

# Heart Chakra

Michael J. Shea, Ph.D., 2025

## Introduction

Ignition is the quintessential biodynamic concept. We train to bring it into our perception and our hands, to make it real. Ignition describes expansion and flow, circulation and channeling of Primary Respiration. It is the core of the health, the midline, the fulcrum, the neutral, the biodynamic whole, and especially the Breath of Life given to us by Dr. Sutherland. When our biodynamic perception deepens during sessions, and our own personal growth over time, we are given insight into the subtle dimensions of the human body that contains our mind and spirit. Thus, the human body consists of the physical elements, the subtle body and the very subtle body of the Breath of Life.

The subtle body as it is called in Eastern traditions, and especially Tibetan medicine from which this article is derived, includes the perception of ignition through three anatomical layers of the subtle body: the channels, energy-winds, and vital essences. The *channels* refer to a central channel and the chakra system which includes all arteries, veins and capillaries. The *energy-winds* refer to the five aspects of Primary Respiration and the *vital essences* refer to wisdom and compassion appearing as youthful feminine deities and much more. The fundamental appearance of these three aspects of our subtle body is based on deepening the perception of color and light. Although much has been written about this subtle anatomy, I will limit the discussion to bring it into a biodynamic perception as a contemplative practice. And then for our hands to become transparent, empty, and full of light, the Breath of Life as Dr. Sutherland experienced it at the very subtle body level.

## The Four Ignitions

We focus our basic perceptual processes on the four ignitions:

1. The first ignition is *conception ignition*. We roll our eyes up to the middle of our forehead and create a spark through the optic nerve to see a color emerge from the third ventricle of the brain. We relax our eyes and maintain the image of the light of conception. We distinguish between the basic rainbow color pattern, white-blue-yellow-red-green. One of those colors or a shade of it will be given with the spark. This is the Breath of Life. Our hands will palpate conception ignition as the Breath of Life because our hands are the Breath of Life at the deepest level. Our hands will conform to the physical level of the biokinetic metabolic fields present in the embryo especially the first week after conception.
2. The second ignition is *heart ignition*. Heart ignition is the first heartbeat at 21 days post fertilization. We focus on the heartbeat as the generator of color in the four chambers of the heart. We visualize the different chambers being different rainbow colors. Our palpation will consist of supporting the heart and visualizing the fifth chamber of the heart as a fulcrum for the Breath of Life as an ice blue diamond radiance.
3. The third ignition is *birth ignition*. At birth we ignite with the spark of our first deep powerful inhalation following the exit from the womb of our mother. We visualize the inhalation as filling our body with a colored mist circulating everywhere and intermingling with the blood. Palpation will synchronize our initial contact with the inhalation of the therapist. We connect our hands to our breath as we connect with the client.
4. The fourth ignition is *death ignition*. At death the last breath on exhalation signifies the dissolving of the four elements of earth-water-fire-wind into the element of space. The element of space is the dynamic stillness. It is silence and can also be called the void. It is initially dark and black. We mix the Breath of Life with conception ignition as a white light that also appears at death. We synchronize attention with the movement of the client's respiratory diaphragm.

## The Five Chakras of the Medicine Buddha

There is a difference between the system of chakras as used in the Hindu system and the Tibetan Buddhist system. The Hindu system emphasizes more of the objective content and static nature of the chakras. The Tibetan Buddhist medical system is concerned with that which flows through them. They contain dynamic functions such as the transmutation of universal life forces that we call Primary Respiration, dynamic stillness and Breath of Life. These are natural biodynamic energies and spiritual potentialities. They describe the spiritual journey in Tibetan medicine whereas previously we learned the Taoist spiritual journey represented by the nine points of the heart meridian. This spiritual potential is not easily manifested without contemplative practices. This is because our conceptual mind and constant habituation of thoughts and emotions act as a detour, a preventative from actualizing our spiritual path and infinitely equal connection to all things in the universe.

The chakras, as I describe them here, are *organs* that collect, transmute and distribute the forces flowing through them and in particular blood motivated by the energy winds. They are part of our subtle midline, our health and act as fulcrums of direct insight for spiritual healing. The chakras are the meeting place between spirit and matter in the body, between the light and the elements making up our body. As we become conscious of this spiritual potential inside our body, we can therefore allow the spirit, in whatever form it takes, to transmute our body as an integrated whole.

