

Demystifying the Chakras...

The Energetic Link



Yours in Yoga

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Chakras

The Chakras are the foundation of every aspect of our being – they underlie our physical, energetic, mental and emotional functioning and map out our journey to fulfillment and ultimately, enlightenment!

To work with and understand these energy centres can transform us at all levels.

They are a map of the subtle body and enable us to explore our inner dimension, which consists of

- Prana & Pancha Vayus – active energy and life force system
- Kundalini – dormant energy
- The Koshas – sheaths covering our pure being
- Nadis – energy channels

The Chakras also have a deep connection to the spine, endocrine system and senses – which will be covered in detail in the next chapter of this e-book.

Studying and working with the chakras gives us an in-depth view of who we are.

They offer an incredibly comprehensive framework – that not only relates to the physical body but also allows us to understand how we feel & think and gives us insight into our behavior.

Deepening our Understanding

Each Chakra is represented by a symbol, which contains a huge amount of information.

When these symbols were shared many years ago there were no vast libraries or internet connection so it was a way of condensing all that was known in a small space – that could then be passed on from teacher to student.

Looking into the symbolism of each Chakra can unlock ancient knowledge that is often overlooked as the symbols become modernized and the subtlety of the symbology is lost!

These drawings contain many elements and are bound in cultural interpretation so we need to remind ourselves as we embark on our study that it is not important to understand every single aspect – but to coax out that which will be helpful and maybe leave the rest for another day ;)



Beginning to Define the Chakras

The Chakras are described as spinning wheels or vortices of energy – they are centres of connection between many aspects of ourselves, the physical, the functional, the energetic and mental as well as the spiritual.

One of the definitions of Tantra is the weaving together of the various fabrics of life – the chakras are the best-developed model of this concept.

They can also be described as centres of consciousness – which imply they are connected to something beyond the mere functioning of the body. This is good to keep in mind when exploring the symbology of each Chakra as we will see in more detail a little later!

The Energy Body

The energy body is not confined to the physical frame – it is subtler and reaches beyond the body itself.

We can experience this directly for instance when we draw the palms of our hands together slowly and feel them before they actually meet – or when we walk through a dark house and try to sense the objects around us. This is our energy body reaching beyond the physical form!

The Chakras pass through the very core of our being – through an energy channel known as Sushumna Nadi. The energy is then distributed through two poles, one at the base (Mooladhara) and one at the crown (Sahasrara).

These poles can cause a polarization from the infinite to the finite and from the transpersonal to the personal – tugging us in one direction and the other!! There is also a right and left division or contrast that gives us the experience of duality in our physical world.

- Things are either too hot or too cold
- Painful or pleasant
- Masculine or feminine
- Light or dark

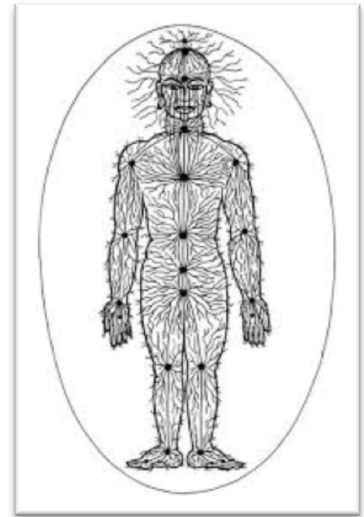
This twofold characteristic is present in our everyday life and represented by Ida and Pingala Nadi.

The balance comes from Sushumna, which invites us into the deeper realm of the mind and into the world of the Chakras.

Ida and Pingala allow us to operate in the world we are familiar with PRAVRITTI – however Sushumna gives us access to the inner landscape of our being NIVRITTI.

The Chakras communicate in both directions – both inwardly through Sushumna and also into the world via the physical body through the Koshas and Pancha Pranas.

There are also other junctions or nodes within the body, which are important in this flow of two-way communication – these can be found in the joints. Knowing this gives us an even more compelling reason for keeping the body mobile and for meditation practices that allow us to withdraw our senses to the inner realms of our being.....



Sushumna

The word sushumna can be divided into three parts - *su-shu-mna*.

- *Su* is a prefix which often changes to *shu*. It means “good, beautiful, virtuous, sweet, and well” (and it is found in the English word “sugar”).
- *Mna* is an infrequently used verb root with the same meaning as its more common root form, *man*, which means “to think.”

Yogic scholars explain the meaning of this word in a slightly different way - *sukha-mana*

- *Sukha* – joyful
- *Mana* – mind

The word *sukha* also contains the prefix *su*—this time added to the short noun *kha*.

- *Kha* – can be translated as - the space at the center of a wheel.

The implication of *sukha*, then, is that at the center of any wheel is a place of balance and tranquility. Therefore, *sukha* can mean “well-centered, running smoothly,” or more commonly, “happy, joyful.”

So to establish Sushumna means to establish a joyous mind and we do this by regulating our breath

Nostril Dominance

Yoga texts such as the *Shiva Svarodaya* have observed that the flow of air through the two nostrils is rarely equal. If you check your own breathing right now, you will probably find that one nostril is more open than the other. In yoga the nostril with the greater air flow is called the “active” or dominant nostril; the other nostril is termed “passive.”

According to ancient yoga manuals, differences in nostril activity are quite normal—nostril dominance, in fact, alternates approximately every 60 minutes. This is the ideal, but most of us find that one nostril may remain active for much longer periods of time, or that regular alternation in nostril dominance rarely occurs.

Such irregularities can have subtle effects on our mood and activity levels.

Revolving Energies

The nostrils provide information about the status of the energy powering the body and mind.

Every human being is a blend of two primary energies.

- The left nostril is associated with inward, nurturing energy, feminine in character. Energy in the left nostril is cooling like the moon; it is associated with the latent power of consciousness, *Shakti*, and with nourishment and replenishment.
- The right nostril is associated with outward moving forces, male in character. Energy in the right nostril is warming like the sun; it is associated with the dynamic aspect of consciousness, *Shiva*, and with growth and expansion.
- The predominant modes of thinking associated with the left nostril are intuitive and introspective, while thinking associated with the right nostril is rational and logical.

Like a revolving wheel, the energies associated with the two nostrils alternately dominate, but during the moments of transition the two seem almost equal. Brief as they are, these moments give us a glimpse of balance before the energies tumble back into action again. And as they interact they colour our every perception.

Establishing Sushumna

Like the eye of a hurricane, Sushumna—the channel of energy flowing along the core of the spine—is said to be unaffected by the powerful energies of Ida and Pingala swirling around it. As the mind rests from its outer activity during meditation, it is naturally drawn toward this central channel of energy.

- With attention anchored in Sushumna, a feeling of deep joy illumines the mind.

The breath is a vehicle for deepening concentration, and an important tool for uncovering inner tranquility. A technique that can have far-reaching effects is to establish Sushumna breathing.

- In this practice the two great modes of energy within the body/mind are coordinated, and attention is focused on the central stream of energy. By sustaining awareness on this central stream, a process of quiet transformation begins.

Following meditation practice our attention naturally turns outward again and resumes an active interest in worldly affairs, often with renewed—and even greater—enthusiasm.

- The charm of meditative experience lies in its continual ability to create a subtle mood of happiness and contentment, much like the joy of having witnessed a beautiful sunrise or sunset. This memory infuses consciousness with reassurance, optimism, and good cheer.

We can enhance this experience by concentrating on the stream of energy flowing at the nose. Once accomplished, attention moves inward along the nadi that courses from the base of the nose to a point centered between the eyebrows and then down through the spinal column.

Note: an audio of the technique of Sushumna breathing can be found in the e-course, <i>Demystifying the Chakra System</i>

The Nivritti & Pravritti Path

Two Ways of Life

- **PRAVRITTI** means to live amidst worldly duties and interests with the senses and actions directed primarily towards the external world.
- **NIVRITTI** on the other hand, is the path of “turning back”, the path of turning within towards spiritual contemplation, and placing this journey at the centre of our existence after fulfilling our familial and professional duties.

For as long as we live in Pravritti our thoughts turn mainly towards worldly things – to pleasure and hobbies and worrying about position, income and possessions. Initially school and education occupy our thoughts, then later profession and family. Finally, in old age we worry about our health and our inheritance.

It is proper and necessary for us to fulfil our responsibilities and duties to our family and society, and there is a no problem with being comfortable or prosperous.

Mooladhara and the Four Pravrittiis (base instincts)

When we look at Mooladhara and the 4 Pravrittiis (or instincts) that reside here we discover that it is vital to bring harmony to our outer world by recognising and balancing these energies.

- Hunger
- Sex
- Sleep
- Self Preservation

The four instincts drive us at a fundamental level – they are our primary urges. Most of us are fortunate enough not to ever have these urges pushed to their limits!!

- Can you ever recall being so deprived of food for instance that you would consider eating from a bin??

The demon of Mooladhara is fear or a lack of safety. When we are fearful we tend to disassociate from the body and so lose our sense of self.

Sadly today most of the reality TV and “normal” things we accept into our homes pushes and triggers these primal urges.

- Game shows to win money, cars and holidays – feeding our idea that we don’t have enough
- Challenges to live on islands without food – triggering the fear of survival
- Violent video games – which distort our perspective on reality

The energy evolving through Mooladhara is the body – when we are born or come into being our instinct is “may I continue to be”. The four pravrittis are a driving force – the root being to survive.

So safety is the key to balancing the energy of our root!

The mantra LAM is said to contain all that we need to nurture the first Chakra

- Through understanding this when we chant the Bija mantra and resting in the place where that practice arises we bring a quality of safety, security & physical comfort to the body.

Which brings us neatly back to Nivritti

Focusing only on the external as our only goal in life can become very short sighted and a cause of great suffering and more importantly imbalance – the addiction to create constantly wraps us in the glue of MAYA. One car after another, new things constantly bought and accumulated, a feeling of never having enough, one of lack

A wise person knows that desires are never-ending. We are constantly hungry and thirsty, even if we have just eaten well part of our mind is on the next meal we will have. No worldly pleasures satisfy us forever. Desire soon rises anew.

