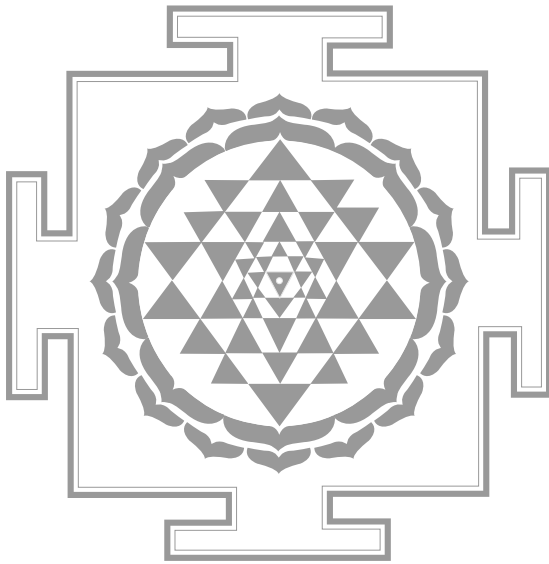


INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS THE TAROT?

The Tarot is a system for raising consciousness.

Externally, it manifests in the form of a deck or pack of cards that are usually 78 in number. The Tarot has multiple uses. The most popular is to serve as a predictor of the future; that is also its least significant aspect. It is a tool for generating answers to life-questions, a trigger to intuition and creativity, an aid to meditation, as well as a complete spiritual path or process in itself. The Tarot defies easy classification as its uses continue to mutate as societies change.

The most intriguing and significant aspect of the Tarot is its universality. It's applicable across historical time and cultural differences. This is not a new insight. One new Tarot pack currently emerges every week of the year, linked invariably to some cultural or historical theme. It is Protean to an incredible degree. The Tarot resonates with archetypal imagery; indeed it is archetypal itself, and is so inherently compatible with mythic structure that it seems as if this was deliberately designed to be so. It brings to the surface latent and unexpressed aspects of mind and psyche, which is why its answers are so relevant and germane. In more objective terms, one may venture to say that the *"Tarot is a schematic substratum that arouses the imagination and projects into the schema, the images and thoughts that dominate the subconscious. By surfacing these thoughts or images and interpreting them in the knowledge of the Tarot, we learn to understand ourselves better."* I have come to realise that the intuitive, predictive power of the Tarot – its foresight – flows from what the classical world called the 'Gates of Horn'.

The ancient Greeks held that visions and dreams, practically synonyms, were not all of equal value. Some were significant and true, while most others were irrelevant and deluding. Visions were sent by the Manes, souls of deceased loved ones or family spirit guides, through two

supernatural gates. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil gives voice to this belief:

“Two gates the silent house of Sleep adorn; Of polish’d ivory this, that of transparent horn: True visions thro’ transparent horn arise; Thro’ polish’d ivory pass deluding lies.”

The idea is already ancient in the *Odyssey*. Penelope tells the disguised Odysseus:

“Stranger, dreams verily are baffling and unclear of meaning, and in no wise do they find fulfilment in all things for men. For two are the gates of shadowy dreams, and one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Those dreams that pass through the gate of sawn ivory deceive men, bringing words that find no fulfilment. But those that come forth through the gate of polished horn bring true issues to pass, when any mortal sees them.”

In classical Greek, ‘horn’ – ‘fulfil’ and ‘ivory’ – ‘deceive’ are homonyms, words that sound and spell similarly. Hence there is elaborate word play and irony inherent in this context. These are concepts well suited to Tarot process work.

The visions of Tarot issue from the Horn Gate. The structure of the Tarot lends itself to clarity and clear thinking, though that does not mean overenthusiastic people are not found who try to make it the Gate of Ivory! I offer this for what it is worth, as yogic concepts of the source of visions are remarkably similar.