We visualize the five chakras of Tibetan medicine as follows:

1. The head chakra exists as a shifting fulcrum between the third ventricle-Sella turcica-Circle of Willis-DU 20. The color of the head chakra is white.
2. The second chakra is the throat chakra. It is red and it's shifting fulcrum is between the thyroid gland-inferior thyroid artery-hyoid bone-superior thyroid artery-base of the tongue-lips.
3. The third chakra is the heart chakra and its color is blue. It has a shifting fulcrum between the dorsal pericardium-aorta-coronary arteries-thymus gland-sternum.
4. The fourth chakra is the abdominal chakra. Its color is yellow. It's shifting fulcrum is between celiac trunk-superior mesenteric artery-inferior mesenteric artery-umbilicus.
5. The fifth chakra is the pelvic chakra. Its color is green. In men, it's shifting fulcrum is between the prostate-internal pudendal artery-head of the penis. In women, it's shifting fulcrum is between the uterus-internal pudendal artery-vulva-clitoris.

Our palpation will include visualizing the color of the chakra that we are closest to. Ultimately, we focus on the heart chakra present at conception and death. At death, the life force, prana or Primary Respiration merges into space and yet our subtle body merges at the heart chakra with the very subtle body of clear light Breath of Life. At death both the pelvic and abdominal chakras dissolve into the heart chakra from below. The head and throat chakras dissolve into the heart chakra from above. And in this way heart ignition is also conception and death ignition.

### Ignition Revisited

In Tibetan Medicine, at conception the heart chakra is ignited. The zygote is the heart chakra. The embryo is nothing other than the heart chakra. Then through the central channel or midline of the subtle body in embryonic development, the father

essence goes up to the third ventricle chakra and the mother essence goes down to the genital chakra. Some Eastern traditions reverse the direction for father and mother. This in general is not gender specific but rather a metaphor for wisdom and compassion, the sun and moon, mother and child and so forth. These *vital essences* are visualized in very simple ways such as a bright white pearl the size of a pea moving up and down the central channel, which coincides with the descending and abdominal aorta in the trunk and abdomen. Death ignition is therefore heart ignition and deeper realization of the heart chakra, the Breath of Life as a rainbow. At death we literally return to our origins at conception. Therefore, death is also a new beginning, a conception ignition.

All the five energy winds of Primary Respiration originate in the heart chakra and are present at conception. They are *life-sustaining, all-pervasive, upward rising, downward moving, and digestive-metabolic*. At conception the Breath of Life, the diamond blue clear light of the very subtle body, starts to refract into five colors and become encapsulated by the five elements. When we touch the body with our hands, we connect with all five elements and are working with encapsulated light that is constantly radiating in every cell. Wisdom is therefore encapsulated as is our neurotic tendencies. This is called co-emergent wisdom that we reconcile as part of our spiritual journey. Sanity and neurosis are one thing that takes a lifetime to see.

The five winds that reside in the heart chakra all help move the blood. They infuse their qualities and bodily functionality at the anatomical, physiological, and metabolic, especially at the cardiovascular level. The heart chakra in Tibetan Medicine controls all arteries, veins and capillaries also called *channels*. While simultaneously causing the blood to move and infusing it with multidimensional functionality, the winds can then take up their traditional five locations or fulcrums in the body as the embryo grows and develops. They not only all stay in the heart but create fulcrums at the top of the head, throat, heart, abdominal aorta, and internal iliac arteries.

All cardiovascular structures are channels both big and small. The whole system of blood capillaries is a beautiful net covering a tree like olive harvesting time in Italy. To repeat: all cardiovascular channels in their association with the subtle and physical body are directly in relationship with a heart chakra and it's subtle levels imbued with spiritual functionality such as compassion and wisdom reaching every cell in the body. The heart chakra itself has five levels to it like a five-story building,

the body's entire vascular system, the pericardium, the blood, the four chambers of the heart, and the clear light of the Breath of Life. Each story is depicted as having different colors with the Breath of Life, the deepest (or highest) fulcrum of the heart chakra being diamond blue clear light of the very subtle body.