Only something long lasting and unchanging is able to give us true satisfaction. That which changes is unreal – only the eternal and unchanging Self is real and to discover this we must follow the Nivritti Path.

Five stages of the Nivritti Path

- 1) **Stillness** – to actually pause consciously and take time to discover who we are
- 2) **Relaxed breathing** – to settle the breath into a constant stream to calm the nervous system and mind
- 3) **Relaxation** – consciously relaxing the physical form – letting go of tension
- 4) **Breath awareness** – moving the breath through the chakras in this instance
- 5) **Mantra** – in the form of Bija chanting

Working with the breath in Chakras

Advanced relaxation and awareness of each Chakra can occur by focusing on transition

- From inhaling to exhaling and from exhaling to inhaling

When the breath flows smoothly the nervous system feels at ease and each Chakra becomes increasingly nourished.

When we begin to work with these concepts it can seem to be a bit like finding our way to a new city in a country we have never visited before – in the beginning we are vigilant and take notice of everything to orient ourselves. Often times when we get used to the route and have settled in to our new surroundings we no longer have that initial depth of awareness.....

It is vitally important to be mindful and acutely aware during breathing practices!!

The Process

1 - Stillness

- We find a position that is comfortable for the practice – one in which we commit to stay alert and aware
- Laying down or reclining is best as we are able to let go of our whole body and cultivate stillness on many levels

Become aware of the breath (cultivates stage 2,3 & 4)

- Simply draw the awareness to the breath and after it has settled begin to notice two great streams of breath – one of inhalation and the other of exhalation

- Follow these streams again and again feeling the lungs filling and the abdomen – lungs emptying and the abdomen softening
- Until you become so accustomed to the breath there is little interest in anything going on outside it
- We must be vigilant and aware
- By connecting the breaths seamlessly the nervous system relaxes fully – this is also important to cultivate for advanced pranayama practices
- This sustained breathing leads to the feeling of not being the breather – rather the silent witness to the breathing process – a bit like continual repetition of a mantra takes on its own energy to repeat itself.

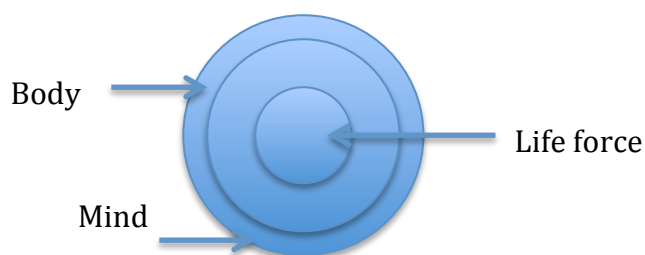
Five things begin to surrender fully when we reach this stage

- The body
- The breathing itself
- The nervous system
- The senses
- The mind

All five are perfectly synched – the body is resting – the breath is flowing – the nervous system is calm – the senses turn inwards – and the mind is without effort.

When we guide our awareness through the Chakras whilst moving through this process – it is these 5 things that cleanse and nourish them.

The six chakras we constantly work with - to balance and harmonise - create 1 large Chakra YOU & ME!! We as the culmination of all six have a centre which spreads out from life force to mind and then to the body....



This expanding wheel becomes visible and we call it ourselves – we look in the mirror and see something.

So it is the outward manifestation of ourselves that occurs in the Pravritti mode – we expand and become manifest – and what manifests is in part down to the energy radiating from within, through each Chakra. If these are out of balance then chances are what we see or feel will be distorted

The inner being is met through Nivritti practices, the process of focusing the mind and the energy body – it is here that we can harmonise and balance all aspects of our personality and life...

ॐ नमः शिवाय

5 - Mantra

Mantra can be described as a sound to transform the mind to bring a new perception for reality – the sound is made with the bodily organs – it sends a message and vibration to the mind – which connects and resonates with the life force within.

Like an echo the truth of the resonance reflects back out – altering the mind and eventually changing our behavior. For this to have a lasting impact

- We need to have faith in the mantra to bring a deep intention into the practice
- Make an effort to repeat the mantra day after day so that we eventually rest in the mantra itself
- Patanjali states this in the sutras – when he says it takes long and dedicated practice

If we practice in this way then inevitably the changes take place.

Mantra and the Chakras

The benefits of bringing our awareness to the Chakras and following the Nivritti path are

- Healing
- Self Enfoldment
- Self realization

Due to the imbalance of external life we can become sick in many ways – emotionally – mentally – or physically. So to correct these imbalances we turn in to re-connect to inner peace.

When we begin to take that journey our story naturally unfolds – we let go of the superficial outward self – the one that is hurt – ill – or burnt out – and begin to allow the whole self to unfold and emerge which ultimately leads us towards the true self – balance and harmony!

Note: a full practice including, asana, pranayama, mudra, mantra & savasana with reflective questions for each chakra is available in the e-course Demystifying the Chakra System

Yantras

- A Yantra is a geometrical pattern made of several concentric figures (squares, circles, lotuses, triangles, points).
- The point (bindu) at the centre of the Yantra signifies unity, the origin, the principle of manifestation and emanation.

When these concentric figures are gradually growing away from its centre (bindu) in stages, this is for human beings a symbol of the process of macrocosmic evolution.



When they are gradually growing towards its centre, this is for human beings a symbol of the process of microcosmic involution.

- According to Tantra, the creation of the world begins with an act of division of the opposites that are united in the deity. From their splitting arises, in an explosion of energy, the multiplicity of the world.
- Starting from pure unity (Shiva), the world is a continuous unfolding (energized by the power of Shakti), until a state is reached, when the process must reverse and involute back to the very beginning. Multiplicity must once again become unity.
- Yantras are symbolic representations of this process of evolution and involution.

According to Tantra, the human being is a miniature universe. All that is found in the cosmos can be found within each individual, and the same principles that apply to the universe apply in the case of the individual being.

- For human beings the body is considered the most perfect and powerful of all Yantras and is seen as a tool for inner awareness.

A Yantra is thus a tool making the process of evolution conscious. It enables the practitioner to retrace their steps from the outward-directed world of multiplicity to the inward focus of unity.

- All primal shapes of a Yantra are psychological symbols corresponding to inner states of human consciousness.
- Yantras are sacred symbols of the process of involution and evolution as perfectly described in each Chakra

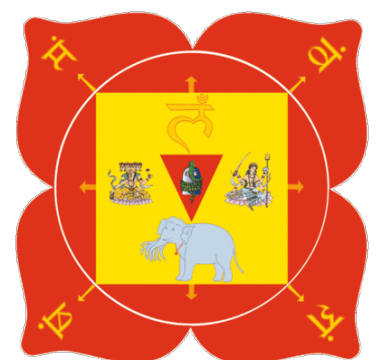
Chakra Symbology

Each Chakra is represented by a form or Yantra, which is a mechanism for transforming energy.

There is a Yantra used to describe the particular activities of each energy centre – for instance:

- Mooladhara is a square, which represents stability and a platform for energy.
- Moola means root & Dhara means support

Each Chakra also has a distinct amount of petals with a Sanskrit letter on each petal and at its centre. The Sanskrit letter at the centre of each



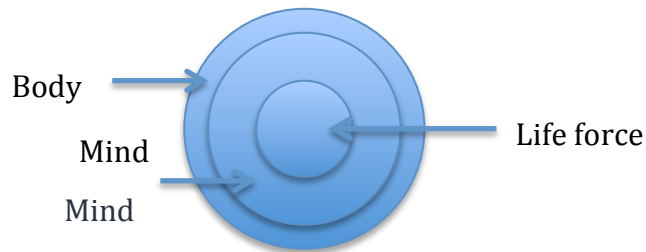
Chakra represents the seed syllable and together – all the petals on the Chakras contain the entire Sanskrit alphabet!

The Sanskrit alphabet represents the entire range of vibration of manifestation – all of which is within the human body

This for me puts into perspective the possibility and power within us all – and it is through the practices of Yoga and chanting specifically that we can become aware of and utilize this energy.

Remember this model we used earlier

The six chakras we constantly work with create 1 large Chakra YOU & ME!! We as the culmination of all six have a centre which spreads out from life force to mind and then to the body....



The Ancient Science of Sound

Beneath the cacophony of life there exists a sound of unsurpassed sweetness. It is not sound as we know it - not something to be heard as much as something to be felt. It is a vibration.

- Sometimes you can feel it spontaneously, perhaps as you lie in bed waiting to fall asleep, or on a quiet morning in the country. For the most part, it takes an effort to feel it, simply because the powerful noises that surround us tend to block it out.
- Yet the individuals who seek depth in their lives will, at some point or other, befriend this sound and begin to explore it. And in doing so they can find assurance in the fact that they are not alone - that all the great esoteric and spiritual traditions have studied the phenomenon of that subtle vibration for thousands of years.
- Perhaps nowhere was this carried out to a greater degree of exacting science than in India, where the whole topic falls under the rubric of the "science of mantra."

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the investigation of sound was perhaps the single most important thrust of study for the ancient sages of India. In their fervor and passion for truth, these earliest scientists repeated the same experiment day after day.

- They watched themselves; they meditated on the Inner Self; they observed the self, functioning in different realms of experience.

In the classical mythology, Shiva himself appeared to instruct these seekers, whether in dreams or in physical reality. From this contact, which was nothing other than the contact with their innermost Self, they evolved a profound teaching about the nature of sound and its relationship to all levels of life.....

The two most important things they discovered about sound can be summarized very simply (although to grasp them is another matter altogether)

- 1) sound (vibration) is the essence of the universe, and**
- 2) understanding sound is the means to liberation or Self-realization.**

The discovery of the importance of sound was not exclusive to the great sages of India. The Greek philosopher Pythagoras talked of the cosmic role of sound.

