes across authors in the postures for a particular chakra.

By the end of this phase, I had tentative groupings of postures based on commonalities.

3.5.1.4 Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) define that this phase consists of reviewing and refining the themes that have been generated in the previous phase, namely some may dissipate, transform, merge

⁹ Looking at all the 106 photos, I had some moments of worry that after all this work I might not find patterns across authors, but I contained my anxiety by bringing myself to the present, and focusing on one step at a time. This helped, because in the present there was no anxiety, my tasks were clear, and I had a process to follow. Living in the future and being attached to results would only generate anxiety, and would not actually change the results or bring any other benefits (once again, Yoga teachings).

or need to be broken down. The authors describe two aspects within this phase, namely reviewing the coded data extracts for each theme, and validating the validity of themes across the whole dataset.

Under the chakra-emotions subset, there was mostly of an analysis of the data that had been collected from the authors for each chakra, and rearranging and refining the themes. Some themes were transformed, renamed or split, which began to offer a clearer sense of what the themes might then become. An example is, some of the codes relating to what was ultimately called the 'unhealthy attachment' theme overlapped with those of the 'social anxiety' theme, around ideas around insecurity, dependence, obsessions, etc. So, many of these codes were arranged together in different ways until I grouped them into final themes that made the most sense.

Regarding the chakra-postures subset, I performed deeper investigation about each of the postures, and reassessed the commonalities I had found in the tentative groupings. Additionally, in some cases, where there were outlier postures, I rearranged the postures and new patterns emerged. An example is that for Manipura chakra, I initially grouped the postures into five themes, namely twists, endurance postures, postures for restraining the leg circulation, restorative postures, and outliers. Such variety was intriguing to me, so I continued to reassess and regroup them until I found more consistent results, meaning groups that had more consistency of posture similarities. After regrouping, I ended up with only three themes: twists, endurance postures, and postures that compress or elongate the internal organs.

3.5.1.5 Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe that this phase consists of identifying the essence of each theme. Namely, reflecting on the data for each theme (which should distinguish it from other themes), naming it, and creating a short narrative regarding what it is about. The authors also mention that it is important to understand how these themes fit into the overall research.

As previously stated, regarding the chakra-emotions subset, the information from the previous steps allowed themes to start to emerge. In this phase, I was more focused in seeing the relationships between themes across the whole dataset, and ensuring I had relevant names for themes. This started to create a high-level view of the psychology of the chakras (e.g. security and grounding mentioned for Muladhara chakra, sexuality, creativity and sociability for Svadhisthana chakra, and so on). In cases where the same theme had been identified for different chakras (e.g. jealousy can be an element of Svadhisthana chakra as well as Anahata chakra), I hypothesised about the nuances between the two, based on what I had read from the authors (in the earlier case, I have articulated that Svadhisthana relates to a more sexual type of jealousy, whereas Anahata relates to a more emotional one).

I have chosen to mark these themes in bold throughout my findings (in the literature review chapter), so that they blend into the narrative that I will describe in step 6.

3.5.1.6 Phase 6: Producing the report

Braun and Clarke (2006) claim that this phase consists of a final analysis and articulation of

the research findings. The authors state that the goal is to describe the story of what the data is trying to tell, in a concise, coherent and relevant way, while creating an argument in relation to the research question.

The outcomes of this phase have formed the literature review chapter, which consists of an articulation of the themes found throughout the different phases of this research. Under the constructionist epistemology that underlies this dissertation, I have attempted to use my subject knowledge to make sense of the data and create a narrative that makes meaning out of all the themes found in the analysis. Below is an example of a narrative that relates to the aforementioned theme of unhealthy attachment, which includes the codes that correspond to it, as well as some of the adjacent contextual information from my analysis, referencing its respective sources.

At a relationship level, the degree of desire (Jung, 1996) and passion that often happen at a Svadhisthana level result in strong unhealthy feelings of **unhealthy attachment**, jealousy, envy, unhealthy dependence and fear (Mercier, 2009). One can become possessive, controlling and manipulative (Judith, 2004), or experience suspicion (Saraswati, 2004) or obsessions.

For clarity purposes, I have created a chapter per chakra, which includes the outcomes of the chakra-emotions subset research (balanced emotions *versus* unbalanced emotions), and the ones from the chakra-postures subset. The chakra-emotions subset narrative tries to convey the emotional states that belong to each chakra. The chakra-postures subset narrative names the patterns in the postures for each chakra, and also states what are the most referenced postures for that chakra (according to the authors in the dataset). This is relevant to the discussion chapter, where I hypothesise about a set of postures that balance and activate each chakra. The discussion chapter draws on the information from the literature review chapter, to further extend the analysis of the topic.

3.6 Chapter concluding remarks

In this chapter, I articulated the idealist ontology, constructionist epistemology, interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology, and thematic analysis method used in this dissertation. I have also articulated how I have applied thematic analysis in this dissertation according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) method, and justified the use of visual thematic analysis for a particular aspect of the data. I have also provided some basic knowledge about the chakras to introduce the understanding of how I see them fitting into psychotherapy, namely by helping to balance the emotions that they relate to (through the practice of postures for those chakras).

The outcomes of this literature review will be articulated in the next chapter, with further discussion emerging in the following one.

4 Literature review on the chakras

As discussed, this chapter will be analysing three aspects for each chakra. The first two aspects compose the psychological makeup of each chakra, namely the emotional states associated with it, when it is balanced, and also when unbalanced. The third aspect is comprised of the postures that are said to help balance each chakra. Some of the Appendixes are relevant to this chapter in terms of data, namely:

- Appendix 2: Chakra-emotions subset codes – Emotions/qualities that relate to each chakra (breakdown by author).
- Appendix 3: Chakra-postures subset codes – Postures recommended for each chakra (breakdown by author).
- Appendix 4: Streamlining of the name of the postures.

While this research chooses not to focus on the physical aspects of which organs are affected by each chakra, I have briefly mentioned the affected organs, mostly to satisfy possible reader curiosity. There are slight variations about which chakras govern which organs according to different authors, so I have mentioned the source from where I have retrieved this information.

Having stated this, I will proceed to present the results of the literature research, achieved through the application of thematic analysis as described in the last chapter. Further discussion about these results will be in the discussion chapter.

4.1 Muladhara chakra

¹⁰Until my late twenties, I was convinced I knew it all, and was in control of my life. My personality was fixed, my life was planned out, and I was sure I had reality figured out. It only takes one moment, for life to crumble. An earthquake, a violent episode, a loss in the family, a serious illness, a shattering car crash. We can try so hard to hold on to the idea of a stable, fixed reality, because the thought of impermanence would be terrifying. And yet in one moment, it all disappears. Once my life crumbled, I found Yoga. I now understand that the impermanent nature of things does not make life meaningless, in fact, I choose to see that it makes it beautiful. We can spend endless energy on material things that grant us the illusion of security... Or we can realise that security is not in our surroundings, but in the immortal nature of our soul, and in the endless nature of love.

4.1.1 Emotions

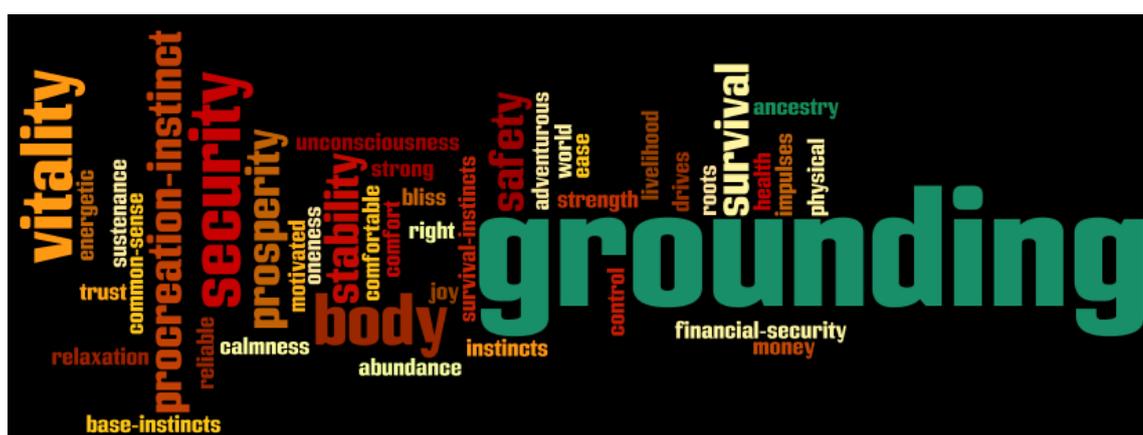


Figure 11 - Muladhara chakra balanced emotions (creative illustration)¹¹.

The descriptions from the authors around the emotional states relating to Muladhara chakra are very similar and complementary, painting a clear picture of the psychological characteristics of this chakra. Muladhara is related to the Earth element, and the ability for **grounding**¹² and **stability** (Mercier, 2009). People with a strongly activated Muladhara are sometimes described as 'steady as a rock', not being prone to frequent changes, yet in the scarce times that they accept something new into their lives, they are incredibly steady, reliable and patient, and likely to remain with it consistently. This is often reflected in prosperity in life (Judith, 2004).

People with a balanced Muladhara tend to experience a strong sense of safety and **security** in life (Saraswati, 2004), they know they have the right to exist, and trust that the world is a safe place. Primal instincts of survival are related to this chakra, and at this level people experience an objective, terrestrial consciousness, and pragmatic awareness.

Often life is experienced with simplicity, and in a state of **relaxation**, harmony and joy, feeling

¹⁰ Personal reflection on one element of my learnings regarding this chakra. Other reflections have also been written for the remaining chakras.

¹¹ These illustrations were automatically generated through wordle.net, a free word cloud engine that randomly creates these images based on text that we introduce (e.g. summary of a chakra). They allow for the material generated through their engine to be used in this type of work.

¹² As previously discussed, bold words are the names of the themes.

Survival is an enormous preoccupation at the level of this chakra (Dale, 2016). When unbalanced, the world may feel threatening, and the person can find themselves in a 'jungle state of mind', with frequent fight-flight-freeze responses. This is often compensated by an excessive concern with **self-preservation** and individual comfort, which leads to strong attachments, self-centred behaviours and incapacity to share (Saraswati, 2004).

A strong concern for the physical level of existence tends to lead the person towards greed, financial and **material insecurity**, materialism, hoarding, and the tendency to accumulate material possessions (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 2004). It is common to feel excessively worried about being emotionally, mentally and physically wounded or attacked by others, generating a strong irrational fear associated with the roles of hunter and prey. At the core of this experience is the fear of annihilation, which creates persecutory anxieties and leads to projections. Hence, common psychological associated with this chakra are hypochondria, paranoia (Dale, 2016), eating disorders (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 2004), schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive behaviours (Mercier, 2009).

The unbalance of this chakra, which can manifest as the **lack of grounding**, can result in disconnection from home, primary relationships, societal norms, nature, causing a lack of roots of any type, which may lead to an existential disconnection (Dale, 2016). The impulse to satisfy primordial needs may result in raw forms of aggressiveness and attack, guilt, resentment, and feelings of rejection and abandonment (Dale, 2016).

Since this chakra is the main source of energy that our body draws from, unbalances can lead to **inertia**, chronic fatigue and a tendency towards laziness (Judith, 2004). Because of this tendency but the world being experienced as a dangerous place, one might manifest rigidity and incapacity to change (Judith, 2004). Lack of patience and perseverance also stem from the unbalance of this chakra.

Given the physical and emotional link between this chakra and the raw, instinctual and self-centred elements of sexuality (Mercier, 2009), unbalances may result in dysfunctions around those areas.

4.1.3 Postures

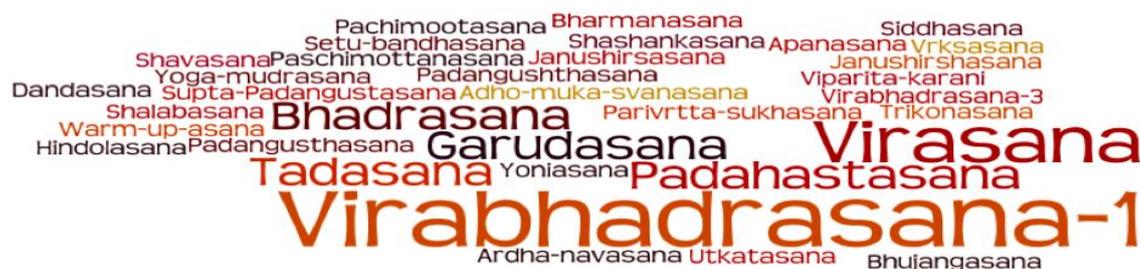


Figure 13 - Muladhara chakra postures (creative illustration).

Looking at the 30 very different postures identified for Muladhara chakra, I noticed my fear that they were totally random and that I would not be able to find any patterns between them. Perhaps my immersion in the state of Muladhara being enacted in this process! So I put my self-soothing abilities to good use, and drew on my systematic nature: what do these postures have

in common? Looking at all the photos for this chakra, I consciously allowed myself to relax. Then, as I have articulated in the methodology chapter, patterns started to emerge, and I started to group the postures, which enabled me to draw the conclusions that I will articulate below.

The postures for Muladhara chakra relate to the elongation and compression of the sacral area (29 postures), whether centrally, from the front, back, or laterally. There is only one outlier posture, which is Savasana, the relaxation pose¹³.

The most mentioned postures for this chakra by the authors are Virabhadrasana 1 (warrior 1) and Virasana (hero pose), followed by Bhadrasana (butterfly), Padahasthasana (forward fold), Garudasana (eagle) and Tadasana (mountain). The relevance of identifying the most referenced postures (which will be done for each chakra) is that this will be part of the basis for drawing conclusions about postures that can balance and activate each chakra (in the discussion chapter).

¹³ This is considered a special posture in Yoga tradition, typically performed at the end of the whole asana practice. This will be further explained in the discussion chapter.