The system of colors of all the other five chakras are the colors of the Medicine Buddha's five chakras. These are very deep and special medicinal colors for healing. In the first phase of using these colors, they are for purification and detoxification, like taking a bath before going to bed or taking a shower in the morning. They facilitate a biodynamic neutral. Once the neutral is achieved, the colors change function into a phase of healing that Dr. Sutherland noticed. The energy winds and colors then choose what needs help in the client's body. The therapist maintains watchfulness like a guard at the entrance to the sacred temple. This means that when a therapist initiates such chakra visualization, after the neutral the colors may automatically shift, and different color schemes and locations can be observed. Any spiritual form can appear with this light of the Breath of Life. It is not limited to Medicine Buddha. Jesus also healed with light and many other compassionate beings. Be willing for the light to take on form and a "second pair of hands" participating in the session. Let go of preconceived notions of the sacred and willing to enter a state of awe and deep wonder in whatever appears. Fear is a contraindication when using colors this way. We are igniting the instinct for self-transcendence. Light is a doorway to the divine.

Frequently the colors become personified in Eastern traditions as feminine deities called Dakinis. This is sentient, very playful, youthful feminine energy. These vital essences create the sparkle, the glow and the radiation from these colors as they express the entire universe right from the heart. They provide a very effervescent, and almost magical view of each moment of our life. Emotions are also quite colorful. Until our eyes and ears and mind can stop mentally labeling sensory experiences except while driving a car of course, it's difficult to recalibrate a direct one-to-one relationship with the universe around us that is a complete whole without subdivisions. We observe the color that we see with our eyes with watchfulness. We notice the sound that we hear with watchfulness. The dynamic play of subject-object perception, and all the conceptual machinery needed to keep it going by mentally labeling and interpreting, needs to dissipate for short periods of time. And not just during sessions but regularly during the rest of the day and night. We can have a more consistent relationship with our noticing self, a self-knowing awareness that

doesn't have an opinion or judgment about external sensory experience or even our internal sensory experience. At this level, mindfulness deepens into what is called watchfulness. We watch the inner in outer world of the five elements as a dance of colors, movement and stillness. We are simply in direct relationship with the element of space, the dynamic stillness, the void.

Science tells us that the brain generates a tremendous amount of white light. These are photons being released from brain cells especially during the death and dying process. It continues for an hour or more after death. The formal *moment of death* is when the patient, you and I, take our very last exhalation and at that time the four elements (earth-water-fire-wind) all dissipate into the element of space. Training in visualization is very good preparation for such a context at death. It's colorful experience as described in many Eastern spiritual texts. At the same time, the vital essence's, whether father-mother, sun-moon, wisdom-compassion, or a bright pearl, come down from the third ventricle (head chakra) through the throat chakra and up from the genital chakra through the umbilical chakra back into the heart.

There are at least two ways to manage your awareness at the moment of death in the Buddhist tradition. You can either eject out the top of the central channel into a Buddha form visualized above your head like what heaven is considered in Christianity. Or you can observe the reunion of vital essences in the heart chakra as a glorious appearance of what is called the *rainbow body*. And there are a lot of perks on this one pathway into the heart. It always seemed to me a little risky ejecting my consciousness out the top of my head into Buddha field above me. You can only imagine how much practice and confidence is necessary to directly relate with the Breath of Life and all of its accouterment when dead. The point being, start preparing your heart right now if that's the direction you want to go when you die. It's good to have a couple of options in case you run into the unexpected several minutes after the moment of death. There is an old Native American expression: you need big cajones to die.

Fear is a major player during death and dying. Nobody wants to die until the will to live is extinguished. And sometimes that happens years, months or weeks before death and sometimes shortly before the moment of death. There are contemplative ways to reduce fear. A practice to sever fear that I learned is called Chod by Namkhai Norbu. He was a Dzogchen master (Ati Yoga). He was also a great Tibetan medical doctor. I received direct transmission for severing fear from him while he was in the Bardo state several days after his

death. I was at Merigar in Italy and was blessed to be able to sit and meditate within a couple of feet of his glass enclosed sarcophagus the day after he died. I did receive other mind transmissions from him and they were quite pithy about severing fear.

The practice is visualizing your own death and the transformation of your dead body into nourishment for all sentient beings. Your body is cooked in a large pot which becomes an infinity pool of ambrosial nectar capable of removing all suffering by drinking from it. There are four classes of people that are invited to feast on you. All the spiritual teachers and masters that you have a direct or indirect relationship with you are first. The second is all the people that have betrayed you or hurt you in life. You invite them all to your pool of ambrosia and visualize them drinking your ambrosia. You give your body away. The third group is all of your clients, friends, and family that need help. The fourth group are all remaining sentient beings. We must release the people and places that scare us. And we must make friends with those people, places, and things in order to sever our fear. It is a practice of severance started by the enlightened female yogini Machig Labdron in Tibet (1055-1149). This practice is carried on now by Lama Tsultrim Allione at Tara Mandala in Colorado. She is recognized as the reincarnation of Machig Labdron. We must learn to sever the disturbance of fear.