- "Each celestial body, in fact each and every atom, produces a particular sound on account of its movement, its rhythm or vibration. All these sounds and vibrations form a universal harmony in which each element, while having its own function and character, contributes to the whole."

And of course great musicians of all time have known of and written about the transcendental nature of sound and its power to bring the listener to a divine state. Beethoven claimed about his music that,

- "No evil fate can touch my music. He who divines its secret is freed from the unhappiness that haunts the whole world of men."

However the ancient sages of India pursued their research with a rigor that parallels that of today's great physicists and mathematicians. They wrote elaborate texts and created complex terminology to describe their experiences. They found that the universe originates from one completely subtle sound that gives rise to all other, grosser vibrations. In a sense there is a hierarchy of sounds, and one might talk about the descent of sound from the subtlest and most impalpable to the densest and

most palpable. Yet, unlike a hierarchy, there is no separation between the levels. The subtlest incorporates the most gross. However, the untrained human is often only aware of the grossest levels. Just as the melody of a single violin is lost next to the clamoring of a subway car, so the awareness of the subtlest sound, the subtlest vibration, is lost to the distracted awareness of an untrained mind.



From their deep investigation into sound comes the principle of SPANDA.

- Spanda means throb or pulse. It also means an urge.
- It might be described as the essence of a wave in the ocean of Consciousness - an impulse or desire to create and enjoy. Perhaps originally it was a flutter of love.
- In any case, it is not an ordinary desire or impulse, for it emanates not only from the centre outward, but from everywhere at once. From deep inside the ocean of Consciousness, something moves.
- From that **SPANDA**, the whole world comes forth.

The vibration of **SPANDA** moves in the atmosphere like a resonance. For this resonance, and the interplay of its vibrations, a symphony of energies comes forth. Substance and form are created without ever losing unity in Consciousness.

The whole universe is the result of the proliferation of these vibrations emanating from **PARASHAKTI**, the primal sound, and the subtle sound that arises at a frequency before noise.

Inherent in the expansion of **PARASHAKTI** are the three powers of

- WILL (*iccha shakti*)
- CONSCIOUSNESS (*jnana Shakti*)
- ACTION (*kriya shakti*).

From these three powers emanate the two currents of substance and form

- VACHAKA, the current of words and meaning which further divides into
 - *varna (sound or letter)*
 - *mantra (mystical syllable)*
 - *pada (word)*
- VACHYA, the current of objects, which further divides into
 - *kala (time and space)*
 - *tattvas (interaction of sound in time and space)*
 - *bhuvana (the resulting gross matter)*

These together form what is called the "sixfold path of emanation" from which everything ultimately manifests.

We could link this to the six Chakras within the body.....

The discovery of the Indian scholars that matter comes from vibration is supported by the findings of the world's great scientists. Physicists continue to find evidence that there is no substantive physical world. Because the special theory of relativity states that energy and mass are actually variations of the same stuff (called mass-energy), quantum physics is led to conclude that everything is a form of energy, i.e., that the "solid particles" that compose our world are formed by the intersection of waves of energy.

- When the Indian scholars characterized the world as a combination of different frequencies, they were saying much the same things as quantum physicists, since sound and movement are inseparable.

Indeed, because sound in the ancient texts refers to much subtler vibrations than the gross sounds that we are familiar with, one would be safe in saying that the ninth century sages and today's scientists are saying exactly the same thing.....

The Microcosm Contains the Macrocosm

According to the ancient scholars of India, everything in the universe exists in each individual. We can illustrate this in its most gross form by noting that all the elements that form the matter of our bodies (e.g., carbon, helium) are either given off by our sun or produced in other areas of the universe hundreds of billions of light years away – so we really are made of the stars ;)

Another dramatic illustration is found in the recent work with holographic images and the resulting discussion of the "holographic paradigm." Holography is a method of lensless photography in which the wave field of light scattered by an object is recorded on a plate as an interference pattern. When the photographic record - the hologram - is placed in a coherent light beam like a laser, the original wave pattern is regenerated and a three-dimensional image appears. My step daughter and her husband have visited Las Vegas to see the Michael Jackson hologram show.....

A similar concept as holography was recorded in the *Tantra Sadbhava* it says,

- "The universe is His form. All feelings exist in Him. Knowledge of the whole gives Him His universality.
- " Because of this, *Parashakti*, the supreme creative energy of life, manifests Herself in the form of vibration
- In an individual, that vibration is called *Kundalini*.
- *Parashakti* and *Kundalini* are one, but *Kundalini* is how *Parashakti* shows up in the individual, in you and me.

Just as the macrocosm manifests in stages from the Absolute through branches involving form and substance and their intersections, so we, the microcosm, are also manifested in stages. The whole of our individuated energy is called *Kundalini*.

Kundalini manifests in stages, beginning with the Absolute, *Parashakti*, the stage in which everything exists in potentiality. It is the stage of *Spanda* in which that first impulse shows itself, the stage in which nothing has yet manifested, although the readiness to manifest is present.

Then follow the three stages of unfolding:

- *Parashyanti* is the impulse to move

- **Madhyama** is crystallized thought
- **Vaikhari** is gross speech.

Each of these stages of manifestation corresponds to the unfoldment of a **Chakra**.

- The **para** stage of manifestation, known in the individual as **parakundalini**, corresponds to the base of the spine or Mooldhara
- The **pashyanti** stage to the navel centre or Manipura
- The **madhyama** stage to the heart or Anahata
- and the **vaikhari** stage to the throat or Vishuddhi

How does all this relate to sound?

Each of the Chakras is associated with a "root-vibration," the Bija Mantra found at its centre which in turn is associated with certain letters from the sanskrit alphabet which can be found on each petal.

- Thus, taken as a whole, the system of Chakras (known as *Matrikashakti*) constitutes the entire primal (sanskrit) alphabet, and from this alphabet, according to tradition, the whole universe arises.

In a beautifully complex and elegant scholarly exposition, the ancient sages traced all manifestation back to a single root sound, the primal vowel, which formed all other vowels.

Then from the vibrations of the vowels came the consonants, and from the interplay of the whole alphabet came the thirty-six *tattvas*.

They went so far as to explain exactly *what* utterance gives rise to a particular phenomenon.

- For example, the gutturals give rise to the five elements: earth, water, wind, fire and air.
- The palatals give rise to the five subtle elements: odor, taste, sight, hearing and touch.
- The cerebrals give rise to the five organs of action: speech, sight, movement, excretion and reproduction.
- The dentals give rise to the five organs of sense. And the labials give rise to five "sheaths" of mind - the psychic instruments.

Their research and discovery clearly proves that sound has tremendous power, and, by extension, the individual who learns how to relate properly to sound has tremendous power and by applying sound theory and practicing the science of mantra, one attains not only the understanding of manifestation, but liberation from suffering and worldliness.

Matrika, Mantra, and Liberation Through Sound

The combination of letters described above is called the **Matrika Chakra**

- **Matrika** means literally the "unknown mother," unknown because we are trapped (by our lack of understanding) in the grossest level of manifestation of the word.
- **Matrika shakti** is the power of sound that is the matrix of the cosmos, and manifests as the letters in the alphabet.
- **Matrika** is the subtle force behind thought and speech. It is important to remember that what

is referred to here is several levels of subtlety removed from gross speech, and from words and letters such as you are reading now.

- The *Matrika Chakra*, and indeed the whole of the science of mantra and sound, is based on an understanding of the *essence* of language, on "word" as referred to by St. John: "And the Word was God."

While in the abstract this may be hard to understand, a look at one's own experience clarifies. Put at its very simplest, words have power.

Take for example, the word "disgrace." Imagine someone you respect accusing you of being "a disgrace." The power of that accusation sets up a vibration in you that was not there before the accusation was uttered. It is as palpable as if someone had thrown a rock at you, yet all that was thrown were words.

This highlights another fundamental concept that our mind, in the form of words, concepts, and ideas, is the source of bondage and suffering. According to the sages, as long as we do not understand the true nature of *Matrika*, we are bound by worldly actions and feelings - remaining victims of words without ever really understanding the source of their power over us.

- With the study of *mantra*, we gain the understanding to see what underlies the power of words and the alphabet, and can begin to use that power for our upliftment.

In the *Shiva Sutras* it is said, "enlightenment comes from knowing the group of letters called *Matrika Chakra*". Each of these letters in the Sanskrit alphabet can individually be called a *Matrika*, because each is a power in its own right. When we think, the process involved stems directly from the vibration of these *Matrikas*.

Again, take your own experience. Think of a time when you lost your temper and spoke unkindly to someone. Where did the thought process and ultimately the articulation of anger come from? It arose from a vibration, a stirring in you that you responded to, which then manifested as thought and finally as words. The process of losing control is none other than taking the subtle vibration of a moment and allowing it to descend into its grossest manifestation in the form of words and actions. This descent parallels the one discussed earlier - that of the subtlest sound (which is the essence of the universe) descending into the gross form of physical manifestation.

Self control (and ultimately liberation) is the reverse of that descent, or rather the cessation of that process at its earliest stages. Instead of articulating that vibration, or even thinking the thought that the vibration evokes, one simply *feels* the vibration fully.

Two things then happen:

- One attains a detachment from the emotional reaction the vibration evokes, and
- The power behind that vibration forces one to a higher level of consciousness. Since the vibration is only a strong energy, if it is not reacted to but simply absorbed as energy, it will promote the individual to a new level of awareness.

And this is only the beginning. Through a spiritual practice of meditation and mantra, our experience is transformed completely.

- A spiritual mantra is nothing other than pure, inwardly-directed *matrika*. Mantra saturates and transforms our consciousness when repeated at the levels of manifestation talked about

above.