2009). An intense desire to merge with the world through the senses is present, and the person can explore the capacity for movement and bodily expression, as well as seeking pleasure, and exploring sensuality and sexual connection. Relationships at this level are centred around the same values, namely a desire for the significant other, a pursuit of what feels nice, and a passionate desire for gratification and satisfaction.

The Svadhithana person can have a high **adaptability** to change, and has no problem in changing course. They are as graceful emotionally as they are physically, in the way they move and interact with the world (Judith, 2004).

Creativity is one of their key features (Rabbitt, 2016), and they tend to be interesting, easy-going, approachable, and imaginative, sometimes to the point of daydreaming.

This chakra is also directly related to **healing** and regeneration (Jung, 2001).

Svadhithana correlates to the sexual glands (ovaries and testicles), and sacral plexus (Judith, 1999). It governs the sense of taste, as well as the sexual organs, including the uterus, vagina and cervix, and also the pelvis, lower vertebrae, appendix and upper intestines. It also shares influence over the kidneys and digestive organs (Dale, 2016).

4.2.2 Unbalanced emotions

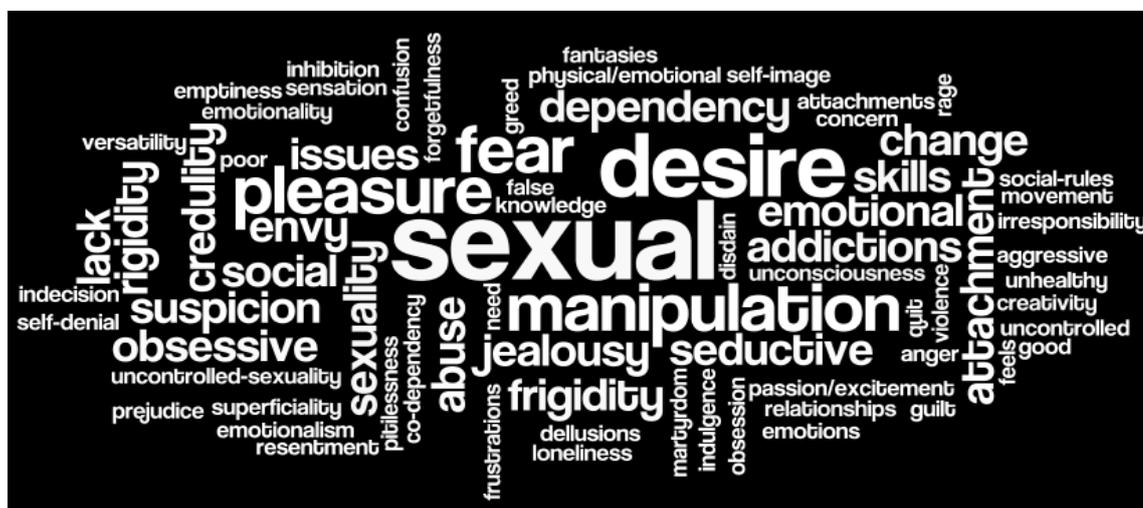


Figure 15 - Svadhithana chakra unbalanced emotions (creative illustration).

At a relationship level, the degree of desire (Jung, 1996) and passion that often happen at a Svadhithana level result in strong feelings of **unhealthy attachment**, jealousy, envy, unhealthy dependence and fear (Mercier, 2009). One can become possessive, controlling and manipulative (Judith, 2004), or experience suspicion (Saraswati, 2004) or obsessions. Because of these psychological characteristics, if the upper chakras are not harmoniously balanced and activated, one can become overly emotional, dysregulated, and experience overwhelming states of agitation, confusion and forgetfulness.

Frustration is often at the core of this chakra, because of the vicious cycle that gets created by seeking a new object of pleasure that is more exciting than the last one, therefore abandoning objects or activities one after another without ever being fully satisfied or following through (Finger

& Repka, 2005), resulting in desires never really being fulfilled. The mood swings that often categorise the unbalance of this chakra (Judith, 2004) can perhaps be explained by the accumulation of frustrations, that can lead to psychological outbursts and martyrdom.

Social skills are often impaired when this chakra is unbalanced (Dale, 2016), hence **social anxiety** can be very high, and craving for social validation is so dominant that often the person will develop a chameleonic personality, losing their own personality in order to please others, which then leads to resentment and a continuous struggle to establish harmony between the inner world and the outer one. In other words, a lack of agency to stand by their ideas, emotions and principles despite whoever is around. Excessive concern about self-image and people's opinions often leads them to go out of their way to maintain the desired perception.

The absence of the water element can cause a lack of fluidity, softness, and flexibility. This also manifests at a physical level, namely a **rigidity** in the body and movement (Judith, 2004).

A wide range of **sexual disturbances** relate to the malfunctioning of this chakra, deriving from an overexposure or lack of access to the senses. These disturbances may range from uncontrolled sexuality, seductive manipulation and sexual exploitation, to sexual inhibitions and frigidity (Dale, 2016). These can be influenced by a series of factors, such as the person's traumas, developmental history, religious upbringing, cultural beliefs, familial influences, amongst others. A very common example is how those of us who have had a religious upbringing can often associate deep feelings of shame and guilt around sexuality, which then hold an ongoing unbalancing influence over Svadhisthana.

Since this chakra is often driven by pleasure, unless the person has the will-power to stand by stronger values and principles (a characteristic of Manipura, the third chakra) it is common for people to find themselves caught up in addictions (Mercier, 2009), irresponsible behaviours and unconsciousness.

4.2.3 Postures



Figure 16 - Svadhisthana chakra postures (creative illustration).

Through the same process as I have undergone for Muladhara chakra, some patterns stand out for Svadhithana. Namely, hip stretches (23 postures) and elongation of the pelvic area (8 postures, 1 overlapping). 2 postures were outliers, namely Marjariasana (cat) and Sukhasana (easy pose).

The most frequently referenced posture recommended for this chakra, is Padahastasana (standing forward bend), followed by Paschimottanasana (seated forward bend), parivrtta-trikonasana (revolved triangle), Ado mucha svanasana (downward-facing dog), Upavistha konasana (seated open-leg forward fold), Jathara parivartanasana (supine twist) and Bhujanghasana (cobra).

Many of the issues around this chakra revolve around power and **control** dynamics (Mercier, 2009), polarised either on the powerful side, or the **powerless** one. Being the one that controls, dominates, abuses, provokes and manipulates, or being vulnerable to staying on the receiving end of that (Dale, 2016).

The **powerful** end of the spectrum can exhibit feelings of **superiority** such as arrogance, entitlement, self-aggrandisement, stubbornness, selfishness (Finger & Repka, 2005), recklessness, or ruthless independence, whereas the powerless end can experience victimisation (Judith, 2004), **inferiority**, lack of courage, self-doubt, dependence, shame, fear, or self-neglect.

The **deficiency in self-esteem and self-confidence** (Dale, 2016) often coexist with an incapacity to assert strong internal values, shyness, introversion, isolation, withdrawal, lack of boundaries, incapacity to say 'no', and vulnerability to abuse. Other aspects are ambitiousness, competitiveness (Saraswati, 2004), praise-seeking and wanting to conquer social status or business positions, to compensate for the lack of self-esteem, and internal states of being insufficient and not good enough.

Anger is the core emotion at the heart of this chakra, in all its various forms, such as aggressiveness, rage, and conflict (Jung, 1996). Such a strong energy often manifests as anxiety (Mercier, 2009). This strong association between Manipura chakra and both anxiety and laughter explains why human beings often laugh when they are anxious.

The weak will-power that characterises the Manipura-unbalanced person involves a lack of self-discipline and self-control (Dale, 2016), plus the reduced internal dynamism impairs their ability to change, transform, make decisions and adapt. One can experience a certain **passivity**, lack of follow-through (Finger & Repka, 2005), self-sabotage and low motivation.

4.3.3 Postures



Figure 19 - Manipura chakra postures (creative illustration).

The postures referenced by the authors for this chakra can be grouped into three categories: endurance postures (18 postures), twists (7 postures) and compression and elongation of the abdominal organs (13 postures). The only outlier posture is the relaxation pose.

The most frequently referenced postures for this chakra by the authors are Ushtrasana (camel) and Trikonasana (triangle), followed by Ardha matsyendrasana (half spinal twist), Naukasana (boat), Dhanurasana (bow) and Purvottanasana (upward plank).

4.4 Anahata chakra

I remember that before Yoga came into my life, I saw love as a feeling that only happened in the context of relationships. Not being able to access the infinite source of unconditional love inside myself, meant that relationships were aimed at filling those gaps, and fulfilling mutual needs, established through expectations, and enforced through demands. I now understand love as a state of being, stemming from the connection with my true nature, and emanating from self like an inner light that extends to those around me. I recognise that most of my needs, expectations and demands were a compensation for not being able to access those parts of my true nature. And I notice that when I act from my place of abundance, it leaves other people free to embody their true nature too, shining their light without my conditionings... and in that moment, we can connect soul to soul.

4.4.1 Emotions



Figure 20 - Anahata chakra balanced emotions (creative illustration).

Love and empathy are at the heart of Anahata (Dale, 2016). The type of unconditional love that Jung (1996) refers to as agape (a term also used by Sufis), namely a warm, affectionate, fraternal, caring and profoundly intimate, non-sexual connection. Wilkins (2001) refers to this as unconditional positive regard, a term more widely accepted by the psychotherapeutic discipline. This differs from the Svadhithana love that is motivated by desires, and is instead motivated by the desire to discover oneself reflected in the other.

At this level, one manages to rise above material matters, individual will and actions, and into who we are. In other words, it is the journey from doing into being. The Anahata-balanced person goes through an expansion of the consciousness to a selfless level, which frees them from the individual desires and personality, offering the ability to be at union with self, others and the universe through unconditional love. This should not be mistaken for docility, conformity or blind

compliance, in fact Jung (1996) associates this level with individuation. There is an **emotional maturity** that comes from experiencing the real sense of unity and interconnectedness present in the universe, which leads to a paradigm shift and refreshed sense of meaning.

This chakra relates to friendship and its inner elements, namely **care**, nurture, appreciation, human closeness, and a heart-to-heart connection (Dale, 2016). Love is experienced as an internal state of being, that we can choose to extend to another person, rather than a feeling that happens in the context of (and is restricted to) a particular person, or worse, a feeling we expect to get from them. This type of love brings enormous potential for emotional healing of early emotional deficits and past experiences. Additionally, at this level, people gain complete access to the depth of their emotions and vulnerability (Saraswati, 2004).

Compassion is also at the core of Anahata (Judith, 2004), allowing one to remain calm and peaceful while experiencing disturbing events, by being able to empathise with the wounded parts of other people instead of being centred in the conflicts and defences of the personality. There is a beautiful story about a woman who was walking down the street, and there was a man who came straight at her and bumped into her, leaving her very angry. An instant outrage took over her, about how the man had been so unaware, inconsiderate and possibly even malicious. Furiously, the woman looked at him, about to start an argument. As she faced him, the man sadly apologised, and she noticed that he was blind. She was immediately struck by enormous shame and guilt about her reaction, and compassion for the man's disability, and apologised for not being more careful and aware themselves. This moving story illustrates my personal journey from anger into compassion. I realised that our egos (anger, jealousy, fear, etc.) disable us from reaching our full potential. Much like the blind man, we all act unconsciously according to our personal, familial, societal and cultural patterns and traumas. I therefore chose to no longer see those egos, or blindnesses, as a reason to hate and resent other people, but rather to feel compassion for them. This genuine compassion, unconditional love for the person, and acceptance of the person just as they are, regardless of their blind spots, is a quality of Anahata (Rabbitt, 2016).

This chakra enables a profound reconciliation of opposite forces, and **integration** or cohesion of opposite feelings or aspects of ourselves or others, leading to a deep state of inner peace, harmony and joy.

Rising above the 'I' allows for the person to become a silent and detached witness to the experiences that are occurring, which is a key element of mindfulness. Yogis sometimes describe it as being in the eye of the storm, where everything around us may be chaos and devastation, yet that would not cause us to lose our centre. The transcendence of the ego experienced at this level (Saraswati, 2004) enables qualities such as acceptance, cooperation, state of humbleness and ability to surrender. People with a balanced Anahata have the aptitude to manifest these qualities in communal ways of living (Dale, 2016). People who are active at this level tend to express **altruism**, generosity, devotion, sweetness and emotional gentleness (Saraswati, 2004). They can be noble, uplifting, inspirational, and able to see wonders where others see banality, and live in a state of amazement and bliss.

Anahata relates to the thymus, and pulmonary and cardiac plexus (Judith, 1999). It governs the sense of touch, as well as the heart, circulation, blood, lungs, rib cage, breasts, shoulders,

2004), and a painful longing and sadness. **Grief** is often strongly manifested in this chakra (Judith, 2004). It often also links in with one's wounded inner child (Mercier, 2009).

4.4.3 Postures

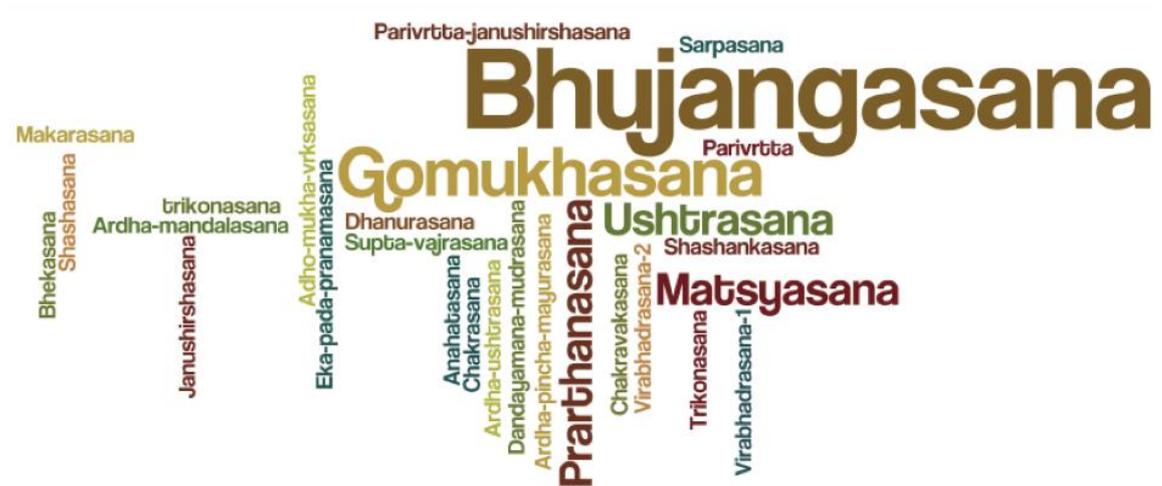


Figure 22 - Anahata chakra postures (creative illustration).