Gyatrul Rinpoche says this: "The reason for going into solitude is to free yourself of disturbances. But what is it that's disturbing you? You are disturbing you, so if you don't disturb yourself, you're already set. In other words, the emphasis is not on the environment, but on the way you respond to your environment. Our minds are agitated and disturbed by our chasing after the objects of the five senses. If we can control that, we've already accomplished our solitude. If the problem really were located in the five sensory objects, they should also be able to disturb corpses. Therefore, live in a place in which you are not disturbed, which means, in which you stop disturbing yourself."

Fear also must be managed at the level of our habitual situations and mundane routine repetitive mindlessness. We are like a ruminant cow with the amount of time spent on nothing of value. And we need recreational mind to binge watch a favorite TV series because of an intense day. I get that. We need to be able to accept change. The very bottom line with fear is coming to grips with impermanence. Coming to grips means to see clearly the enormity of the ups and downs of every day waking life and sleeping life. Renunciation of our possessions and the concepts that possess us before the end of life is critical. It's a purification and

you must be true to your own destiny. No one else has control of your own inner decision-making process. That is the foundation of self-mastery. As they say in Zen, it's all about you. Contemplative practices are essential.

Reflecting on the Sheer Volume of Conditioning Factors is the third of Seven Ways of Exercising Your Mind in Bodhicitta by the Third Karmapa in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Lama Justin says: "Samsara is a personalized algorithm based on our relative response in the moment." Algorithm is a term from the Internet and social media usage. An algorithm is a set of Artificial Intelligence (AI) rules on how I respond to certain content mentally and emotionally. It is very personalized, predicting conscious and unconscious conditioning. This programming was what used to be called "brain washing." It's been going on our whole life and now a computer program can throw us the bait constantly. Algorithms analyze how I interact with content by my liking or disliking the content on the Internet that I engage with. My personalized conditioned algorithm up in the "cloud" is keeping score of my likes and dislikes. It knows my habitual patterns better than I do. My conditioning is formless until it meets my algorithm on Amazon.

The purpose of the algorithm is to present material to me so that I can remain constantly engaged with it by spending more time on certain Internet sites. This is true of our habitual cognitions and our polarized mind liking good and not bad, liking pleasure but not pain. This ultimately serves the financial interest of those sites where I spend most of my time. The desire realm has only one intention, to have you buy more stuff and keep us captured in a hell realm of unconsciousness and lack of inner freedom or knowing of our cultural entrapment.

The algorithm itself is invisible and so is our unconscious habitual pattern and responsiveness to the moment. We are constantly unconsciously invoking our Samsara algorithm that prevents us from liberation and freedom of conceptual mind. We go into the waiting room of "death scrolling" on the Internet. We listen to the news feed sirens as they captivate and then capture our attention for prolonged periods of time. Our ability to attend to that which is important for our deep lasting happiness and that which is not is destroyed. And it's a simple formless algorithm simply pointing out what our valueless choices are. And it's a very loud siren.

All regrets must dissipate to drop into a profound state of love. It is too late on your death bed to write forgiveness notes and go to the Post Office for stamps to mail the notes. At death, many people want to talk about their loved ones or love itself.

Sometimes a dying person is confused, you can ask them who did you love in this life? See what they say. Some patients will have either anxiety, pain or breathing problems. Those are the three suffering states that can be greatly helped with spiritual skills, laying on of hands, and visualizing the Breath of Life. The instinct for self-transcendence can be ignited with such a laying on of hands ministry. Anointing with oils is a must.

The hardest piece in life and death is the actual behavior of letting it go, of acknowledging a change process and relaxing with the change. The essence of ignition is letting go to create a spark. Death is a spark. We do it with each exhalation. And we need to do it with the uncountable number of concepts we come up with on a day-to-day basis and their related emotionality. It's just about letting go of thoughts, and more thoughts, and their formless concepts constantly being built. We must develop the inner practice of stopping concepts and emotions so letting go can ignite lasting happiness. And letting go into the Breath of Life is a universal experience because every cell in our body is light encapsulated by the elements. And it is right now, the power to stop and the power to let go into spacious awareness. Our life is complete right now. Our death is complete right now with every exhalation.