- Yet while *matrika* usually (in our normal thought processes) moves through our awareness from the *para* stage down to the *vaikari* stage, in the practice of mantra the order is reversed. When repeated at the *vaikari* level (the throat), the gross body is purified. The feeling associated with it may be experienced as a vibration in the tongue and mouth.
- When repeated on the *madhyama* level, the mantra is said to have one hundred times the power as when repeated on the gross level, and may be felt as a stirring in the heart.
- In the next level, the *pashyanti* level, the mantra no longer exists in concrete form, but is simply a pulse of energy. The awareness of this pulsation releases ecstasy in the heart; a person who has attained this level has the power to create through words - whatever such a person says has to come true.
- On the *para* level, only bliss exists. Pure *spanda* appears and the seeker is totally aware of the "I" - consciousness that is our very essence.

And all this takes place from sound, from the basic vibration and combination of vibrations interacting with one another. One vibration becomes like a string that has a pitch of a certain frequency and sets up various resonances. Each resonance in turn becomes like another string that sets up further resonances. And from this symphony of creative energy, everything manifests.

All things are forms of creative energy, the Shakti, which is never separate from Shiva, the Absolute. Through meditation, we experience *Him* directly. We penetrate *maya* and *matrika*, and reach the eternal mantra, the sound of the union of Shiva and Shakti, the vibration in which all is One.

This is liberation.

Mantra Yoga and Primal Sound

Mantra in the Yoga tradition consists of the use of sacred sounds and intentions to transform the energy of the mind in a positive direction. Mantra is probably the most powerful and commonly used of all yogic meditation methods.

- All the main paths of Yoga – whether of knowledge, devotion or action, or whether Hatha, Raja or Kundalini Yoga – have their key mantras.
- Mantras can also be performed to help us with concentration, with our work, dealing with emotions, for health, prosperity or overall well-being.

Mantras are of many types. Some are longer prayers and intentions, like the famous Vedic *Gayatri* mantra. Others consist of the repetition of Divine names like the well-known mantra *Om Nama Shivaya* for Lord Shiva.

- Yet probably the most important and simplest of all mantras are the single syllable mantras called “Bija” or seed mantras starting with OM. They can be used for meditation, worship of deities, energizing prana or for healing purposes – for all aspects of mantra practice.
- These main Bija mantras are also called “Shakti mantras,” as they are commonly used in the worship of the Goddess, who Herself, is the power of sound and mantra.

Eight Prime Shakti Bija Mantras and their Corresponding Powers

Shakti Bija mantras carry the great forces of Nature such as the energies of the Sun and Moon, electricity and magnetism, not simply as outer factors but as inner potentials of Divine light, love and wisdom. They hold, resonate, and propel Kundalini force, the higher evolutionary power of consciousness, to flow within us. They consist of the following.....

Pranic energy	Ascending power of pure consciousness	OM
Energy of sound	Creative power of knowledge and guidance	AIM (aym)
Solar energy	Power of illumination and reflection	HRIM (hreem)
Lunar energy	Power of reflection and devotion	SRIM (shreem)
Electric energy	Power of action, expression and transformation	KRIM (kreem)
Magnetic energy	Power of love and attraction	KLIM (kleem)
Power of fire	Power to purify, protect and remove negativity	HUM (hoom)
Power to stabilize	Power to hold and conceive	STRIM (stream)

Shakti mantras relate to the primary forms of the Goddess or Divine Mother. There are special Shakti mantras for each of the great Goddesses, through which we can commune with them and gain their grace.

Shakti mantras are the primary mantras used in Tantric Yoga, in which they are combined in various ways to bring about different results. They have a great capacity for transformation that can extend to the deepest layers of our consciousness and prana. They should be approached with reverence and respect as the very life blood of the Goddess.

Most Shakti mantras contain the vowel

- AI, the vibratory ee-sound, which is the main primal sound of Shakti.
- Most contain the consonant R, which is the seed of fire, heaven, light, order and dharma and has a stimulating and energizing effect.
- Some contain the consonant L, which is the seed of earth, water, joy and bliss and has a calming and stabilizing effect.
- Many begin with either the letter H, which indicates prana, light and the Sun
- Or the letters S or Sh, which indicate the Moon, the mind and water.
- Some like AUM or AIM consist of vowels only.

Application of Shakti Mantras

Shakti mantras can be used to create, sustain or dissolve the various forms, patterns and forces within us. They have particular affinities with certain locations in the body and with specific chakras – like HRIM and the heart – but also have a broader effect to promote certain types of forces, like HRIM as solar energy that can be used on many different levels.

The application of Shakti mantras, like that of other mantras, depends upon the goals of life that we are using them to achieve (dharma, artha, kama, and moksha or career, wealth, enjoyment, or liberation), which gunas we are energizing them with (sattva, rajas, tamas, or the qualities of clarity, action or inertia), or their application through Yoga, Ayurveda, Vedic astrology or other disciplines. In this regard, the same Shakti mantra can be used in many different ways. Yet at the deepest level, Shakti mantras are meant to arouse and support the Yoga Shakti or inner power of Yoga within us.

For example, the mantra SRIM at an outer level connects us to the abundance of our dharma and artha, our career and financial gains, and the fulfillment of our kama or desires. For Yoga practice, it grants devotion to the guru and the deity. In Ayurveda, it promotes healing, growth, and nourishment. In Vedic astrology, it is the mantra of the Moon and can be used for strengthening benefic Venus and Jupiter as well. In Vaastu, it promotes well-being, prosperity and happiness in the dwelling.

Used with a sattvic intention, SRIM has a nourishing and harmonizing force; with a rajasic intention, it has a power to promote outer development and achievement; and with a tamasic intention, it can gain a destructive or crushing capacity. At an outer Lakshmi (Goddess of Prosperity) level, SRIM can grant us the abundance of the material world; while at an inner Lakshmi level, it can grant us the abundance of the spiritual life, which is devotion, bliss and the beauty of perception.

How to Use these Mantras

Please use these mantras with respect and a sense of their sacred power, along with your meditation, honoring the deity within. Generally, seed mantras are repeated numerous times in a series of continuous meditation sittings to reach the number of 100,000, which is the amount usually required to awaken their energy and draw it deep into our psyche. Then they can be repeated regularly as needed, even off and on during the day, to help us maintain calm and focus of the mind, or to direct us towards the particular goal that we are seeking through repeating the mantra.

Shakti mantras have a powerful effect by their sound alone, which is pranic in nature and helps decondition the mind, even if one does not understand their meaning.

- They are easy to pronounce as they consist of one syllable only!
- You can choose one of these mantras as your meditation mantra, repeating it silently for at least fifteen minutes or around a thousand times before meditation.

Another method is to let the mantra reverberate along with the breath.

- You can draw in the Shakti of the mantra on inhalation like HRIM as the solar energy or pure light of awareness, and spread its energy throughout your being or into your environment upon exhalation.

When mantra and prana become one, both are brought to a higher level of power and function. One can direct the mantra along with the breath to whatever part of the body one wishes to be healed or strengthened, or send it as a healing force for the benefit of others.

Bija mantras can be used along with Divine names

- OM HRIM SURYAYA NAMAHA for honouring the solar deity Surya.
- They can be used in combinations for different deities or aspects of the Divine, like KRIM HUM HRIM for Ma Kali.

OM

OM serves to open and clear the mind for meditation. It brings about an ascension and expansion of our energy

Om is the prime mantra of the Purusha, the Cosmic Being, the Atman or higher Self. As such, it attunes us with our true nature and higher reality. Om is the sound of *Ishvara*, the cosmic lord, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe, who is also the inner guru and prime teacher of Yoga. It reflects both the manifest and the unmanifest Brahman, sustaining the vibration of being, life and consciousness in all worlds and all creatures.

Generally, Om is divided threefold as A, U and M

- A referring to creation, the waking state and Brahma, the creator;
- U as sustenance, the dream state and Vishnu the preserver
- and M as dissolution, the deep sleep state and Shiva the transformer.

More specifically, Om relates to Shiva, the cosmic masculine force.

Om serves to open and clear the mind for meditation. It brings about an ascension and expansion of our energy. It promotes the higher prana and inner light and takes us into the formless realm. It draws the sound current up the spine, through the chakras and out from the top of the head.

- Om also means “yes” and is said to be the sound of assent. It allows us to harmonize with the forces of the universe externally and with our own nature internally.
- It attunes us to the cosmic reality and the sacred vibratory patterns that arise from it.

Relative to Ayurvedic medicine, Om helps harmonize the body, prana, mind, and senses with the higher Self, Atman or Divine presence within. It connects us with the cosmic healing prana. It brings a deep healing energy into the subconscious mind to remove negative emotions, addictions and compulsions.

Relative to Vedic astrology, Om is the sound of the Sun and of the higher light behind all the stars and planets. In Vaastu, Om can clear the energy in the home or dwelling and bring in Divine light, grace, and knowledge.

Relative to other mantras, Om is often used to begin them. It clears the mind for other mantras to work, opens us up to the higher consciousness, and brings a deeper prana into the mantra. Without first chanting Om, it is said that other mantras may not be effective.

AIM

AIM is the mantra of the Guru and helps us access all higher knowledge

After OM, AIM (pronounced “aym”) is the next most common bija mantra. AIM is the feminine counterpart of OM and often follows Om in various chants. Om and AIM are the two main compound vowel mantras, A plus U making Om (and AUM) and A plus I making AIM. As such, together they comprehend all sounds.

- As OM is the unmanifest or expansive aspect of primal sound
- AIM is the manifest or directed form.
- As OM serves to clear the mental field
- AIM helps us focus the mind and heart in a particular manner
- As OM is the word that is heard
- AIM is the word that is seen.
- As OM is the supreme Purusha or cosmic masculine force
- AIM is *Adya Shakti*, the supreme Shakti or cosmic feminine force.

That is why we find the mantra AIM in so many different mantras to the Goddess or Divine Mother.