The clear pattern in Anahata chakra postures is the extension of the chest (whether frontally, sideways or through the back). 30 postures were found, all fitting this pattern. The most recommended postures were Bhujanghasana (cobra) and Gomukasana (cow's face), followed by Matsyasana (fish), Prarathanasana (prayer) and Ushtrasana (camel).

4.5 Vishuddha chakra

I remember living a life completely disconnected from the alternation of the seasons, circadian rhythms, moon cycles, biological rhythms, ecological surroundings or astrological influences... I had not yet discovered that the Earth was growing the exact types of vegetables I need for my well-being in each exact season, or that the sun, ocean, trees, fresh air and beautiful land could nourish me in ways that only my soul suspected. Metaphorically speaking, I was a violin player who could not hear their own orchestra. So regardless of how well I played, I was always out of tune. Our intuition is the tool that enables us to hear the orchestra that we are a part of, so that we can play in harmony with the magnificent whole.

4.5.1 Emotions



Figure 23 - Vishuddha chakra balanced emotions (creative illustration).

The expansion beyond the limits of individuality and into the greater whole continues with Vishuddha chakra. A key faculty that emerges at this level is one's intuition, through which one achieves a sense of **cosmic connection**, making it possible to live in tune with the universal current of life (Saraswati, 2004), of which synchronicity is a common resulting experience.

At the level of Vishuddha, the intuition offers direct access to the universal archetypes (Jung, 1996), mysteries and collective unconscious. This enables an alignment with the internal and external natural rhythms (e.g. circadian, biological, seasons, moon, astrological), which results in a more harmonious lifestyle. One of the foundational ideas in Yoga is that each of us is like a drop of water in an ocean, and that when we realise who we are (the drop) and how we fit into our context (the ocean) we can live in sync with the universe and joyfully ride the waves, instead of being constantly struck by them by trying to constantly think and act in isolation. A question I almost inevitably hear in every course I teach, regarding this idea of being aligned with the universal stream of consciousness rather than the individualistic one, is how does one do that. Specifically, how do we know whether our emotions, behaviours and intentions are coming from a consciousness-driven place or an ego-driven one. My answer to that is, through the intuition. The intuition is a paramount tool to hear our internal wisdom, the problem is that often it is very weak, like a muscle that has not been exercised for years. Through awakening and balancing

Vishuddha chakra, the intuition can become pure and enhanced, allowing for that discernment that will enable the inner wisdom to shine forth. I would describe Yoga as a path of uncovering all the elements (egos) that are clouding our consciousness, and using our inner resources for our own healing and alignment with that cosmic consciousness, namely through listening to our body, mind, emotions and intuition, as a guide for recovery.

Other central features of this chakra revolve around **communication** (Dale, 2016) and **expression** (Mercier, 2009). A clear, persuasive and melodious expression is described, being able to express fundamental truths and higher realities in clear and concise ways. People who are active at this level can access their power of expression through words, singing, melodious music, rhythm, art, beauty, and other forms of **inspirational creativity**. Svadhishthana is also characterised by creativity as previously outlined, but I understood that it is a creativity motivated by pleasure, whereas Vishuddha is more driven by intuition and inspiration. The communication element also includes an openness, and capacity for active listening (Judith, 2004), including the openness to superior guidance and divine grace received through the intuition.

Common-sense capacities are also related to this chakra, with regards to content and also more subtle areas. An example is the sense of timing (Judith, 2004).

People with a balanced Vishuddha chakra also have access to their **sixth-sense** (heightened perceptiveness), and being able to feel the essence of objects and people, meaning their underlying substance (Jung, 1996).

Purity is another important element of Vishuddha (Judith, 2004), in the context of an aspiration towards more elevated levels of consciousness, and a consequent state of harmony and plenitude.

Vishuddha relates to the thyroid and parathyroid glands, and pharyngeal plexus (Judith, 1999). It governs the sense of hearing, as well as neck, ears, mouth, trachea, vocal chords, thyroid, parathyroid, cervical vertebrae, oesophagus, and upper shoulders (Dale, 2016).

4.5.3 Postures



Figure 25 - Vishuddha chakra postures (creative illustration).

Out of 25 postures recommended by the authors, 24 meet the same pattern, namely the compression, elongation or twist of the neck. The only outlier apart from the relaxation pose is Adho Muka Svanasana (downward dog).

The most recommended postures are Sarvangasana (candle), Dharunasana (bow) and Halasana (plough), followed by Matsyasana (fish), Simhasana (roaring lion) and Ardha Matsyendrasana (half spinal twist).

understanding from the literature about how they differ, is that while Vishuddha relates to the parts of the intuition that relate to a sixth sense, namely perceiving the essence of things, Ajna relates to the parts of the **intuition that access wisdom and universal truths**. Both forms of intuition can be used as a form of guidance, but the first leans more towards being able to live in tune with the universe, and the second towards understanding of how it all works. Both are only possible by quietening the lower mind, and accessing the intuition and non-verbal thinking. Ajna holds the dimension of concepts, generalisations, universal laws, patterns, causality, **logic** and principles. People with this chakra activated typically have the ability to conceptualise, work with abstract or symbolic concepts and ideas, synthesise, apply judgement based on higher principles, make links between emotions and the lessons behind them, and correlate apparently distinct elements of reality.

At this level, people tend to exhibit good **self-reflection** (Judith, 2004), self-awareness, introspection, and an ability to access and explore the subconscious and make and complex non-linear inter-connections. This is a precious help in the psychotherapeutic work, in identifying negative patterns and the roots of pathogenic beliefs (as defined by Weiss, 1993). Ajna governs functions such as memory, access to dreams, and relating the higher and lower aspects of the self.

In combination with Anahata chakra, Ajna governs **emotional intelligence**.

Ajna relates to the pineal gland, and carotid plexus. It also governs the neurological system, eyes, sinuses, and hypothalamus. Additionally, it shares influence over the brain, ears, nose, and pituitary gland.

4.6.2 Unbalanced emotions



Figure 27 - Ajna chakra unbalanced emotions (creative illustration).

A key part of unbalances of Ajna chakra manifest as a range of problems with **mental**

capacities. Namely, lack of memory, concentration, discernment, mental clarity, objectivity (Jung, 1996), intelligence, awareness, insight, and lateral thinking. The person can experience mental chatter, an agitated mind, ignorance, confusion, chaotic thinking and obsessiveness. There may be an impairment of the ability to work with abstract concepts and ideas, synthesise, and apply judgement based on higher principles, resulting in failures in logic, contradictory actions, incoherence, and a lack of symbolic representation capacities.

Self-awareness can be compromised, as well as self-reflection, introspection and meaning-making. Distorted perceptions are common (Dale, 2016), on one hand of the spectrum having perceptions clouded by lack of insight, self-centred perceptions, denial or pathogenic beliefs, and towards the other end with delusions and hallucinations (Judith, 2004). The resulting lack of self-confidence at a psychic level can leave the person vulnerable to manipulation, blind faith, and compromise. People unbalanced at the level of Ajna may have little or disorganised access to the subconscious, including nightmares. They also often find it hard to remember dreams (Judith, 2004).

One can exhibit **low emotional intelligence** if Ajna or Anahata are unbalanced.

4.6.3 Postures



Figure 28 - Ajna chakra postures (creative illustration).

Three patterns have been identified for this chakra. First, inversions, meaning postures that have the head below the heart (7 postures). Second, balancing postures (7 postures). Third, resting poses (9 postures). There are 2 outliers besides the relaxation pose, namely Ashwa sanchalanasana (equestrian) and Ardha matsyendrasana (half spinal twist).

The most recommended posture by the authors for this chakra is Garudasana (eagle), followed by Vajrasana (thunderbolt), Halasana (plough), Natarajasana (Lord dancer), and Adho muka svanasana (downward dog).

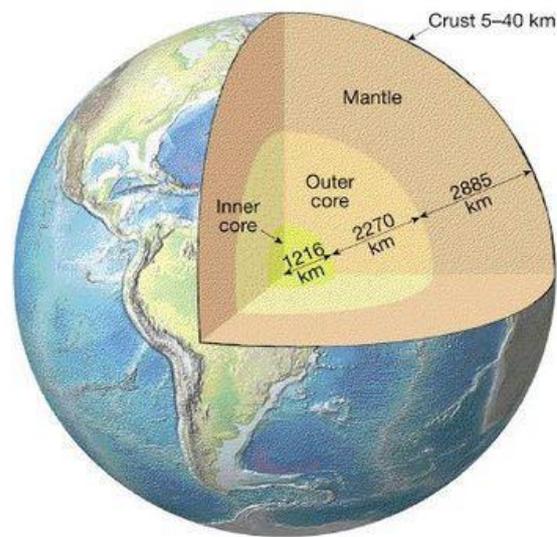


Figure 30 - Illustration of how small we are, when looking at it from a planetary perspective.

Imagining how one human life in one point in time is so small, when compared to the entirety of the planet, really put my personal problems into perspective, and brought an awareness of how important things like sustainable living and conscious communities are. Like in an ant farm, there is a way in which one ant does not matter, because it is only together that the ants create the space, avoid predators, and bring in food to sustain the ant farm, but there is also a way in which it does matter, because there could not be an ant farm without individual ants. Like ants, I believe that it is raising the consciousness of whole societies and cultures that can make a difference to our planet, so my goal as an individual is to contribute towards that global view, even if I only have a small part to play. From that planetary perspective, **humanitarianism** emerges as there may be no point in getting caught up in individualistic egos, such as pride, frustrations, anger, jealousy or whatever else, which take us away from the big picture, which is ultimately the one that matters in the evolution of humanity, which is intimately interlinked with the evolution of the self, given that both are interconnected. There are parallels to Māori understandings of the world, that see nature, culture and society as a part of the self (Durie, 2011).

This is the chakra that relates most directly to **spirituality** (Saraswati, 2004), and access to the individual soul, and through it, access to the universal spirit. Sahasrara helps us connect to the universe from this broad holistic perspective, rather than a narrow individualistic one, bringing a sense of universal harmony, freedom from the limits of the personality, positivity, connectedness and bliss.

Sahasrara relates to the pituitary gland, and cerebral cortex (Judith, 1999). It governs the skull, brain stem, cranial nerves, cranial plexus, nervous system, and shares responsibility over the brain (Dale, 2016). Note that some authors believe that Sahasrara rules the pineal gland instead, whereas it is Ajna that rules the pituitary (Dale, 2016; Wills, 2002).

4.7.2 Unbalanced emotions



Figure 31 - Sahasrara chakra unbalanced emotions (creative illustration).

Unbalances of Sahasrara relate to an **unhealthy relationship with spirituality**. These include spiritual disconnection (Saraswati, 2004) and a total cynicism around spirituality or religion (Judith, 2004), a fear of death or anything spiritual, or on the other hand, spiritual pride, rigid belief systems or an obsession with spiritual matters.

This also relates to an **existential disconnection** from one's own body, soul and existence in general, living in an apathetic and **joyless** state of disconnection from the world (Dale, 2016). The isolation that this can result in, if extreme, can be reflected in an existential crisis, **meaninglessness** and lack of trust in a higher purpose (Dale, 2016). At lesser extents it can be experienced as a lack of consciousness (Jung, 2001), wisdom (Mercier, 2009) and also a **lack of universal perspective**, being attached to materialistic things that do not matter from a spiritual point of view, taking things personally and believing them to be problematic, and having narrow perspectives on life.

4.7.3 Postures



Figure 32 - Sahasrara chakra postures (creative illustration).

Out of the 9 postures the authors recommend for this chakra, 8 relate to having the head facing downwards, in line with the spine. The only outlier besides the relaxation pose is Natarajanasana (Lord dancer).

The postures for this chakra that are most referenced by the authors are Shirshasana (headstand), Shavasana (corpse) and Prasarita padatanasana (crown-based pose), followed by Shashasana (bowing pose).

4.8 Chapter concluding remarks

This chapter holds the outcomes of the literature review. Having organised the information in terms of the 7 main chakras, I have synthesised the authors' views on the emotions that relate to each chakra (both balanced and unbalanced), and the postures that can help balance the chakra.

The next chapter will present more discussion around these findings, as well as some critique, and speculation about the relevance of this research in particular to the field of psychotherapy.

5 Discussion

So far, this dissertation explored a gap in Anjali's (1994) framework, namely the author's idea that the therapist can propose Yoga postures and practices that can help augment psychotherapeutic treatment, but not having stated which ones. This gap has been addressed through the exploration of the framework of the Hindu chakra system, by performing a literature review on two strands of investigation, namely which human emotions correlate to each of the seven main chakras, and what postures can help balance and activate those chakras. In the first strand, it was clear from the chosen literature that the authors mostly agreed on the types of emotions that correspond to the chakras, so this strand consisted mostly of grouping their key points and summarising them. However, in the second strand, most of the authors disagreed on the postures that balance each chakra, so it was necessary to look under the surface of the data, searching for patterns within those postures.

This chapter will begin by offering a succinct summary of the findings from the literature review. Then, a tentative *asana* practice will be proposed, based on these findings, following which I will reflect on the integration of Yoga postures into a psychotherapeutic context. Then, I will reflect further on the significance of this research to the psychotherapy field. Lastly, I will offer some critique around this dissertation, and reflect on future directions.