A typical pack has different yet linked sets of cards called the Major and Minor Arcana, respectively. The Major Arcana Cards are 22 in number while the Minor Arcana consists of 4 suits of 14 cards each, thus creating a grand total of 78 cards. In *The Sacred India Tarot*, the Major Arcana has 4 extra cards. Two of them are alternatives offered for the Death and World Cards and their choice is explained in the text of the cards. Two of the cards are Grace Cards, called ‘Blessings of Ganesha’ and ‘Blessings of Babaji’, respectively. Strictly speaking, they are not necessary for readings but they add significant spiritual dimensions to the pack and have been included for that reason.

The Major Arcana Cards feature enigmatic, striking figures that represent esoteric knowledge and destiny in the life of the person concerned. The Major Arcana Cards of *The Sacred India Tarot* have the additional dimension of representing the evolution of life consciousness in a yogic perspective. They are numbered individually from 0 to 21 with the 0 card being origin and conclusion. The Minor Arcana were the forerunners of the modern set of playing cards, but the contemporary trend is to illustrate Ace to 10 cards with figures within them. The Ace to 10 with Court Cards of Page, Knight, Queen and King constitute a suit. They are named variously, so a comparative list is given for the reader's benefit.

The name of *The Sacred India Tarot* suit comes first, followed by the elemental energy it represents, and then the many variations upon it.

Minor Arcana Suits:

Discs – also known as Earth / Pentacles / Diamonds / Coins

Lotuses – also known as Water / Cups / Hearts / Chalices

Staves – also known as Fire / Wands / Clubs / Batons / Sceptres

Arrows – also known as Air / Swords / Spades / Spears

Court Cards:

Page – also known as Princess / Knave / Sister

Knight – also known as Prince / Brother

Queen – also known as Mother / Lady

King – also known as Father / Lord

The Tarot is reasonably easy to learn, though it is not simple and requires patience. It will be many years before you achieve genuine competence with it, but the wait is worth it. As a predictive system and as a divination system, it has probably the widest range of possibilities on offer and hence it remains an attractive system of choice.

While it is true that the Major Arcana tends to be more spiritual in outlook than the Minor, there is no need to privilege or discriminate any set of cards over the other. All aspects of the Tarot are valuable, in context. Context is all.

How does it work? The short answer is that nobody really knows – hence its enduring power. I venture an approximation here: holding it frees the intuitive and subconscious aspects of mind through the discipline of study and ritual. The formal pattern of laying down of cards, known as ‘spreads’, links you into the larger pattern of energy called the Tarot. It is also human nature to defer to what seems to be supernatural or higher wisdom, even though the source of such is always within you. Divination, after all, comes from the Latin *divinus*, ‘to be inspired by the gods’. Hence, it is inherently a serious spiritual process; if misused or degraded for grubby reasons, there are appropriate consequences. The patterns of human nature and human behaviour are pretty predictable and so are most answers and solutions. The Tarot spread is a snapshot of your inner reality at that particular moment in time, which is why it speaks so powerfully to you.

From a yogic perspective, which is what permeates *The Sacred India Tarot*, Consciousness pervades the universe; everything is interconnected and the past, present and future are a flowing continuity of being that can be tapped into by certain methods – one of which is the Tarot. The cards seem to link up to the connecting force, which Carl Gustav Jung famously defined as – ‘acausal synchronicity’. There is an inner imperative that needs to be externally expressed and it uses aids like the I Ching, Runes or the Tarot to accomplish this manifestation. They are thus synchronous – the cards, runic emblems or hexagrams matching the inner psychological state, but they do not directly cause such states.

Jung co-authored a paper on Synchronicity with Wolfgang Pauli, one of the earliest theoretical physicists who won a Nobel Prize and who had such a peculiar bio-electric field that he could blast, destroy, stop, render useless or otherwise screw up laboratory equipment of any lab he walked into! In his honour this phenomenon is still called the Pauli effect. There was no direct causal link to this but everybody knew what was going on, and Pauli had too much intelligence not to realise Jung was on to something significant.

The Tarot unshackles the mind, advising you as to the attitudes to adopt, or the best possible course of action in the circumstances, but the final decision is your responsibility. The Tarot creates space for a creative, original and flexible design effort on your part.