More specifically, AIM is the seed mantra of Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge and speech, the consort of Lord Brahma, the Creator in the Hindu trinity of great Gods.

- As such, AIM aids us in learning, art, expression and communication and is good for promoting learning and education generally.

AIM is also the mantra of the guru and helps us access all higher knowledge. It can be used to call or to invoke wisdom and understanding. It indicates motivation, direction and will-power.

It can orient us toward whatever we are seeking. It increases concentration of mind and awakens our higher intelligence (Buddhi).

- Relative to other mantras, AIM is often used to direct our awareness or intention to the deity, to function as our call to draw in the higher knowledge so the mantra can work.
- In terms of Ayurveda, AIM strengthens the voice and the vocal chords. It helps open the lungs and clear the senses.
- Astrologically, AIM connects to the planet Mercury and to some extent the Moon, both planets that govern speech and expression. For Vaastu, AIM will bring creativity and learning into the dwelling, particularly for studies, libraries and classrooms.

HRIM

Hrim is a mantra of magical force, captivation and empowerment

After OM and AIM, HRIM (pronounced “hreem”) is probably the most commonly used Bija mantra.

- It is composed of the sound - Ha, which indicates prana, space and light
- Ra, which indicates fire, light and dharma
- I, which indicates energy, focus and motivation.

HRIM is the prime mantra of the Goddess in all of her three main powers of creation, preservation and destruction, and so is the main Shakti mantra, with a more specific application than AIM. It is said to be the Shakti bija and to be equivalent to OM for the Goddess.

- More specifically, it relates to Parvati or Shakti, the consort of Shiva, who is the destroyer/transformer among the great trinity of deities.

HRIM is a mantra of magical force, captivation and empowerment. It can be used relative to any deity or object whose presence we wish to access at the level of the heart. It brings about joy, ecstasy and bliss.

- HRIM both purifies and exalts us in our inner quest, humbling us before the Divine power so that it can enter into our hearts.
- HRIM is a specific mantra for the heart (*hridaya* in Sanskrit) on all levels, whether the spiritual heart, the heart chakra, the emotional heart or the heart as a physical organ. It energizes the heart, provides warmth, and allows for both deep feeling and deep thought.

In terms of Ayurveda, HRIM can be used to counter heart disease of all types, aiding in longevity and rejuvenation. More specifically, it helps promote the pranic and functional aspect of the heart and with it the power of circulation of the blood, the lungs and the nervous system. It has generally Pitta (fiery) energy but some Vata (air) energy as well, stimulating the higher pranas and emotions. In terms of Vedic astrology, Hrãæ relates to the Sun, the planet of the heart, and helps promotes solar energy, expression and charisma.

HRIM is usually a soft mantra but can also be harsh. As a soft mantra, it increases the finer energies of the heart. As a harsh mantra, it can be used to hypnotize or captivate, to dissolve or to carry away.

SRIM

SRIM relates to the heart in its feeling aspect, whereas HRIM relates to the pranic or functional aspect of the heart.

SRIM (pronounced “shreem”) is one of the most commonly used mantras because it is probably the most benefic of all sounds, drawing to us all that is good, helpful and promoting of positive growth and development.

- More specifically, SRIM is the seed mantra of Lakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity and abundance, and the consort of Lord Vishnu, the preserver in the Hindu trinity of great Gods, and brings Lakshmi’s many blessings.
- SRIM is also called “Rama bija” and is used in the worship of Lord Rama, the avatar of dharma.
- SRIM is the mantra of faith, devotion, refuge and surrender. It can be used to take refuge in or express devotion to any deity, helping us to gain its favor and grace.
- SRIM relates to the heart in its feeling aspect, whereas HRIM relates to the pranic or functional aspect of the heart.

SRI means splendor in Sanskrit, like the beautiful light of the Moon.

- SRIM is often used along with HRIM.
- As HRIM is solar, SRIM is lunar.

SRIM relates to the Moon in Vedic astrology and promotes a kind of lunar energy, Soma and beauty overall. Yet it is also used for other benefic planets like Venus and Jupiter, promoting their positive energies.

Relative to Ayurveda, SRIM is mainly a Kapha (watery and earthy) mantra for improving health, happiness, fertility, love and calmness of mind. Yet it does have some secondary Pitta (fire) qualities and improves our glow, luster and light.

It is particularly important for women’s health and brings proper function and circulation to the female reproductive system.

SRIM has a soothing effect on the mind and emotions, allowing us to surrender to Divine grace and take refuge in the higher powers.

KRIM

KRIM rules over all manifestation including time, space, and action (causation).

KRIM (pronounced “kreem”) is the first and most important of the consonant mantras, the mantras that begin with a hard consonant rather than a vowel or sibilant.

- KRIM begins with Ka, the first of the Sanskrit consonants that indicates manifest prana and the initial phase of energy.
- To this it adds the Ra sound or seed of fire
- The I sound or focusing power as in the other Shakti mantras creates light and intention like HRIM and SRIM but of a more specific, stimulating, and manifesting nature.

KRIM relates to *Vidyut Shakti* or the basic electrical energy behind all things in the universe – the *Kriya Shakti* or power of action on all levels. KRIM rules over all manifestation including time, space, and action (causation). Through it, we can gain control of our karmas and also move beyond them.

- KRIM is the seed mantra of Kali, the Goddess of time and transformation, the consort of Lord Shiva, the Destroyer/Transformer in the Hindu trinity of great deities. Through it, we set Kali’s power in motion within us. It serves to energize things to the highest level, which is to raise their level of vibration to the point where we can return to the source.

KRIM is a mantra of work, yoga and transformative energy, and is said to be *Yogabija* or the “seed syllable of Yoga practice.” Its inner application is to awaken the Kundalini Shakti to merge our outer nature back into the higher Self.

KRIM stimulates higher perception and higher prana, promoting the yogic process of Pratyahara (internalization of mind) and giving greater power to concentration, meditation and Samadhi. The mantra can connect us with the inner power of any deity we wish to connect to.

- In terms of Ayurveda, KRIM combines Vata (wind, electrical) energy mantra with Pitta (fire) for an adrenaline type effect. It has a powerful electrical force and stimulates all the pranas and Agnis (biological fires), the circulatory and nervous systems, particularly the heart and the liver.
- In Vedic astrology, KRIM relates primarily to the planet Mars, which is the planet of work and effort.
- KRIM is generally a harsh or strong mantra, particularly as used with HUM, and so should be recited with care.

KLIM

KLIM (pronounced “kleem”) is the softer, watery or more feminine aspect of KRIM. As KRIM is electrical or projective, KLIM has a magnetic quality that draws things to us. It can also be used to hold or fix things in place.

- KLIM carries the *Akarshana Shakti* or the “power of attraction.” It relates to Krishna, who grants bliss (Ananda) as a deity, and to Sundari, the Goddess of love and beauty.
- KLIM is the seed mantra of desire (Kama Bija) and helps us to achieve our true wishes in life.
- KLIM can be used relative to any deity we would like to access to fulfill our wishes.
- KLIM is the mantra of love and devotion, increasing the love energy within our hearts. For this reason, it is one of the most benefic mantras, and one of the safest and most widely used.

Relative to Ayurveda, KLIM is mainly a Kapha (water)-promoting mantra and is particularly good for the reproductive system and for the plasma and skin. It promotes *Kledaka Kapha* (the digestive fluids of the stomach), increasing our capacity for nourishment. Most importantly, it is specific for *Tarpaka Kapha*, the Soma of the brain that promotes well-being, soothing the nerves and calming the heart. It strengthens the immune system and brings contentment to the entire being.

KLIM is not specifically an astrological mantra, but is sometimes used for Venus or the Moon. For Vaastu, it can bring the energy of Divine love and beauty into the dwelling.

KLIM can have a harsh side as well. It can be used to fix, to stop or to nail down, or to hold things under the power of wishes, though such usage is not as common as its benefic application.

STRIM

STRIM is the seed mantra of the Hindu Goddess Tara

STRIM (pronounced “stroom”) contains

- The Sa sound of stability
- The Ta sound which gives extension
- and the I vowel that provides energy, direction and motivation.

It is connected to root meanings such as to stand, to spread, to take a step, to rise or traverse from one level to another. It brings about an expansion and spreading of energy that can follow a horizontal expansion, a vertical ascent, or a spiral movement.

- STRIM is said to be *Shanti bija* or the “seed syllable of peace” and carries the Shakti of Sat or Pure being.
- STRI in Sanskrit also means a woman.
- The mantra STRIM provides the power of the Divine feminine (Stri-Shakti) to give birth, to nourish, to protect and to guide.

It is similar to SRIM in sound qualities but stronger and more stabilizing in its effects. It can be used to increase Shakti or feminine energy in oneself or in one’s outer activity.

- STRIM is another general mantra of the Goddess, particularly in her higher knowledge form.
- STRIM can be used relative to any deity whose energy we wish to expand or project in a creative manner. It grants poetic and artistic powers, as well as powers of argument, debate and law.

STRIM is the seed mantra of the Hindu Goddess Tara (not the Buddhist Tara, who is a different deity approached with different mantras). Hindu Tara is connected to Durga, who is often called Durga-Tara, as a protective and fiery form of the Goddess. She is the high priestess and represents the inner knowledge and the insight of the guru, particularly the power of the Word.

- Tara controls the weapons of the Gods, particularly the *Trishula* or trident of Lord Shiva.
- Tara also relates to the mantra OM, and STRIM is the means through which OM takes us across all difficulties.

Tara in astrological symbolism is the wife or feminine form of Brihaspati, the planet Jupiter. She is the great star Goddess associated with the star Aldeberan (the Vedic star Rohini), the bright red star of the constellation Taurus. As Brihaspati/ Jupiter is the high priest or guru of the Gods,

- Tara is the high priestess of the heavens.
- STRIM as the mantra of the Star Goddess attunes us to the benefic powers of the stars and Nakshatras and gives us astrological knowledge.