5.1 Findings and discussion

5.1.1 Findings from the literature review

Some highlights from the literature review are represented in the following visual illustration, created for the purposes of this dissertation (Figure 33).

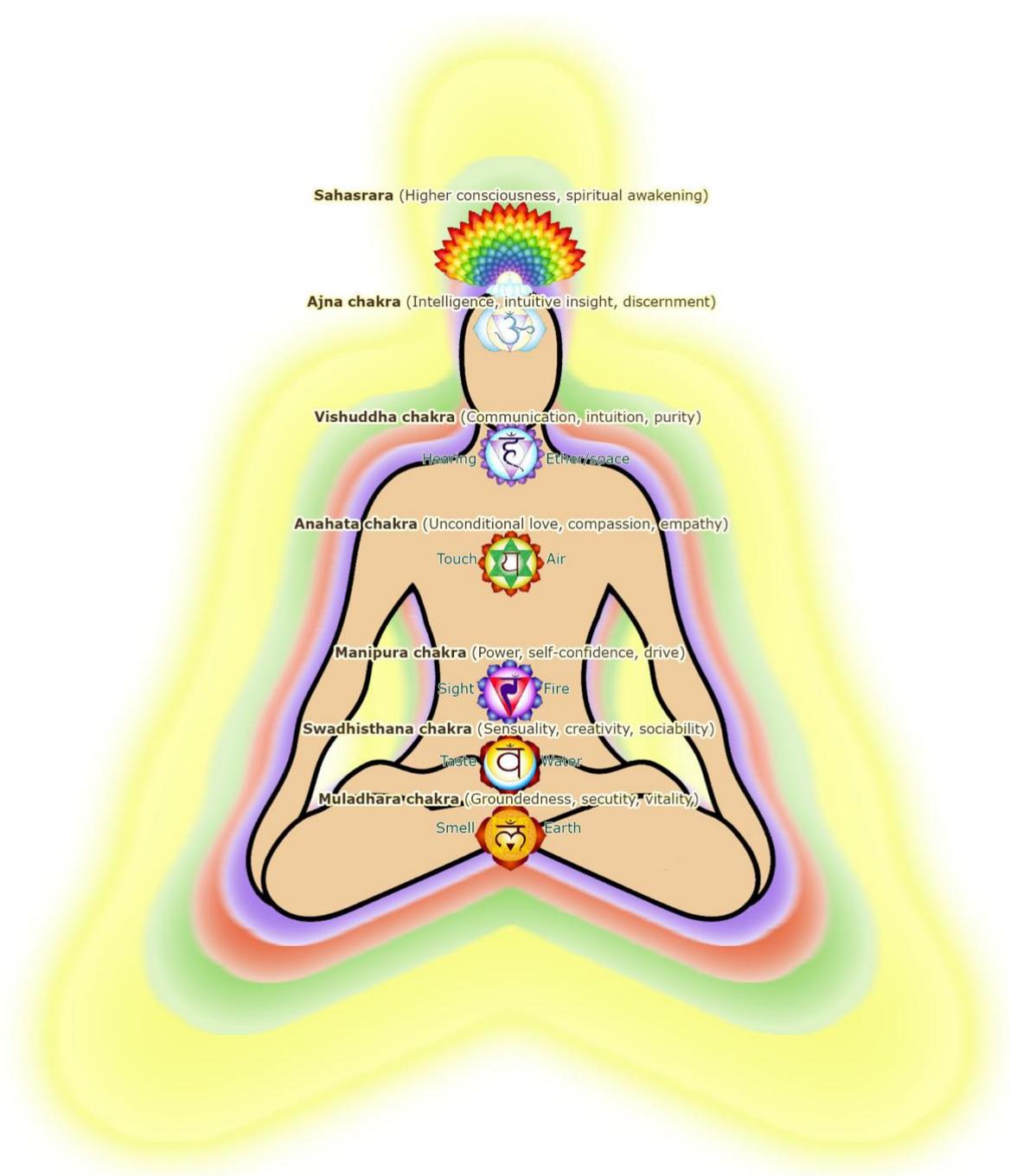


Figure 33 - Illustration of the rough location and some attributes of the main chakras, as well as the elements (e.g. earth, water, fire) and senses (e.g. smell, taste, eye sight) they relate to.

Muladhara chakra relates to grounding, stability, security, relaxation, instinctual drives, vitality, and procreation. When unbalanced, the key emotions that arise relate to fear, existential terror, self-preservation, material insecurity, lack of grounding, and inertia. Postures for this chakra have in common the sacral elongation and compression.

Svadhithana chakra relates to sociability, enjoyment, sexuality, adaptability, creativity, healing. Unbalanced emotions relate to the areas of unhealthy attachment (e.g. possessiveness, jealousy), frustration, social anxiety rigidity, and sexual disturbances. Postures for this chakra consist of hip stretches, and pelvic elongation/compression.

Manipura chakra includes the qualities of will-power, self-agency, self-esteem, pride, capacity

for change, drive, power, courage, and humour. Unbalanced emotions can iterate between being powerful or powerless, controlling and manipulating or being controlled and manipulated, feelings of superiority or inferiority, poor sense of confidence or self-esteem, anger, and passivity. Postures for this chakra relate to endurance, and abdominal compression/elongation/twist.

Anahata chakra relates to unconditional love, emotional maturity, integration of opposite feelings or ideas, emotional intelligence (in combination with Ajna), care, compassion, and altruism. Unbalanced states often relate to aloneness, hopelessness, grief, emotional insecurity, lack of self-love, and dissociation between mind and emotions. Postures for this chakra have in common the chest compression and elongation (front, back and sides of the chest).

Vishuddha chakra involves the capacity for communication, expression, intuition (in the form of sixth sense, and common sense), inspirational creativity, a sense of purity, and feeling connected to the cosmos. When unbalanced, the person can experience impairments in communication, expression and listening, impaired sixth-sense and common sense, bitterness, and an inability to feel the interconnectedness of things. Postures for this chakra have in common the neck compression and elongation (from the front, back and sides).

Ajna chakra relates to mental capacities (e.g. memory, intelligence, discernment, concentration, understanding complexity), awareness, logic, self-reflection, and intuition of wisdom and universal truths. Its unbalance can result in impaired mental capacities, and impaired self-awareness (stemming from poor self-reflection skills and impaired access to the subconscious). Postures for this chakra include inversions, balance postures and resting ones.

Sahasrara chakra relates to spirituality, wisdom, universal consciousness, humanitarianism, wisdom, universal consciousness, and humanitarianism. Unbalanced states include unhealthy relationship with spirituality, existential disconnection, meaninglessness, lack of universal perspective, and joylessness. Postures for this chakra consist of inversions.

As the aforementioned findings were identified, and I was consolidating the information, an overarching pattern regarding the postures emerged. Namely, that the patterns for each chakra (emerging from the literature review chapter) relate to the physical location of the chakra (specified in Appendix 5). Specifically, the postures that balance Muladhara chakra have in common the elongation or compression of the sacrum, and this chakra is in the sacrum area. Postures for Svadhisthana chakra include the elongation or extension of the pelvis, and this chakra is in the pelvic area. Postures for Manipura chakra include compression or elongation of the abdomen, and this chakra is in the abdominal area. Similarly, postures for Anahata chakra involve the compression or elongation of the chest, and this chakra is in the chest area. Postures for Vishuddha chakra involve the compression or elongation of the neck, and this chakra is on the neck. Postures for both Ajna and Sahasrara chakra include inversions, and these chakras are on the head (where the blood flow is directed when the body is inverted). As logical and obvious as this may now sound with the luxury of overview, it had not occurred to me in the beginning of this research.

5.1.2 Creating a Yoga asana practice to help balance and activate specific chakras

Based on the literature review, I will now propose a tentative group of postures that can be used to balance and activate each chakra. The practitioner may choose to propose any of these, or all of these, based on the client's psychology and needs. However, first I will articulate the method by which I have arrived at the proposed set of postures.

5.1.2.1 Method for the selection of the proposed set of postures

The base set of postures about to be proposed consist of the postures that were referenced by the largest percentage of authors in the literature review for each chakra. Additionally, I have cross-checked that these postures include all the patterns for that chakra¹⁴, and when they don't include some of the patterns, I have selected one of the postures proposed for that chakra that meets the pattern. The choice of what posture to select was based on the fulfilment of the following two criteria. First, having been proposed by at least one author for that chakra. Second, being one of the most proposed postures overall (for any chakra, by any of the selected authors). The flow chart in Figure 34 illustrates the method for selecting the recommended postures for each chakra.

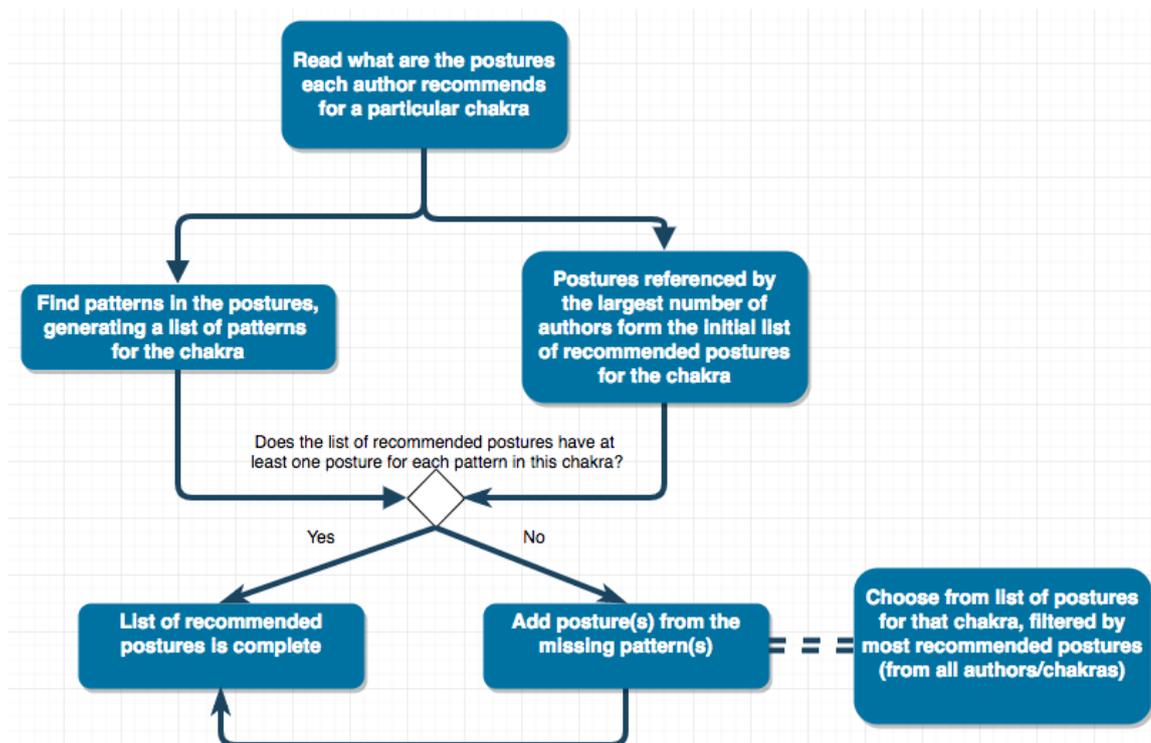


Figure 34 - Flow chart regarding the process of selecting a set of postures for each chakra.

Out of my own curiosity, I performed a holistic check at the end, regarding whether the postures that had been proposed by the highest percentage of authors for any chakra had been included in my proposed postures for at least one chakra; and indeed they were.

Moreover, as previously discussed, my research has also shown that Savasana, the 'corpse'

¹⁴ As described in previous paragraphs.

or relaxation pose (laying on one's back), is referenced by the authors for most chakras. While thematic analysis has been helpful in analysing the postures for each chakra individually, I believe that this posture requires a more holistic approach, so that the proposed asana practice can meet the best practices of the Yoga tradition. Namely, this posture is considered a way of restoration and integration upon completion of the asana practice (Saraswati, 2004), hence why it is typically performed in at the end of Yoga asana classes. Hence, I am inclined to recommend this posture be practiced at the end of Yoga asana practice, regardless of what postures were practiced. I will not place too much focus on the order in which the other postures are practiced at this stage, but as a general rule I initially tend to suggest that clients practice the postures in order of the chakras (first to last), unless their intuitive knowledge says otherwise. The following paragraphs contain the proposed tentative practice for each of the chakras.

5.1.2.2 Muladhara chakra

The most recommended postures for Muladhara chakra were Virabhadrasana 1 (warrior 1) and Virasana (hero pose), followed by Bhadrasana (butterfly), Padahastasana (forward fold), Garudasana (eagle) and Tadasana (mountain).

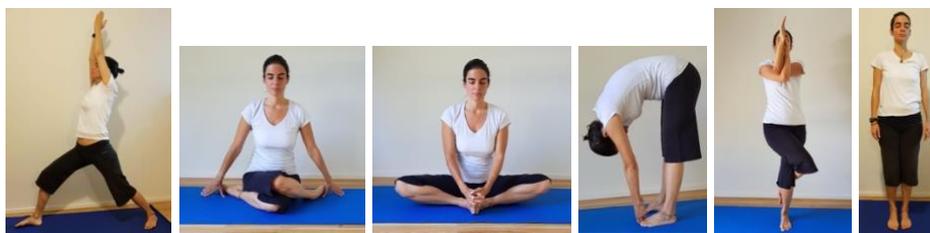


Figure 35 - Virabhadrasana 1, Virasana, Bhadrasana, Padahastasana, Garudasana, Tadasana¹⁵.

Given that the aforementioned include the central, lateral and back elongating the sacrum (the pattern identified for Muladhara chakra), but there are no postures amongst these elongating the front of the sacrum, I propose to add Shalabasana (locust) to the selected postures, given that it fits the aforementioned selection criteria.



Figure 36 - Shalabasana.

5.1.2.3 Svadhisthana chakra

The most frequently referenced posture according to the authors as recommended for this chakra, is Padahastasana (standing forward bend), followed by Paschimottanasana (seated forward bend), parivrtta-trikonasana (revolved triangle), Ado mucha svanasana (downward-facing dog), Upavistha konasana (seated open-leg forward fold), Jathara parivartanasana (supine twist)

¹⁵ The photos in this chapter have been taken specifically for this dissertation.

and Bhujanghasana (cobra).



Figure 37 - Padahastasana, Paschimottasana, parivrtta-trikonasana, Ado mucha svanasana, Upavistha konasana, Jathara parivartanasana, Bhujanghasana.

Since the more referenced postures contain both the hip stretches and compression or elongation of the pelvic area (the identified pattern), I believe this combination of postures would be sufficient for this chakra.

5.1.2.4 Manipura chakra

The most frequently recommended postures by the authors are Ushtrasana (camel) and Trikonasana (triangle), followed by Ardha matsyendrasana (half spinal twist), Naukasana (boat), Dhanurasana (bow) and Purvottanasana (upward plank).



Figure 38 - Ushtrasana Trikonasana, Ardha matsyendrasana, Naukasana, Dhanurasana, Purvottanasana.

Given that the most frequently recommended postures include endurance, twists, and elongation/compression of the abdominal organs (the patterns for this chakra), I am satisfied that these would suffice for the purposes of balancing and activating this chakra.

5.1.2.5 Anahata chakra

The most recommended postures were Bhujanghasana (cobra) and Gomukasana (cow's face), followed by Matsyasana (fish), Prarthanasana (prayer) and Ushtrasana (camel).



Figure 39 - Bhujanghasana, Gomukasana, Matsyasana, Prarthanasana, Ushtrasana.

Since these postures do not include lateral opening of the chest, I will add Janushirshasana (head to knee), according to the aforementioned criteria. I will also suggest the adding of Shashankasana (child) for the opening of the back of the chest, based on the same reasoning.



Figure 40 - Janushirshasana, Shashankasana.

5.1.2.6 Vishuddha chakra

The most recommended postures are Sarvangasana (candle), Dharunasana (bow) and Halasana (plough), followed by Matsyasana (fish), Simhasana (roaring lion) and Ardha Matsyendrasana (half spinal twist).



Figure 41 - Sarvangasana, Dharunasana, Halasana, Matsyasana, Simhasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana.

Given that the most recommended postures cited above include all the variations of neck restrictions identified in the pattern for this chakra, I see no need to add any further postures.

5.1.2.7 Ajna chakra

The most frequently recommended posture by the authors for this chakra is Garudasana (eagle), followed by Vajrasana (thunderbolt), Halasana (plough), Natrajasana (Lord dancer), and Adho muka svanasana (downward dog).

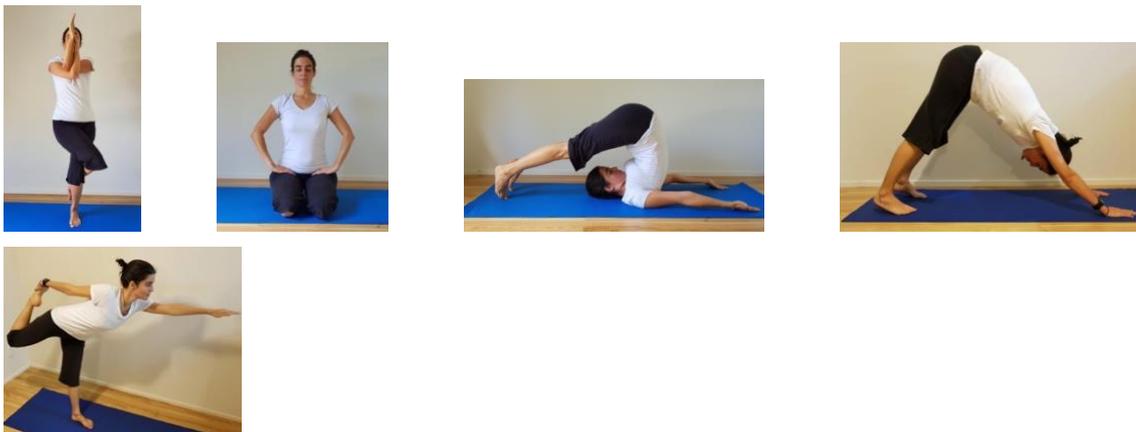


Figure 42 - Garudasana, Vajrasana, Halasana, Natrajasana, Adho muka svanasana.

Given that these postures include all the patterns that have been identified for this chakra, no further postures need to be added to the most frequently recommended ones.

5.1.2.8 Sahasrara chakra

The postures for this chakra that are recommended by most of the authors are Shirshasana (headstand), Shavasana (corpse) and Prasarita padatanasana (crown-based pose), followed by Shashasana (bowing pose).



Figure 43 - Shirshasana, Shavasana, Prasarita padatanasana, Shashasana.

Given that these postures cover the identified pattern, I would say they are sufficient for the practice of this chakra. Although it is important to remember that Shavasana is the relaxation pose, so it can be placed at the end of the practice.

5.1.3 Integration of postures into a psychotherapeutic context

There are some elements I would like to reflect on regarding some of the complexities of introducing postures into a psychotherapeutic context, namely Yoga Psychotherapy.

First and foremost, even though this work has conveyed that Yoga postures can help balance or activate the chakras that govern specific emotions, I find it important to restate that *asana* is only one of the eight limbs of Yoga, and postures are a part of a wider philosophical and psychological paradigm, which offers its full potential as a whole. This is why this study proposes to fit into a Yoga Psychotherapy framework, rather than being a stand-alone proposition.

Second, I would like to emphasise that I see the practitioner's main role on this front as to teach the relevant postures and their specific purpose, in the context of resourcing the client to use them to their advantage, and practicing them in their own time. This way, the practitioner is empowering the client (e.g. learning that if they experience anger, they have these postures for self-regulation and transcendence), rather than being dependent on the practitioner. Exceptionally, and like any other characteristic that the client may not yet have developed, if they are not yet resourced enough to have the motivation to perform *asana* in their own time, the therapy space could cater for some practice time, but ideally, this space may be better used to put in place the remaining aspects of Yoga and psychotherapy disciplines, which can also offer immense value.

Third, naturally not everybody will be drawn to, able to, or willing to perform Yoga *asana*. Nevertheless, the aim of this research is to provide tools, so that those who are can use it as appropriate. Like any other tool, some people will use it and their lives will be changed, others want nothing to do with it. In a client-centred discipline such as Yoga Psychotherapy (and one could argue psychotherapy in general), it is important to have the tools available for the client should they want to. From my personal and professional experience, it is crystal clear to me that there is no value in trying to force beliefs onto people. Personally, I live and breathe the Yoga principles, and sometimes people are drawn to living how I live, or experiencing what I experience, in which case I am delighted to offer the tools that have worked for me, but I would be very unlikely to do so under other circumstances.

Fourth, because of the complexity of trauma, and more fragile clients (who often present to psychotherapy), it can be useful to take trauma principles into consideration. For this I would recommend a Trauma-sensitive Yoga approach while teaching postures. This has been thoroughly researched and is described by Emerson and Hopper (2015). This approach has principles such as inviting rather than telling the client what to do, collaborating to see what their body can tolerate, and staying within range of the clinician's professional competence (e.g. yoga teacher, psychotherapist). It also involves specific phases of client work¹⁶, designed to cater for the sensitivity required for trauma work.

Fifth, while this research offers a quick overview of the trends that may indicate that chakras are not balanced or not activated, there may be nuances in emotions that are not apparent, so it may not be beneficial to not look at these ideas entirely linearly. For example, if a client is

¹⁶ There are three phases defined in this approach. Phase one is about becoming aware of their body (building a relationship with the body, emphasis on self-awareness, self-tolerance and regulatory skills, practicing purposeful action, feeling embodied and safe). Phase two is about befriending the body (noticing what the body feels like, interacting with it, taking the initiative of experimenting with movement or breath, and developing an openness and curiosity towards body sensations). Phase three involves using the body as a resource (yoga practice for self-regulation).

experiencing envy, it is not sufficient to look at this study and identify that the word 'envy' is in Svadhisthana chakra. If the envy is in a context of ruthless professional ambition, it may relate more to Manipura chakra, instead of the social type of envy that often relates to Svadhisthana. So, my view is that it is important for the practitioner to have a holistic understanding, primarily of the whole person, keeping an openness and sensitivity to the person in context, and secondarily of the essence of each chakra (preferably lived experience), as this could increase assessment accuracy and treatment efficacy.

Sixth, a reminder of safety considerations. Yoga Psychotherapy falls under the codes of conduct for both Yoga and Psychotherapy. Hence, safety considerations can be defined by the practitioner's standards, best practices and ethics, depending on their Yoga tradition. Some examples are, conveying guidelines for the client regarding timings of doing postures before and after eating, factoring in physical limitations or injuries, requirements around physical space, and decisions around adjustments, number of recommended postures, risk factors, amongst others.

While there are many other elements relevant to be taken into account regarding the use of Yoga in a psychotherapeutic setting, these have already been considered as part of the Yoga Psychotherapy framework as described by Anjali (1994), as I have explained in the introduction chapter.

5.1.4 Significance of this research to the field of psychotherapy

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I articulated some of the impacts of Yoga (or Yoga Psychotherapy) to the field of psychotherapy. In addition to those, I would like to explore impacts of this research in particular (the use of Yoga postures for emotional balancing) to a psychotherapeutic context.

First, the possibility of using the body to access unreachable emotions. Namely, while talking therapies are known for engaging the mind (through conversation) to reach the emotions, multiple authors (e.g. Broom, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2014) have argued that while the mind can dissociate from emotions, the body cannot. This explains psychosomatic illness, where the body expresses the emotions that have been dissociated from the mind (Broom, 2007). This is a phenomenon I see frequently in my psychotherapeutic work in the Hospital, where people who have suffered traumatic experiences have lost access to either the memories or emotions of what happened, so these express through the body. The relevance of Yoga asana on this front is that because it works with the physical body (closely intertwined with emotions), it holds the potential to access (and therefore heal) those emotions and somatic memories that are inaccessible to the mind. As emotions become balanced or reintegrated by the mind, often they no longer need to express through the body, normally causing illness to disappear (Lindsay, Goulding, Solomon, & Broom, 2015). Hence, Yoga *asana* provides an avenue for exploring this mind-body connection, which has the potential to bring healing for clients.

Second, the body's potential role in establishing safety, which is another key element of psychotherapy (The Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2013). This is particularly important in the context of trauma (Briere & Scott, 2006), "because trauma is held in the body, the

ability to have a new, positive somatic experience is an incredible asset for many trauma survivors. This is the beginning of a path toward regaining a part of the self that was taken away” (Emerson & Hopper, 2015). My clinical experience suggests that it is a deeply transformative and empowering experience for people with trauma to feel safe in their body, and eventually even use it for emotion regulation. Psychological safety has become even more important in psychotherapy since the thinking has evolved from the Freudian idea that people are driven by pleasure, to the idea that people are driven by the need to feel psychologically safe (Weiss, 1993). This suggests that safety would be quite relevant in terms of clients’ needs. In my various forms of work with trauma clients, I found that a gentle body-driven approach (possibly in addition to other interventions) to establish security, connection and empowerment, can be a powerful and expedient way for clients to regain safety, without necessarily having to spend years working through a complex set of psychological defences. In fact, many of my own personal leaps in terms of trauma recovery have happened through physical or creative modalities.

Third, the role of *asana* in helping shift negative beliefs. Clients are often affected by ‘pathogenic beliefs’ (negative beliefs about reality or morality that shape one’s perception of self and others) based on difficult childhood experiences, which then create lifetime conditionings and limitations (Weiss, 1993). Attachment theory speaks of a similar concept, namely ‘internal working models’, meaning a person’s generalised beliefs and expectations about the world, self and others (Holmes, 2001). Yoga *asana* may be able to help with this, because from a holistic perspective, based on body, emotions, mind and spirit being connected, it is plausible that these beliefs and emotional states may also be stored in the body at some level. In which case, under the hypothesis that *asana* practice transforms those physical areas, they also have the potential to balance the associated emotions. This could be a more direct healing pathway, because often the challenge of using the mind to heal the emotions (instead of the body) is that the mind has its well-established distractions and defence mechanisms that sabotage the healing efforts, whereas the body can sometimes be more accessible to change.

Fourth, the use of *asana* to restore the chemical balance of the body, so that it does not negatively impact the mind. Neuropsychotherapy tells us that when clients experience high levels of anxiety, their stress response system (the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal system in the amygdala) is activated, resulting in increased production of hormones¹⁷ which compromise the high-level functions of the brain (Rossouw, 2014). One of the major implications of this for psychotherapy is that cortisol, unlike adrenaline (which is generated rapidly in face of danger, and then rapidly dissipates), takes a long time to be removed from the organism. Therefore, psychotherapeutic work is often negatively impacted by such chemical imbalances of the brain, which can keep clients stuck in self-damaging and often perpetuating cycles (e.g. violent responses due to fear, which then causes fear of violent responses). Hopper (2014) refers to the concept of ‘cycles of suffering’, naming the fear/anxiety cycle, as well as the depression/defeat cycle, based on neuroscientific research. Because Yoga *asana* reduces cortisol and enhances vagal activity (Balasubramaniam et al., 2013; Field, 2011; Nolan, 2016), this could suggest that it may help restore the chemical balance in the brain, which would be key to help clients out of

¹⁷ Adrenocorticotrophin hormone, corticotrophin releasing factor, norepinephrine, adrenalin and cortisol.

those cycles, hopefully for long enough to break into more positive cycles (e.g. compassion, generosity, self-love).