In terms of Ayurveda, STRIM is important as a healing and empowering mantra for women, and can aid in childbirth and can promote women's health generally, strengthening the heart, reproductive system, circulatory system and bones.

HUM

HUM with a long vowel sound has a similar meaning to OM but with a more feminine and Shakti quality

HUM (pronounced "hoom") is one of the most important Sanskrit mantras along with OM, AIM and HRIM. It is said to be the Pranava or primal sound of Lord Shiva, the transformative aspect of the Divine Trinity.

- HUM is the main Agni or fire mantra and can help kindle fire in all of its forms from the digestive fire to the Pranic fire to the fire of the consciousness. It refers to a gaseous type of fire and so can be connected with lightning and to the power of prana and the breath.
- HUM is also a weapon and protection mantra and can be used to destroy negativity with its lightning fire. It can be used to direct a fiery explosive energy with other mantras.
- It is also called *Krodha bija* or the "seed sound of wrath."
- It is the mantra that Lord Shiva uses to project the fire from his third eye that destroys all negativity and burns up all desires.

HUM with a long vowel sound has a similar meaning but a more feminine and Shakti quality.

- It relates to fierce forms of the Goddess like Kali, Chandi and Chinnamasta.
- It has the power to cut off and indicates the sword.
- However, HUM has a soft potential as well. It is said to be the *Dhenu bija*, the "seed sound of the Mother cow," calling its calf back to it. It calls out and invokes, while at the same time challenging and warding off.

- HUM is used specifically for raising the Kundalini, particularly combining the mantra with the breath, and the fixing of the gaze at the navel, the seat of the digestive fire.

Relative to Ayurveda, HUM increases Prana, Tejas and Pitta, setting all our fiery energies in motion from the digestive fire to the fire of the mind. Both strengthen the immune system particularly against any active pathogenic attacks, but as harsh mantras require some care in application.

Astrologically, HUM relates to fiery planets like the Sun, Mars or Ketu and increase their fiery properties. They are particularly good for bringing in the higher perceptive power of Ketu, which is a great aid in astrological research, spiritual healing and Yoga. Relative to Vaastu, they can be used to create a protective energy shield around one's dwelling.

The Language of Shakti Mantras

A single Shakti mantra can be used as a meditation mantra in order to draw the mind into deep awareness. One repeats the mantra prior to meditation to bring the mind into a meditative state. Then one keeps the mantra going in the back of the mind as long as the meditation proceeds, to help sustain the process.

Several Shakti bija mantras can also be used together as meditation mantras, often in groups of three to seven bijas.

- Shakti mantras can function as names of deities to invoke them, like OM and SHIVA, or AIM and SARASWATI.
- But they are more commonly used in conjunction with Divine names, like OM AIM SARASWATAYE NAMAHA

Shakti mantras reflect various types of invocation. For example,

OM AIM HRIM SRIM – which means OM: I invoke (AIM); open my heart to (HRIM); and take refuge in (SRIM).

In conclusion, Shakti mantras allow us to energize our thoughts and feelings at a deeper level with the force of higher awareness.

Journeying ever Deeper!

To further our understanding and work with the Chakras we can call upon the Shakti energy of each chakra, as it is embodied in the manifestation of seven unique and powerful goddesses. In the great tradition of Tantra, the energy of the Goddesses are used to invoke the essential qualities of truth, power, beauty, goodness, and love that live within.

The mantras of these Goddess energies are encapsulated sounds that carry the essence and awareness of the symbolic expression of the Goddess energy residing in all of us—whether we are male or female.

What is Shakti?

Shakti is a goddess whose dance brings forth creation. Every transformation of energy—from physical to mental to spiritual—is a new expression of Shakti's dance, as each level of creation emerges. There is no limit to how you can express yourself, because Shakti isn't just your personal energy. It's another name for the mother goddess from whom everything in creation flows. When you do anything that expresses who you are, you are adding to creation—reality unfolds through each of us.



Reflective Questions as part of our practice

“The key to wisdom is knowing all the right questions.” – John Simone

Believe it or not, the kind of questions you ask determine the kind of life you lead. That’s because your questions trigger its own set of answers, which lead to certain emotions, which then lead to certain actions (or inactions), followed by results.

- If you ask yourself limiting questions, you’ll get limited results.
- If you ask yourself mind-opening, forwarding questions, you’ll gain a lot more out of them.

Forward & Backward looking Questions!

Some people like to ask questions like “Why am I so unlucky?”, “What if I had done this earlier?” and “Why am I always in such a situation?”. Because these questions are backward looking, the answers you get with them are naturally disempowering.

On the other hand, questions like “What can I learn from this experience?”, “What can I do differently moving forward?” and “What am I grateful for?” are empowering. They provoke you and get you thinking, putting you on the path to a better life.

If you’re someone who normally doesn’t self-reflect, you might be stumped by questions. However, this is perfectly normal. It doesn’t matter if you get stumped in the beginning, or if you don’t know the answers to the questions at first. Our minds are boundless. Just because you don’t get an answer immediately, it doesn’t mean there are no answers. The answers are there — it’s just that your mind is too foggy since you’ve not consulted it before. The more you ask, the clearer your mind will be, and the more ready you’ll be to receive the answers.

Remember, there is no one final answer. It’s a continuous discovery process. Your answers to the questions today will be different from your answers one month, three months, six months, and one year down the road.

The Benefits of Reflection

- Reflection makes all of us self-aware. It challenges us to think deeply
- Reflection deepens ownership. When we reflect, we become sensitive to the personal connection that exists between our selves, our learning, and our work. The more we consider these connections, the deeper they seem to become.
- Reflection makes things matter more.
- Reflection helps us get comfortable with uncomfortable.
- Reflection helps us know ourselves better. It helps us sharpen our vision, so we can align our actions to it. Reflection also helps us notice when we’re getting off track.
- Perhaps most importantly, reflection helps us advocate for ourselves and support others. Taking the time to reflect enables us to identify what we want, what we need, and what we must do to help ourselves.
- It also helps us realize how our gifts and strengths might be used in service to others.

A Brief guide to each Chakra

“Anatomy is destiny,” Freud famously said. If he had understood the subtle anatomy of the yoga tradition he might have said, “Destiny determines anatomy.”

- Yogis know that destiny arises from consciousness defining itself in us through seven major energy centers—the *Chakras*.
- The story of the chakras is the story of how spirit manifests in human form, including our individual variations on the human theme, as well as the story of our spiritual destiny and how we can transform our lives through yoga practice.

The word *Chakra* literally means a “spinning wheel”—an apt metaphor, as spirit uses the Chakras to weave the fabric of life. The chakras govern our behavior, shape our emotional life, give expression to our deepest desires, and build the structure of our physical body and personality.

Understanding the Chakras gives us self-knowledge at every level of our being. Luckily for us, the chakras also map out the journey to fulfillment and enlightenment. Yoga is designed to use the energy of the Chakras to accelerate that journey.

The Chakra model describes how the life force, *Prana*, circulates between two poles, one in the physical world of the body and the other in the realm of pure consciousness. We humans, strung out between them with all our longings, joys, doubts, and desires, embody both the gross physical reality and the infinite potential of consciousness.

- Prana nurtures and sustains every aspect of our body and mind through the six energy centers arranged on an axis through the core of the body between the top pole, infinity at the crown (the seventh chakra), and the bottom one, at the pelvic floor (the first chakra).

For easy reference, you can view the chakras in respect to their position along the spine, but keep in mind they are not physical structures; rather, they are the loci of subtle energy, which manifests on many different levels, not just the physical.

Putting it all into Practice

The following pages contain a snapshot of the practices discussed so far in this e-book.

Our e-course Demystifying the Chakra System contains full video and audio practices to explore each chakra and looks in depth into the rich symbology of the chakra system.

The e-course is designed to offer the necessary tools to unlock and understand the energy the resides within each and everyone of us – to balance, heal and energise the whole body – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.....

Root Chakra (Mooladhara)



Located at the base of the spine (the pelvic floor), the root chakra gives us our individual toehold on physical life. As the foundation of earthly existence, physical well-being, and security, Mooladhara gives rise to the instinctive urges—such as hunger, sex, sleep, and self-preservation—that fuel our activities as well as our passions.

On the physical level, the root chakra is associated with the earth element, the sense of smell, and the capacity of excretion. It is also where our individual potential lies sleeping in the depths of our unconscious mind. Our spiritual journey in the universe of the body is to awaken this divine potential (*kundalini*) and unite her with the infinite at the crown of the head.

In the elegant convention for conveying attributes of the chakras symbolically, the root chakra appears as a four-petaled lotus with a lingam, a symbol of creative potency, inside a square. The serpent coiled around the lingam is the dormant kundalini; the square conveys the sense of stability and security associated with this chakra.

What helps to balance this energy centre

Asana practice in particular can ground and pacify the energies of this center, offering safe haven in the home of the body. Other practices—such as observing the *yamas* and the *niyamas*—help us regulate the urges and free ourselves from an excessive or inappropriate focus on survival issues.

Audio and video practices can be found in full in the e-course [Demysifying the Chakra System](#)

Dakini - Mooladhara

Dakini: The Goddess Dakini embodies the qualities of the first or root chakra. Repetition of her name as mantra during meditation activates Mooladhara by invoking the energy, or shakti, of her essential qualities – allowing us connect to the source of security and grounded peace, aligning ourselves with the strength of the Earth as the foundation to our natural state flow.

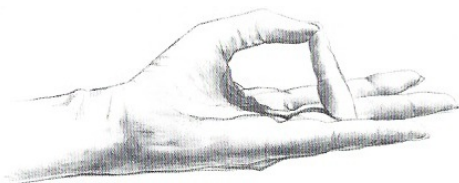


Affirmation – I am grounded and secure – I am protected at the core of my being

Reflective Questions

- Do I honour my body and eat nourishing food?
- Do I have a healthy relationship with my body and sexuality?
- Do I get enough sleep or conscious relaxation?
- Do I feel safe, nurtured and secure in my life at every level?

Mudra



Pelvic Chakra (Swadishthana)



Swadishthana chakra, associated with the sacrum, the water element, and the genitals, governs taste and reproduction, as well as desire and pleasure. Our zest for life has its origin here, but if mismanaged, the power of this centre can result in cravings, attachments, and addictions of all kinds. The literal meaning of *swadishthana*—“her own abode”—implies that the goddess Kundalini, when awakened from her slumber in mooladhara, resides here, and our desire is one and the same as divine desire. We are no longer ruled by personal likes and dislikes, but rather are instruments in the hands of the Divine at the deepest level of our being.

What helps to balance this energy centre

This chakra is closely linked to mooladhara and related to many of the same issues and yoga practices. Many spiritual traditions, including yoga, make use of fasting and celibacy (or dietary and sexual moderation) as the means to manage the strong pleasure-driven desires associated with this centre.

[Audio and video practices can be found in full in the e-course Demysifying the Chakra System](#)

Rakini - Swadhishthana

Rakini: The Goddess Rakini embodies the qualities of the second, or sacral, chakra. As we repeat her name in the mantra during meditation, we activate Swadhishthana by invoking the energy, or shakti, of her essential qualities – allowing us to activate the ever present source of happiness, pleasure, and joy within.

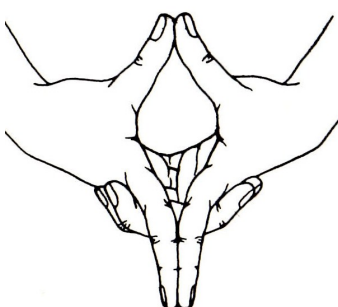


Affirmation – I embrace the unfolding flow of change

Reflective Questions

- What lessons are my relationships teaching me?
- Am I able to recognise and appreciate loving energy directed at me?
- Do I allow myself some form of pleasure everyday?
- How do I adapt to change and new situations?

Mudra



Navel Chakra (Manipura)



Manipura chakra, located at the navel, regulates the lumbar spine, the digestive organs, eyesight, and locomotion. As the pranic hub of the body, the navel chakra is associated with the fire element. Fire is transformative, and since yoga is a transformative process, many hatha yoga practices focus on the navel to strengthen this fire.

As the centre of vitality, manipura provides the easiest access to the pranic force in the physical body. Glowing good health, courage, enthusiasm, vitality, and self-esteem are hallmarks of strong navel chakra energy. At the psychological level, issues of aggression, power, and ego-identity play out through this centre.

What helps to balance this energy centre

Physical practices that activate this area of the body—including many asanas and more subtle practices, such as *agni sara*, *navli kriya*, and *bhastrika* pranayama—improve digestion and mobilize healing energy throughout the other systems of the body

Audio and video practices can be found in full in the e-course [Demysifying the Chakra System](#)

Lakini - Manipura

Lakini: The Goddess Lakini embodies the qualities of the third, or solar, plexus chakra. As we repeat her name in the mantra during meditation we activate Manipura by invoking the energy, or shakti, of her essential qualities – allowing us to tap into the power of the universe as we invite the energy of inner strength, courage, and true power in our lives.



Affirmation – I choose health, happiness, light and love

Reflective questions

- Am I keeping my word?
- Am I seeking the approval of others constantly?
- Am I operating within my own code of ethics?
- Am I afraid of responsibility, or do I assume others responsibility?

Mudra



Heart Chakra (Anahata)



At the intersection of the downward-descending divine force and the upward-ascending forces of instinct lies the fourth energy centre—Anahata chakra. Governing the heart and the lungs, Anahata is the seat of the Self, the very “heart of the matter.” It is associated with the air element, the thoracic spine, and the sense of touch.

Compassion, unconditional love, affinity, and connectedness—as well as grasping, manipulation, and feelings of abandonment, isolation, and despair—all surface through this chakra. The Star of David, the symbol for Anahata, and the Christian emphasis on service and love are both familiar references for the heart centre.

What helps to balance this energy centre

As we move to higher chakras with more subtle energies, the application of yoga also becomes more subtle. Pranayama and breath work to enhance the intake of prana and quiet the mind, heart-centered meditation practices, and devotional practices of all kinds—from prayer to kirtan—work with the energies of the heart.

[Audio and video practices](#) can be found in full in the e-course [Demysifying the Chakra System](#)

Kakini - Anahata

Kakini: The Goddess Kakini embodies the qualities of the fourth, or heart, chakra. Repetition of her name as mantra during meditation activates Anahata by invoking the energy, or shakti, of her essential qualities – allowing us to gently open our heart centre allowing the source of love within to flow freely.

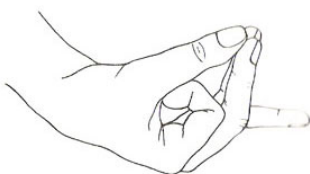


Affirmation – I live in peace and gratitude

Reflective Questions

- How do I show myself love and compassion?
- How do I give love and compassion to others?
- What am I grateful for in this moment?
- How can I cultivate empathy for people close to me as well as acquaintances and even strangers?

Mudra



Throat Chakra (Vishuddhi)



Located at the throat and associated with the element space, Vishuddhi chakra governs the cervical spine, the voice box, speech and hearing, and the thyroid and parathyroid endocrine glands, which regulate our metabolism. Creative expression, connection to the Divine, and the transmittal of consciousness are themes of Vishuddhi. Distortions of energy in this chakra can result in difficulties in authentic expression, and in taking in nourishment of all kinds.

The symbol of this chakra includes a 16-petaled lotus, one petal for each of the 16 vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet. Vowels give life to language, the most fundamental and refined creative act. Through them, we find the capacity for unique expression that in part defines the human existence and gives rise to the use of mantra as a means for transmitting divine consciousness.

What helps to balance this energy centre

Many familiar yoga practices target the throat: the shoulder stand, plow pose, lion and fish poses; the chin lock, upper wash, *ujjayi* and *bhramari* pranayamas; and chanting the names of the Divine during kirtan.

Audio and video practices can be found in full in the e-course [Demystifying the Chakra System](#)

Shakini - Vishuddhi

Shakini: The Goddess Shakini embodies the qualities of the fifth, or throat, chakra. Repetition of her name as mantra during meditation activates Vishiddhi by invoking the energy, or shakti, of her essential qualities – allowing us to activate our true voice so that we may freely express our unique gifts and perspective with the world, accessing our creativity and opening to the free flow of authentic expression.



Affirmation – In a space of deep inner listening, I open to my infinite possibilities.

Reflective Questions

- How do I express my love, sorrow, confusion, longings and my boundaries?
- How can I communicate my ideas, needs and wants clearly and compassionately?
- What are the qualities of my voice?
- How do I express my unique creativity?

Mudra



Eye Brow Chakra (Ajna)



Ajna (pronounced “ahgya”) is the command centre, the seat of the mind, and the interface between body and mind. This sixth chakra, sometimes called “the third eye,” regulates growth and development at every level through the brain centers and the pituitary gland (the master gland). The two major aspects of the pranic force in the body, which operate as opposing forces in all the lower chakras, come together here, opening in the mind to deep inner stillness. The integration of intellect and feeling at Ajna results in divine sight, intuition, and profound self-knowledge. Without that integration, we stay trapped in the consciousness of ordinary reality and the realm of the senses.

What helps to balance this energy centre

Yoga practices, such as alternate nostril breathing (*nadi shodhanam*) and meditation on the breath or mantra at Ajna chakra, help us gain access to a deeper level of consciousness. Relaxation and meditation practices make use of this centre to consciously reach beyond physical awareness into the compulsive responses in the psyche, reshaping both body and mind.

Audio and video practices can be found in full in the e-course [Demysifying the Chakra System](#)

Hakini - Ajna

Hakini: The Goddess Hakini embodies the qualities of the sixth, or third eye, chakra. Repetition of her name as mantra during meditation activates this energy center by calling in the resonance, or shakti, of her essential qualities – allowing us to activate our intuition as we align with our natural inner knowing, flowing with the current of this inherent guidance and stepping closer to living the life we are here to live.

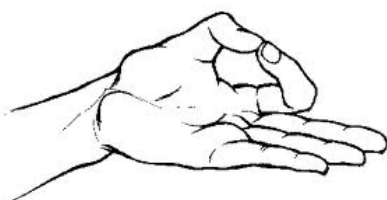


Affirmation – I open myself to open and know my inner guidance

Reflective Questions

- Do I truly see what is around me?
- When did I last act on an intuitive impulse?
- Or go with any compelling thoughts without rasionisation?
- Or be alert to any coincidence that may contain hidden meaning.....

Mudra



Crown Center (Sahasrara)



The crown chakra, Sahasrara, is *beyond* the individual; it is the gateway to the transpersonal matrix of pure consciousness and the source of all the chakras. With a thousand petalled lotus as its symbol—which denotes the infinite number of attributes belonging to primal unitary consciousness—Sahasrara reigns as the seventh and highest energy centre. It exists beyond the realm of mental functioning and the personal level of consciousness, and yet, at the same time, is the field from which such mental functioning arises and the vantage point of enlightenment.

According to the tantric yoga tradition, each human is a miniature universe built on the same template as the cosmos, and the chakras connect the individual and the cosmic forces. Awakening kundalini—the latent energy in the chakras that lies coiled at the base of the spine—and leading her to unity with the energy at the crown centre is the spiritual process by which we grow beyond the personal and into cosmic consciousness.