Fifth, as I have alluded to before, the holistic nature of Yoga implies an integrated understanding of health (Anjali, 1994). I see this dissertation's attempt to bridge sciences and psychologies with esoteric mind-body-spirit traditions as part of a wider shift happening in medical systems in general. I consider this particularly important in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, being a bi-cultural country where Māori also have an integrated understanding of health, yet the current dominant biomedical model of health is failing to address those needs (Mark & Lyons, 2010). Perhaps this helps explain why Māori have more concerning indicators regarding statistics for physical and mental health (Rochford, 2004; Elizabeth, 2015; Hoeata, Nikora, Li, Young-Hauser, & Robertson, 2011; Pihama et al., 2016; Hay et al., 2014; Creamer et al., 2010).

5.2 Critique of the research process and outcomes

In this section, I will critique and discuss some of the potential limitations of the research process that was applied in this dissertation.

The subjective nature of a qualitative study such as this one, implies that it involves some subjective analysis and interpretation of the literature (e.g. the investigation of patterns in Yoga postures). I am not necessarily advocating that this is a limitation, as that follows the set epistemology and represents the nature of a qualitative analysis, but I would argue that alongside this, a quantitative study could also provide valuable insight into these contributions. A positivist-oriented person may agree that my conclusions could potentially benefit from being scientifically validated by identifying the location of the chakras, or scientifically demonstrating the relationship between chakras and postures. And I myself also hope that science continues to evolve to use that positivist paradigm to prove more of these millenary concepts that Yoga has been evidencing, as it has for some already¹⁸.

A limitation of the scope of this dissertation is that it was limited to the *asana* element of Yoga. This left out other types of Yoga practices that would have fit Anjali's (1994) criteria (e.g. mudras, mantras, pranayama, meditation). Regardless, this was a conscious choice, given the size restrictions of this dissertation, and knowing that if I wanted a large enough dataset to be able to draw conclusions around patterns in postures, I would have to substantially focus the scope.

Additionally, I think a critique of Yoga Psychotherapy in general, and Anjali's (1994) thesis in particular could have added value to this dissertation, however that was not possible for similar reasons to those stated above.

Moreover, the research was limited to publications available in the English language, which misses less popular Indian literature that may not have been translated. While this is probably a natural filter (as the most renowned books are likely to have been translated into English), I imagine that other useful sources could also have brought their own benefits and perspectives.

I am also very mindful that Yoga is a holistic tradition, with a multi-dimensional understanding

¹⁸ A recent example of science evolving to prove Yoga concepts, is quantum physics proving that emotion and intention affect physical matter (as per multiple clinical trials explained by Dispenza 2012).

of the universe. Trying to narrow it down to linear purposes such as finding direct relationships between emotions, chakras and postures can be (and is certainly likely to be) reductionist and miss out on the complexity of an enormous philosophical system of knowledge. While I had this possibility on the back of my mind throughout all the dissertation phases, it was ultimately a risk I was willing to take, for the benefit of clients in need, as I believe it is better to have to reduce something and still get great value out of it, than to not have it available at all.

Moreover, some might say that the outcome of this dissertation (a posture-based treatment) can be slightly prescriptive and too straight-forward, when emotions are actually very complex. Similarly to the point above, this was a risk I consciously took, because it is almost inevitable for something to be lost when we narrow down multi-layered concepts into a linear approach. Yet clinical experience (both my own, my clients', and the research) suggests that it may be of value. Hence, my preference is to get these tools out into the world, so that they become available for people to try them if they so wish, letting the results speak for themselves.

I am also aware that the method I used to select the postures for each chakra (described earlier in this chapter) can result in possibly redundant postures. Not knowing as much about the physical, energetic, emotional and mental aspects of each posture as the Yoga masters from these traditions who first taught them, I did not want to risk removing any of the postures that were highly recommended yet seemed possibly redundant. Plus, each chakra only had between four and seven postures (of the most recommended by the selected authors), which intuitively felt like an acceptable number.

My last critique is around bringing topics of spirituality and esoteric teachings into a Western-driven discipline such as psychotherapy, which can sometimes exhibit a mild anti-religious bias (particularly conventional psychotherapy, although more recent transpersonal forms of psychotherapy have started to include more spiritual aspects). This was a conscious choice given the Hindu philosophy that this topic is grounded in. Regardless, I would argue that a substantial part of the population is possibly open to spirituality and/or religion, and I question whether this bias is actually serving us, not only because it may miss a large portion of the population, but it may also miss out on potential benefits of spirituality to day-to-day mental and emotional illness, as a source of meaning, holding and insight.

5.3 Future directions

One of the suggestions for future directions, as stated above, can be to explore the outcomes of this dissertation from a positivist paradigm perspective, given that Yoga Psychotherapy attempts to bridge the wisdom and spirituality from the East with the psychologies and sciences from the West. Hence, it could potentially be useful to augment my analysis of the postures with scientific knowledge about the chakras and meridians.

Additionally, this research could be taken to the next step by relating Yoga postures not only with emotions but with particular medical diagnosis and conditions (e.g. depression, eating disorders, etc.).

It would also be useful to research the physical counterpart of this dissertation, namely what are the physical areas of our body that each chakra is responsible for, so that ultimately there

could be a manual of Yoga postures for physical illness. Although in saying this I am even wondering if I am being too reductive, in separating physical from emotional illness. On that note, perhaps further studies could also elaborate on links between physical and emotional illness. Broom (2007) mentions multiple examples of emotional conditions that express through the body, and how psychotherapy can be used for treatment simply by relating the person's physical symptoms with their emotions and personal story. Personally, I have successfully used Yoga postures to heal physical conditions (e.g. endometriosis, dysmenorrhea, urticaria) that were intimately related to emotional conditions and past traumas, and I have had similar experiences in clinical settings.

5.4 Chapter concluding remarks

This last chapter summarised the findings from the literature review (psychological characteristics of each chakra, and patterns identified in the Yoga postures for that chakra). Then, a Yoga *asana* practice to help balance and activate the chakras (and related emotions) was tentatively proposed, followed by a reflection on implications of introducing asana practice into a psychotherapeutic setting. Then, there were further reflections on the significance of the research for the psychotherapy field. Lastly, there was a critique of the research process, and future directions offered.

The last thing I would like to share is the reluctance I carried throughout the whole writing of this dissertation, about zooming in on the *asana* element of Yoga. The discrepancy between what I understand to be the all-encompassing multi-dimensional philosophical paradigm of Yoga, and the fitness modality that Yoga centres around the world claim to sell as 'Yoga', absolutely breaks my heart. My personal quest is to contribute to a shift in the understanding of what Yoga is in its entirety (its eight limbs), and its contributions to integrated health (mind-body-spirit), and in resourcing and empowering people into reaching their full potential, so that they can shine as the magnificent beings that they are... And yet the gap I found in the literature was about *asana*, precisely the element which I would have preferred not to emphasise. As ironic as that may sound, I trust that the coincidence that my expertise on the topic matched exactly the gap I found in the literature, as part of a larger cosmic synchronicity that I am happy to partake in and flow with.

Thank you, and Namaste.

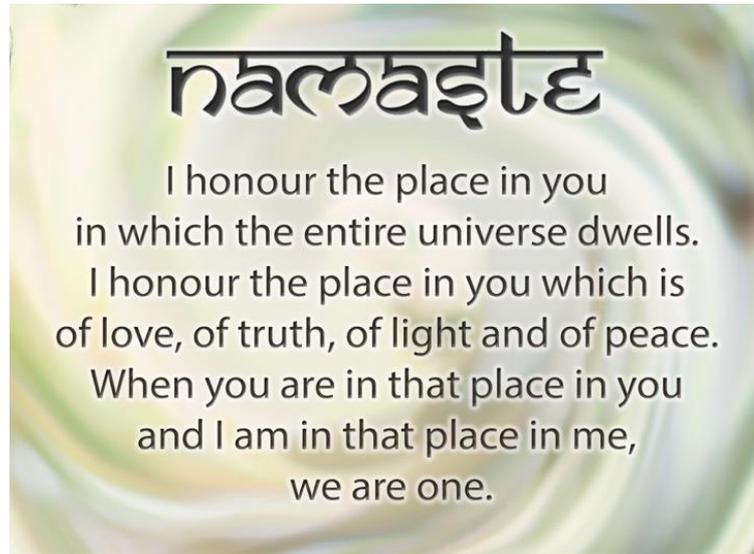


Figure 44 - Translation of *Namaste*, a Sanskrit¹⁹ greeting and gesture of appreciation.

¹⁹ Ancient Indian language often considered sacred in Yoga.

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Appendix 1 - Dataset sources (authors and publications)

Selected authors / publications

Cyndi Dale is an internationally renowned author, speaker, healer and business consultant. She spent years investigating and learning about the chakras, and pulled together information from many different traditions into her very comprehensive 1000+ page book about the chakras. President of Life Systems Services, she has conducted over 50,000 client sessions and offers training across Europe, Asia and America.

Selected publication: Dale, C. (2016). Llewellyn's complete book of chakras: Your definitive source of energy center knowledge for health, happiness, and spiritual evolution.

Alan Finger, under the influence of his father's teacher, Paramahansa Yogananda (one of the enlightened masters from the Yoga lineage), started doing Yoga at age five studying it at age fifteen, and teaching it from sixteen onwards, having systematised ISHTA, a profound yoga method now studied widely across the globe.

Selected publication: Finger, A., & Repka, K. (2005). Chakra Yoga: Balancing energy for physical, spiritual, and mental well-being.

Anodea Judith has been a student of spirituality, psychology, and metaphysics since she was old enough to read. Her academic background includes a master's degree in clinical psychology, a doctorate in Health and Human Services (focused on mind-body health), and a certification in Yoga Therapy. Judith's studies in healing have included bioenergetics, psychology, psychotherapy, mythology, sociology, history, systems theory, and mystic spirituality. teaches across the U.S., as well as in Canada, Europe, Ireland, Asia, and South and Central America. Her journey started in 1975 with Swami Satchitananda and his book Integral Yoga Hatha, Anusara lineage, Bikram and Sumits Yoga.

Selected publications:

Judith, A. (1999). Wheels of life: A user's guide to the chakra system.

Judith, A. (2004). Eastern body Western mind: Psychology and the chakra system as a path to the Self.

Judith, A. (2015). Anodea Judith's Chakra Yoga.

Patricia Mercier was initially initiated by Maya elders into ancient wisdom, and then continued her journey by learning from multiple Yoga teachers, before becoming a teacher herself.

Selected publication: Mercier, P. (2009). The chakra bible: The definitive guide to working with chakras.

Satyananda Saraswati, another enlightened master from the Yoga lineage, was a Yoga teacher and guru in both his native India and the West. He was a student of Sivananda Saraswati., and wrote over 80 books, and many of the current Yoga traditions around the world are derived from his disciples.

Selected publications:

Saraswati, S. S. (2002). Asana pranayama mudra bandha.

Saraswati, S. S. (2004). A systematic course in the ancient tantric techniques of Yoga and Kriya.

Carl Jung has been influential in not only in his work in psychiatry, but also anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and religious studies, and initially worked with Sigmund Freud (founder of psychoanalysis). Jung aimed to discover how to fulfil the deep, innate potential of human beings. Based on his study of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Taoism, and other traditions, Jung believed that this journey of transformation (which he called individuation), was at the mystical heart of all religions, and that spirituality was essential to human existence, health and well-being.

Selected publication: Jung, C. G. (1996). The psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the seminar given in 1932 by C. G. Jung.

Pauline Wills learned from an Indian teacher who devoted most of his life to the study and practice of Yoga, as taught by Patanjali, including the spiritual aspects, asana and chakra system.

Selected publications: Wills, P. (2002). Chakra workbook: Rebalance your body's vital energies.

Gregorian Bivolaru, the leader of the Integral Yoga school where I have learned Yoga, founded MISA (the Movement of Spiritual Integration into the Absolute), which counts over 200 Yoga instructors in Romania alone (his home country), and over 15,000 practitioners in branches spread across all continents. He follows the works of some modern sages like Ramakrishna, Sivananda and Yogananda, and collaborated extensively with the Romanian Ministry of Health and with the Association of Psychosomatic Medicine of Bucharest to help people heal from terminal diseases through Yoga.

Authors who have been eliminated from the selection

Khalsa, G. K., & Michon, C. (2000). The 8 human talents: Restore the balance and serenity within you with Kundalini Yoga.

Herring, B. K. (2001). Asanas for the chakra system.

Motoyama, H. (2008). Theories of the chakras: Bridge to higher consciousness.

Watson, J. (2011). Nursing: The philosophy and science of caring (Revised Edition).

Voigt, A. (2004). The Chakra Workbook: A Step-by Step Guide to Realigning Your Body's Vital Energies

Rabbitt, M. (2016). Chakra alignment.

Appendix 2 - Chakra-emotions subset codes: Emotions/qualities that relate to each chakra, according to the main authors

Balanced emotions per chakra

Book	Muladhara	Svadhithana	Manipura	Anahata	Vishuddha	Ajna	Sahasrara
Mercier, P. (2009)	grounding	sexual health	power	agape	expression	balance higher & lower self, intuition	divine love, super-consciousness
Dale, C. (2016)	safety, security, physical ease, prosperity, grounding, common-sense, in control of body drives, reliable, motivated, adventurous, calmness, energetic joy, bliss, oneness	friendliness, vitality, satisfaction, compassion, sexual expression emotional attachment, sensuality. feeling-sensitive, empathy, creativity, caring	power, self-worth, assertiveness, cooperation, dynamic energy, intelligence, decisiveness, productivity, mental focus, healthy work relationship. ability to carry out decisions.	love, empathy, compassion, friendliness, motivation, nurture, acceptance, sense of wholeness. appreciation, generosity, self-care, ethical & individual yet communal, ego transcendence	creativity, expression, positive communication, active-listening, contentment.	keen intellect, intuition, positive use of imagination, ability to see the big picture, perceive & influence spiritual panes, establish goals and take action. perspective	freedom from ego-based desires, increased self-trust, selflessness, superior consciousness, refined sense of empathy, ability to see big picture, humanitarianism, inner peace, joy, present-moment living, crown compassion, ability to be perceptive & communicative. expand our perspective to understand all others, spiritual, highly conscious, expressive of universal truths, positivity
Saraswati, S. S. (2004)	security	pleasure-seeking, enjoyment	active, extroverted, powerful	emotions, devotion, ego-transcendence, acceptance, unconditional love, creativity	feeling-at-home, openness, seeking understanding, flow in-tune with the current-of-life, magical-feel cosmic-connection, intuition, compassion, peace, bliss	mind, subtle intelligence, discernment, wisdom, intuition to tune into the underlying essence of things, intuitive perception of meaning & symbolism, extrasensory perception, mental resolve, awareness, detachment, harmony	divinity
Jung, C. G. (1996)	grounding, impulses, instincts, unconsciousness	sexuality, water as a source of regeneration or destruction, rebirth, creativity	intensity, activity, centre of identification with god, drive, fire of passion, wishes, change, resolutions	heart, individuation of the self, expansion, values, non-selfishness, atman	cosmic-connection, abstract thinking, intuitively experiencing the substance of things, realisation of the subjectivity of our own experience, archetypes	psyche, non-ego, true beyond-subjectivity experience of the self (god), true consciousness instead of self-consciousness, detached observation	highest consciousness not limited to this universe
Judith, A. (2004)	strong health, vitality, grounding, comfortable in body, trust in the world, safety, stability, relaxation, prosperity, right	connection, graceful movement, pleasure, nurturance of self & others, ability to change, healthy boundaries	responsible, reliable, will-power, self-esteem, ego-strength, warmth in personality, confidence, spontaneity,	love, empathy, compassion, self-love, altruism, peace, balance, acceptance	communication, creativity, good-listener, good-timing, good-rhythm, purity	abstract thinking, intuitive, perceptive, good memory, good dream recall, ability to think symbolically,	broad understanding, perceiving/assimilating / analysing information, intelligent, thoughtful, aware, open-minded,

	livelihood		sense of humour, playfulness, self-discipline, power, ability to meet challenges			visualise and recognise patterns, self-reflection	able to question, spiritually connected, wise, self-knowledge
Finger , A.	grounding, stability, sustenance, security, financial-security, money, body, ancestry, roots, abundance, comfort, procreation-instinct	likes&dislikes, movement, unconscious, satisfaction, sensuality, sexuality, creativity	ego-strength, brilliance, relaxation, justice, equity, self-confidence, power, self-esteem, extroversion	agape, love, joy, ego-transcendence, harmony / integration between physical-spiritual, internal-external, fulfilment, meaning, acceptance, compassion, selflessness, emotional-clarity, kindness, understanding	purity, harmony, communication, creativity, intuition, inspiration, active-listening, speak-own-truth, cosmic-channelling	command-centre, universal-intelligence, burn-karma, consciousness, clarity	consciousness, bliss, divinity, wisdom, surrender
Wills, P. (2002)	procreation-instinct, survival, base-instincts, vitality, survival-instincts, grounding	attraction, desires, emotions, gentleness, likes&dislikes	power, respect, self-respect, cheerfulness, self-confidence, relaxation, spontaneity, warmth	agape, love, compassion, nurture, feelings	contentment, communication, inspiration, creativity, wisdom	detachment, transcendence-of-materialism, psychic-power, telepathy, clairaudience, clairvoyance, access-to-past-lives	divinity, access-to-subconscious
Integral Yoga oral tradition	strength, vitality, survival, grounding	pleasure, sensations, duality, likes&dislikes, pursuit of what feels nice sociable conversation sexual energy desire for entertainment and social life sensuality creative imagination healing energy sense of enjoyment good relationships and social interactions sensitivity hunger, thirst, sleep	strong willpower direction humour relaxation capacity to act good understanding of situations independence self-confidence strong magnetic personality justice honour courage determination dynamic vitality genuine values active and inexhaustible ability to influence others acts of kindness and selflessness strong presence	love, kindness, caring, affection, altruism, selflessness, devotion harmonious, stable, balanced elevated emotions. Unconditional love emotional energy emanate a frequency that fulfils the hearts of people profound and harmonious communication everyone is interconnected humbleness surrender, give, non-attachment, inspire hope emanate kindness, radiate warmth and sincerity non-judging, peacefulness deep reconciliation continuous happiness healing love magnetism harmony, freedom	intuition harmonious integration high-ideals eternal-knowledge-seeking transcendence common-sense mysteries blissful happiness divine-grace clear melodious communication, intuition, cosmic-connection, profound intelligence purity, expansion transcendental and cosmically-based-thought space time cosmic-channelling	command-centre, lucidity in complexity intelligence perceptiveness correlations causality non-linear logic emotional-intelligence discernment principles laws visualisation conceptualisation access to subconscious levels introspection psychic self-confidence psychic powers telepathy, hypnosis, clairvoyance clarity, clear awareness conditioning-removal ingenious spiritual-intuition transcend the mind and awaken the superior intuitive intellect	detachment divinity wisdom

Unbalanced emotions per chakra

Book	Muladhara	Svadhsthana	Manipura	Anahata	Vishuddha	Ajna	Sahasrara
Mercier, P. (2009)	sexual, lust, obsession	relationships, violence, addictions	power, fear, anxiety, introversion	passion, tenderness, inner-child, rejection	self-expression, communication, will	unbalance-between-higher&lower-self, distrust-inner-guidance	inner wisdom, death of the body
Dale, C. (2016)	lack of grounding, hurt, resentment, victim mentality, lack of follow-through, self-destructiveness, sense of being unlovable, suicidal tendencies, addictions, anxiety, depression, passivity, financial lack, poor/rigid boundaries, greed, hoarding, materialism, hypochondria, paranoia, laziness, fatigue, fear of change, survival, anger, sadness, fear, disgust, rage, resentment, futility, despair, terror, abandonment, rejection, shame, guilt, longing, distrust, disconnection (from home, primary relationships, societal norms)	rigidity, frigidity, self-denial, fear-of-change, poor-social-skills desire & creativity, addictions, irresponsibility, emotionalism, seductive manipulation, unhealthy co-dependency, obsessive attachments, emotional abuse, envy, jealousy, rage, greed, prejudice, guilt, shame, resentment, fear, martyrdom	low-self-esteem, low-self-confidence, contracted energy, dissatisfaction, low-self-discipline, manipulation, propensity for being manipulated, victimisation, unreliability, passivity, blame, controlling, aggressive dominating behaviour, stubbornness, selfishness, hyperactivity, pride, competition, anger, fear, prejudice, judgement, oversensitivity to criticism, control, self-aggrandising, mental chatter, anxiety, self-sabotage, self-neglect & praise-seeking	inability-to-forgive, loneliness, lack of empathy, lack of self-love, apathy, indifference, withdrawal, aimlessness, jealousy, co-dependency, martyrdom, self-aggrandisement, egotism, self-centeredness, tribalism. drama	fear of speaking, inability-to-speak-own-truth, perfectionism, overbearing, gossip, stuttering, loudness, overactive-thyroid, lack-of-consideration, fragmentation, compulsive-behaviours, withdrawal.	obliviousness, denial, gullibility, chaos, co-dependency, abuse, difficulty-planning, poor-memory, joylessness, anxiety, perception-issues, fantasizing, hallucinations, difficulty-concentrating, obsessiveness, delusions, nightmares, self-centeredness, turmoil, irritation, refusal-to-change, inability-to-look-forward-with-joy.	lack-of-purpose, lack-of-ethics, lack-of-joy, lack-of-trust; loss-of-meaning, loss-of-identity; apathy, materialism, selfishness, inability-for-closure, fear-of-spirituality, spiritual-obsession, religious-obsession, spiritual-cynicism, lack-of-wisdom, learning-difficulties, fear-of-death, feeling-of-separation (from others, body, self), intellectualisation, lack-of-humility, spiritual-pride, manic-depressive or hysterical behaviour.
Saraswati, S. S. (2004)	self-centred, materialistic	credulity, suspicion, disdain, false knowledge, pitilessness	abusive, ambitious	self-centred	disharmony, neurotic and antagonistic	fickleness, attachment, ignorance, lack-of-discernment	lack-of-connection-with-divinity
Jung, C. G. (1996)	fear	desire	conflict, anger, illusions, explosions	selfishness	not-understanding-subjectivity-of-own-experience	lack-of-objectivity, lack-of-clarity (inability to see the truth), lack-of-discernment, illusion	lack-of-consciousness
Judith, A. (2004)	fear, issues with roots, grounding, nourishment, trust, health, home, family, prosperity, boundaries, disconnection from body, obesity or underweight, anxiety, restlessness, poor focus/discipline, financial difficulties, disorganisation, materialism, greed, laziness, tiredness, fear-of-change, obsession-with-	guilt, movement, sensation, emotions, sexuality, desire, need, pleasure, physical-rigidity, emotional-rigidity, frigidity, poor-social-skills, fear-of-change, lack-of-desire, lack-of-passion, lack-of-excitement, emotionality, sexual-manipulation, emotional dependency, obsessive attachment,	shame, issues with energy, activity, autonomy, individuation, weak-will-power, low-self-esteem, proactivity, power, low-energy or hyperactivity, manipulation, low-self-esteem, poor-follow-through, physically / emotionally cold, victim mentality, blame, passive, unreliable, aggressive,	grief, inability-to-forgive, issues with love, balance, self-love, relationships, intimacy, anima/animus, devotion, reaching out/taking in, antisocial, withdrawn, cold, critical, judgemental, intolerant (self/others), loneliness, depression, fear-of-intimacy, fear-of-relationships, lack-of-	lies, poor-communication, creativity, listening, resonance, self-expression, introversion, shyness, poor rhythm, verbal-domination, poor-comprehension, gossiping	illusion, lack-of-intuition, lack-of-imagination, lack-of-insight, issues-with-dreams, lack-of-vision, insensitivity, poor-memory, difficulty-seeing-the-future, denial, inability-to-see-other-perspectives, hallucinations / delusions, obsessions, lack-of-concentration.	attachment, issues with transcendence, immanence, belief systems, divinity, union, vision, spiritual-cynicism, spiritual-obsession, learning difficulties, rigid belief systems, apathy, unbalance-of-lower-chakras, intellectualisation, confusion, dissociation from body.

	security.	addictions.	anger, controlling, abusive, power-hungry, deceitful, stubbornness, competitive, arrogant.	empathy, narcissism, co-dependency, poor-boundaries, demanding, clinging, jealous, overly-sacrificing.			
Finger , A.	eating-disorders, body health, financial-insecurity, irresponsibility, materialism, greed, lack-of-grounding	impulses, desire, lust, greed, dissatisfaction, moving-from-one-thing-to-the-next, frustration, boredom, compulsions, lack-of-desire, addictions	egotism, blindness-to-own-ego, arrogance, vanity, insensitivity, anger, control, depression, insecurity, weakness, introversion, heightened-vulnerability, indecision, anxiety, low-self-esteem, self-doubt, self-destructive-behaviour, need-to-be-right, intolerance, praise-seeking, powerlessness, harshness,	attachment, emotional-withdrawal, emotional-flamboyance, emotional disappointment, drama, fear-of-losing-love, emotionality, low-self-love	aggressive-communication, loud-communication, judgement, non-receptivity, disconnection-from-universal-mysteries, lack-of-inspiration withdrawal, dominate-conversation, compassionate-communication, connected-to-divine-guidance, cosmic-connection, overbearing	confusion, fragmentation, disharmony, karma	illusion, lack-of-consciousness
Wills, P. (2002)	aggression, domination, egotism, low-sexuality, lack-of-confidence, lack-of-grounding, lack-of-willpower	over-emotionality, over-sensitivity, shyness, resentment, distrust, guilt, aggression, manipulation, sexual-obsession, ambition, over-indulgence	weakness, inhibitions, judgement, ambition, perfectionism, authority-resentment, insecurity, low self-confidence	judgement, possessiveness, mood-swings, conditional-love, suspiciousness, indecisiveness, clinging, fear-of-rejection, need-for-reassurance	arrogance, self-righteousness, dogma, excessive-talking, shyness, fear, inconsistency, unreliability, manipulation, fear-of-sex	pride, religious-dogma, manipulation, egomania, oversensitivity-to-others-feelings, non-assertiveness, ego-and-higher-self-undistinguishable	frustration, indecision, lack-of-joy
Integral Yoga oral tradition	fear-of-annihilation sleepiness laziness victim-attitude weak-sexual-power illusions ungrounding eating-disorders security-obsession passivity unconsciousness fatalism deep anxiety irrational-tensions ignorance rigidity hunter-behaviour aggressiveness thinness animal-instincts ego-centred anarchic-tendencies greediness attachment indifference	frustration, drama moving-from-one-thing-to-the-next "I-quit" social-rules self-image uncontrolled-sexuality sexual-dependency uncontrolled-fantasies attachment confusion forgetfulness jealousy emptiness indecision credulity sexual-inhibition abuse pleasure concern for own pleasure aggressive sexuality sexual-manipulation dellusions obsession with	dependency shyness fear low-profile, fake-humbleness passivity weak-character poor-follow-through teachery low-self-control weak-will-power low-self-confidence indecision slow-motion un-adaptation incapacity-to-say-no anxiety regrets cowardness need-to-be-right anarchic-independence aggressive-behaviour recklessness arrogance anger rage	sadness loneliness vulnerability hurt feelings indecision regarding feelings emotional insecurity hypersensitivity confusion about feelings fear to lose love and be alone, compromises exchange-favours-for-love lack of confidence in friendship, feeling that friends are not giving enough in the relationship painful passive longing, hopelessness, attachment, judgement, self-preoccupation, feeling lost regret exaggerated	rejection, withdrawal, isolation, "ivory-tower" inability-to-express self-judgement mind-body-dissociation, inexpressiveness, superficiality chaotic-access-to-memory verbal-vampirism bitterness-for-imperfection defensive-attitude metaphysical-concern sadness fear-of-expression judgement lack-of-trust-in-intuition lack-of-discernment, chaotic-expression, disharmonious-	Inability-to-understand-complexity lack-of-discernment lack-of-insight low-emotional-intelligence lack-of-discernment inability-to-apply-ethics inability-to-conceptualise and abstract failure-to-understand-non-linear-correlations lack-of-psychic-confidence confusion incoherence, cold-and-distant, autistic inability-to-access-the-subconscious ego preconceived-ideas limiting-beliefs and mental-patterns	attachment, taking-things-personally, loss-of-perspective, disconnection, lack-of-consciousness, spiritual-cynicism, spiritual-disconnection, lack-of-connection-with-divinity, spiritual-obsession, lack-of-humility, spiritual-pride

		<p>what “feels good” indulgence unconsciousness envy, anger loneliness versatility suspicion sexual- superficiality</p>	<p>pride stubbornness manipulation exaggeration arbitrary actions and decisions, unjustified-self- confidence superficial- decisions fast-motion selfishness superficiality no-regrets provocative attitude, self- aggrandising</p>	<p>care for others egocentrism aloneness, isolation, unworthiness self-demanding demanding superficiality dominate and manipulate emotional- manipulation emotional- blackmail selfishness superficial involvement coldness indifference towards love and needs incapacity-to- accept-love tendency to impose the way the friendship should be unbearable longing emotionally self-referential insensitivity to other people's feelings</p>	<p>charisma overpowering, willpower, memory- manipulation self-deceit verbal- domination, guilt-of-being- superficial bitterness-for- imperfection, dissatisfaction spiritual- saturation dismiss- intuitions knowledge- expressed- without- discernment, superficial-use- of-intuition superficiality futility</p>	<p>lack-of-spiritual- intuitions or lack-of- visualisations unawareness misinterpretation lost-in-feelings- and-logics, inappropriate- behaviour contradictory- actions unrealistic- psychic- confidence, uncontrolled- subconscious, delusions</p>	
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Appendix 3 - Chakra-posture subset codes: Asanas for each chakra according to the main authors

Book	Muladhara	Swadhisthana	Manipura	Anahata	Vishuddha	Ajna	Sahasrara
Mercier, P. (2009)	Virabhadrasana-1 Trikonasana Garudasana	Parivrtta-trikonasana Utthita-parsvakonasana Natarajasana	Gomukhasana Ardha-matsyendrasana Ushtrasana	Bhujangasana Janushirshasana Matsyasana	Dhanurasana Simhasana Paschimottanasana	Adho-mukhasvanasana Agnistambhasana Halasana	Shirshasana Bakasana Sarvangasana
Dale, C. (2016)	Virabhadrasana-1	Parivrtta-trikonasana	Ushtrasana	Bhujangasana	Dhanurasana	Adho-mukhasvanasana	Shavasana
Saraswati, S. S. (2002)	Siddhasana Yoniasana Bhadrasana Virasana Garudasana Padangushthasana	Siddhasana Virasana Marjarasana Shashankasana Ushtrasana Supta-vajrasana Padahasthasana Bhujangasana Saralbhujangasana Ardha-shalabasana Paschimottanasana Vrksasana Merudandasana	Advasana Matsya-kridasana Vajrasana Shashankasana Ashtanga-namaskara Bhujangasana Dhanurasana Chakrasana Meruwakrasana Janushirshasana Halasana Vrksasana Hamsasana	Ardha-ushtrasana Supta-vajrasana Prarthanasana Bhujangasana Sarpasana Dhanurasana Gomukhasana Eka-pada-pranamasana	Simhasana Ushtrasana Supta-vajrasana Ardha-chandrasana Adho-mukhasvanasana Bhujangasana Shalabasana Dhanurasana Sarvangasana Halasana Dwi-hastabhujangasana	Advasana Vajrasana Simhasana Virasana Ashwasanchalanasana Gomukhasana Ardha-matsyendrasana Prarthanasana Natarajasana	Shashasana Prasaritapadatanasana Shirshasana
Judith, A. (2015)	Tadasana Dandasana Bharmanasana Apanasana Supta-Padangusthasana Setu-bandhasana Shalabasana Bhujangasana Adho-mukhasvanasana, Virabhadrasana-1 Utkatasana Vrksasana Padangusthasana Virasana, Hindolasana, Janushirshasana, Pachimootasana, Shashankasana, Shavasana	Bhadrasana, Ananda-balasana Sucirandhrasana Jathara-parivartanasana Upavisthakonasana Agnistambhasana Padahasthasana Adho-mukhasvanasana Anjaneyasana Uttanpristhasana Eka-pada-rajakapotasana Supta-baddhakonasana	Virabhadrasana-1 Virabhadrasana-2 Virabhadrasana-3 Trikonasana Ardha-chandrasana, Utthita-parsvakonasana, Adho-mukhasvanasana Phalakasana Naukasana Bharmanasana Purvottanasana Vasisthasana Parighasana Shalabasana Dhanurasana Ardha-matsyendrasana Shavasana	Dandayamanamudrasana Gomukhasana Chakravakasana Anahatasana Ardha-mandalasana Matsyasana Ushtrasana Bhujangasana Adho-mukhasvanasana Chakrasana Makarasana	Shashasana Setu-bandhasana Matsyasana Parivrtta-parsvakonasana Bakasana Kakasana Sasangasana Halasana Karnapidasana Sarvangasana, Nakulasana Shavasana	Virabhadrasana-3 Parsvootanasana Garudasana Ardha-pinchamayurasana Adho-mukhasvanasana Pinchamayurasana Shavasana	Natarajasana Shirshasana Chakrasana Shavasana
Wills, P. (2002)	Warm-up-asana Ardha-navasana Yoga-mudrasana	Padahasthasana Janushirshasana Paschimottanasana	Purvottanasana Ushtrasana Setubhandasana	Virabhadrasana-1 Trikonasana Parivrtta-trikonasana	Matsyasana Halasana Sarvangasana	Ardha-matsyendrasana Natarajasana Garudasana	Prasaritapadatanasana Shirshasana
Finger, A.	Tadasana Virabhadrasana-3 Padahasthasana Virabhadrasana-1 Viparita-karani Parivrttasukhasana	Virabhadrasana-2 Upavisthakonasana Bhujangasana Adho-mukhasvanasana Jathara-parivartanasana	Trikonasana Paschimottanasana Urdhva-mukhasvanasana Prasaritapadatanasana Parivrtta-parsvakonasana	Virabhadrasana-2 Shashasana Ushtrasana Ardha-pinchamayurasana Parivrttajanushirshasana	Utthitahasthasana Ardhuttanasana Chatushpadotham Sarvangasana-prep Ardha-matsyendrasana	Eka-pada-pranamasana Shashankasana Setubhandasana Ardha-shirshasana	Shavasana
Integral Yoga	Padahasthasana Bhadrasana	Sukhasana Shalabasana	Trikonasana Ushtrasana	Bhujangasana Gomukhasana	Sarvangasana Ardha-	Vajrasana Halasana	Padangusthasana

oral tradition	Paschimottanasa na Virasana Janushirshasana	Yoniasana Ardha- chandrasana	Naukasana Supta- vajrasana Simhasana	Prarthanasana Bhekasana Shashankasa na Simhasana	matsyendrasana Setu- bandhasana	Garudasana Karnapidasana Brahmacharyasana	Prasaritapadatanasana Shashasana Ardha- shirshasana Shirshasana
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Appendix 4 - Yoga posture name translations and streamlining

Sanskrit name	English name	Other names
Padahasthasana	Hand to foot / Forward fold	Uttanasana
Ardha uttanasana	Half forward fold	
Bhadrasana	Butterfly	Poorna Titali Asana
Paschimottanasana	Seated forward bend	
Virasana	Hero	Dhyana Veerasana
Janushirshasana	Head to knee	
Parivrtta janushirshasana	Revolved head to knee	
Sukhasana	Easy	
Parivrtta sukhasana	Revolved easy	
Shalabasana	Locust	
Ardha shalabasana	Half locust	
Yoniasana	Yoni	Bhadrasana
Brahmacharyasana	Contenance	
Ardha chandrasana	Half-moon	Hasta Utthanasana
Trikonasana	Triangle	Utthita trikonasana
Parivrtta trikonasana	Revolved triangle	
Ushtrasana	Camel	Dandasana
Ardha ushtrasana	Half camel	
Naukasana	Boat	Nabhiasana; Paripurna navasana
Supta vajrasana	Sleeping thunderbolt	
Matsyasana	Fish	
Bhujanghasana	Cobra	
Saral bhujangasana	Sphinx	
Sarpasana	Snake	
Gomukhasana	Cow's face	
Prarthanasana	Prayer	
Bhekasana	Frog	
Dhanurasana	Bow	
Shashankasana	Child	Yoga mudra; Balasana; Vajra mudrasana
Ananda balasana	Happy baby	
Sarvangasana	Candle	
Ardha matsyendrasana	Half spinal twist	
Meru wakrasana	Spinal twist	
Setu-bhandasana	Bridge	Kandharasana; Setu bandha sarvangasana; Uttana mayurasana
Chakrasana	Wheel / upward facing bow	Urdhva dhanurasana
Chatushpada pitham	Four-legged table	
Vajrasana	Thunderbolt	
Halasana	Plough	
Garudasana	Eagle	
Karnapidasana	Ear pressure	
Padangusthasana	[Thumbs towards feet]	Utthita Janu Sirshasana
Prasarita padatanasana	Crown-based	Moordhasana
Shashasana	Bowing; Hare; Seated Yoga mudra	Pranamasana (arms not up) or Hasangasana (arms up)
Ardha shirshasana	Half headstand	Bhumi Pada Mastakasana
Shirshasana	Headstand	Kapali asana
Adho muka svanasana	Downward-facing dog / mountain	Parvatasana
Anahatasana	Extended puppy	
Urdhva mukha svanasana	Upward-facing dog	
Angushthasana	Tiptoe	
Marjariasana	Cat	
Dandasana	Staff	
Bharmanasana	Table	
Apanasana	Knees to chest	
Supta padangusthasana	Hand to big toe	
Utkatasana	Chair	
Vrksasana	Tree	
Eka pada pranamasana	One-legged prayer	
Hindolasana	Baby cradle	
Virabhadrasana 1	Warrior 1	Alana asana; Similar to high lunge
Virabhadrasana 2	Warrior 2	
Virabhadrasana 3	Warrior 3	
Anjaneyasana	Deep lunge	
Siddhasana	Perfect/accomplished	
Tadasana	Mountain	
Utthita hastasana	Upward worship	

Shavasana	Corpse	
Utthita parsvakonasana	Extended side angle	
Parivrtta parsvakonasana	Revolved side angle	
Natarajasana	Lord dancer	
Merudandasana	Spinal column	
Upavistha konasana	Seated open-leg forward fold	
Sucirandhrasana	Eye of the needle	
Jathara parivartanasana	Supine twist	
Uttan prsthasana	Lizard	
Eka pada rajakapotasana	Pigeon	
Supta baddha konasana	Reclining bound angle	
Advasana	Reverse corpse	
Matsya kridasana	Flapping fish	
Makarasana	Crocodile	
Ashtanga namaskara	Eight limbed salute	
Hamsasana	Swan	
Phalakasana	Plank	
Purvottanasana	Upward plank	
Vasisthasana	Side plank	
Parighasana	Gate / Gate 1	Parighasana 1
Ardha mandalasanana	Half-circle / Gate 2	Parighasana 2
Agnistambhasana	Firelog	
Dandayamana mudrasana	Standing Yoga mudra	
Yoga mudrasana	Arm and shoulder stretch	
Bitilasana	Cow	
Adho mukha vrksasana	Handstand	
Chakravakasana	Cat-cow	
Simhasana	Roaring lion	Simhagarjanasana
Dwi hasta bhujangasana	Two-handed cobra	
Bakasana	Crane	
Kakasana	Crow	
Sasangasana	Rabbit	
Nakulasana	Mongoose	
Ashwa sanchalanasana	Equestrian	
Parsvootanasana	Intense side stretch	Parsvottanasana
Ardha pincha mayurasana	Dolphin	Makarasana
Pincha mayurasana	Feathered peacock	
Unknown Sanskrit name	Warm-up	
Ardha navasana	Half boat	
Viparita karani	Legs up the wall	

Appendix 5 - Location of the chakras

Below is a brief description of the location of the chakras, relevant to the discussion chapter:

- **Muladhara:** Pelvic floor, perineum area between pubis and tailbone (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 1999; Saraswati, 2004; Wills, 2002).
- **Svadhithana:** Pubic bone just above the sexual organs (Saraswati, 2004) or sacral area slightly above that, between the pubis and the navel (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 2004; Wills, 2002).
- **Manipura:** Navel or solar plexus (Finger & Repka, 2005), with the navel one varying between the actual navel and two fingers below or above the navel. To clarify why sometimes there are two different locations, I should explain that the human body has thousands of chakras (authors usually refer to 7 main ones, but each of them has a vast network of sub-chakras). So for instance, regarding Manipura, while it seems clear that there are two important chakras (navel and solar plexus) and that they both relate to Manipura, some authors believe that the navel chakra is the main one (Saraswati, 2004; Wills, 2002) and the solar plexus is its sub-chakra, while others believe that the solar plexus is the main one (e.g. Judith, 1999), making the navel a sub-chakra. Worth noting that some traditions (e.g. Saraswati, 2004) call these frontal chakras 'kshetram's, arguing that they are actually sub-chakras of the main chakras, which are their corresponding projection points on the spine.
- **Anahata:** Heart (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 1999; Saraswati, 2004), although similarly, some traditions will say that translates to the centre of the chest (Wills, 2002), others to the point between breasts.
- **Vishuddha:** Throat (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 1999; Saraswati, 2004; Wills, 2002).
- **Ajna:** Third-eye, meaning the point between the eyebrows (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 1999; Saraswati, 2004; Wills, 2002), or middle of the forehead.
- **Sahasrara:** Crown (Finger & Repka, 2005; Judith, 1999; Wills, 2002).