Thus, the chakra system describes the totality of a human being: physical, mental, and spiritual. Yoga practice is the practical application of the chakra model to achieve good health, self-understanding, and spiritual wisdom. The range of yoga practices can reshape our destiny by correcting physical, energetic, and mental/emotional imbalances, directing awareness to the more refined levels of consciousness, and mitigating and removing obstacles to self-realization. Yoga calls us to consciously experience the Divine in the chakra-built shrine of our own human self.

Demystifying the Chakra System e-course

You will find a complete set of practices which include asana, pranayama, visualization, mudra, chanting, reflective questions and Yoga Nidra that will integrate and balance the energy of each chakra – in the Demystifying the Chakra System e-course.

The course includes

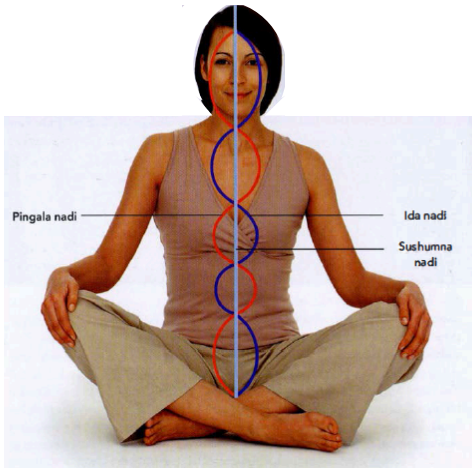
- Video – 6 x Elemental Yoga flows to connect with each Chakra
- Video – Yoga flow to connect with Sushumna Nadi
- Video – Yin Yoga practice which combines chant to balance and harmonise all chakras
- Audio – Yoga Nidra to connect with the essence of each chakra
- Audio – Shakti Bija chants for each chakra, to connect with the Goddess energy
- Audio – Mudra practice with reflective questions to balance each energy centre
- Audio – Visualisation of each chakra to connect at a deeper level to the richness of the symbology
- Audio – Bhuta Shuddhi meditation – a full meditation practice to balance and purify your entire energy system

All notes from this e-book will be included plus much more information regarding mudras, reflective questions essential oils, gem stones and many more practices for each chakra. All practices in this e-book will be covered in depth and how to use them effectively to transform your life.....

Demystifying the Chakras... The Physiological Link



Shakta Theory and the Chakras



The name chakra comes from the Sanskrit word for wheel, in reference to the chariot wheels of rulers called *cakravartins* (the original “cakra” was pronounced with a “ch,” but we usually see it written now as “chakra”). Energy from each these parallel points, called chi, ki, or prana, is thought to flow in a spiral fashion so long as each chakra is open.

Other ancient eastern traditions, including qi gong, acupuncture, and tai chi also focus on this flow of pranic energy. Early mentions of chakras deem them the facilitators to a stable, more connected life (both to ourselves and to others). By focusing on these centers and paying attention to their specific roles, we can reach our highest potential.

The original models of the chakras from the Brahma and Yogatattva Upanishads were adapted in Tibetan Buddhism as Vajrayan theory and as Tantric Shakta theory. Shaktism arose as an organized sect in India in the 5th century CE, and it is this sect’s interpretation of the chakras that has most influenced the Western understanding of them.

Shaktism describes the seven major chakras and they were viewed as centres of pure consciousness and focal points for meditation. It also established symbolic associations and correspondences for each chakra, it’s element, visual symbol, mantric sound, deity, colour and animal.

The Shakta way also teaches us about kundalini energy, the energy unleashed during the creation of the world. Tantric texts refer to the nadis (or channels) of vital life-force (prana) which thread throughout the body and link with the chakras along the primary nadi in the body, shushumna nadi, like pearls or jewels.

How the Chakras link to our body

The Chakras are not physical, they are the aspects of consciousness or energy in the same way that the Auras are aspects of consciousness / energy.

While Chakras in themselves may not be physical, they interact with the physical body in a number of ways. They connect through two major vehicles, the endocrine system and the nervous system. Each of the seven main Chakras discussed here are associated with one of the seven endocrine glands and also with a particular group of nerves called a Plexus. Each of the chakra's has governance over particular areas and functions of your body controlled by that plexus or endocrine gland.

Other links have been with the different functions of the brain and the chakras, as well as physical areas we universally feel emotions and corresponding chakras. Lastly many complimentary health practitioners / healers have made connections to various physical health conditions / dis-ease in the body and the chakra centres.

Below I will explore each of these areas and then bring them together in an overview so you can begin to see the multitude of connections and ultimately how the chakras can enable us to see ourselves holistically.

I will also introduce the idea that our biography becomes our biology – a concept developed by Carolyn Myss her book 'The Anatomy of Spirit'

The Chakras and the Endocrine Glands

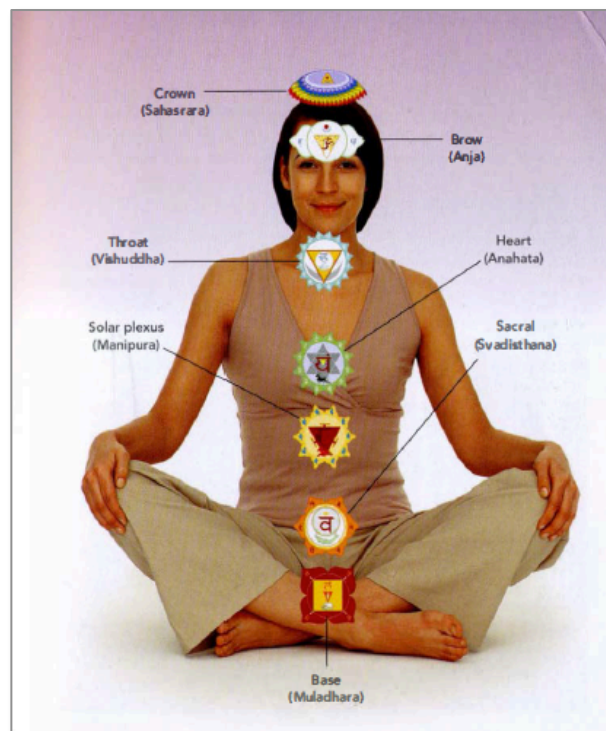
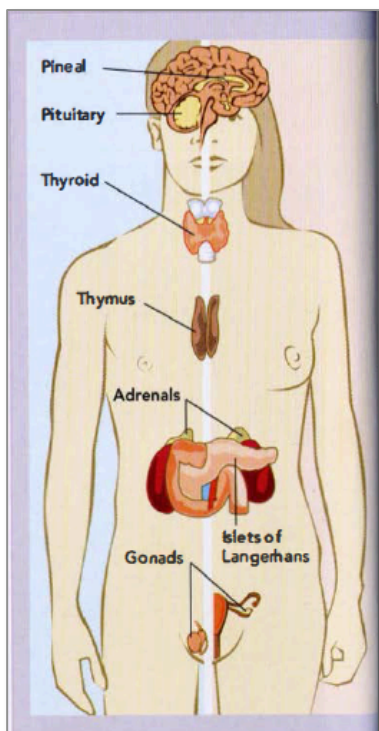
Theosophist Society founder Alice Bailey, along with Charles Webster Leadbeater, was among the first to associate the chakras with particular endocrine glands and the sympathetic nervous system.

There is no evidence that the Indian mystics made this association, although the pioneering work of Theophilus Gimbel on light and colour for healing lead him to note that the traditional positions of the chakras corresponds to the positions and functions of the glands of the endocrine system and the positions of the nerve ganglia along the spinal column.

The endocrine system is a complex part of the human body and is still in the process of being fully understood.

- The ductless glands of the endocrine system provide a chemical communication network that controls a huge number of physiological processes.
- Hormones are produced by the glands of the endocrine system and act as chemical messengers in the blood, affecting the functioning of cells. Only certain cells in the body, known as target cells, are receptive particular hormones.
- Hormone receptors are found either exposed on the surface of the cell or within it, depending on the type of hormone. The binding of hormone to receptor triggers a cascade of reactions within the cell that affects virtually every function of the body.

Each of the glands influences the production of particular hormones....



Mooladhara and the Adrenals

- Some texts refer to Muladhara being connected to the Gonads and others to the Adrenals. I prefer the connection to the adrenals because the root chakra is all about survival and the Adrenal glands are linked to the 'flight / fight' response. This is the most base of all chakras, the one most closely connected with our animal self.
- Our pair of adrenal glands, also referred to as the supra-renal glands, are triangular-shaped glands located on top of each kidney. Our adrenal glands work hand-in-hand with the hypothalamus and pituitary gland.
- The adrenal glands are located just underneath the 11th and 12th ribs on the back plus a little bit beyond the ribs and about 1/3 of the way out from the spine.
- The adrenal glands are made up of two parts. The outer part is called the adrenal cortex, and the inner part is called the adrenal medulla. The adrenal cortex produces hormones that regulate the body's metabolism, the balance of salt, potassium and water in the body, the immune system, and sexual function. It is also responsible for the production of cortisol, which regulates glucose levels and inflammation of tissue. As mentioned adrenal glands are responsible for our 'flight or fight' response. The adrenal medulla produces hormones that help the body cope with physical and emotional stress by increasing the heart rate and blood pressure.
- Balanced, healthy adrenal glands help us stay grounded, feel vital, calmly focused and alert and provide support to our parasympathetic nervous system whose job is to restore our body.

Swadhistana and the Gonads

- Swadhistana is intimately connected in the male with the prostate gland and testes, and in the female the ovaries and uterus.
- The gonads are the main source of our sex hormones, the chemicals that secrete the essences for new life via eggs and sperm. They respectively create our feminine and masculine characteristics.
- There is a direct connection between the ovaries and our adrenal glands (refer first chakra). Adrenal fatigue can affect a woman's menstrual cycle.
- It is interesting that children and celibates are often chosen as temple seers and prophets and this may be because they are unfettered from sexual energy and are more pure.

Manipura and the Pancreas

- There are some texts that connect the Adrenals to Manipura and I see the merit in this as Manipura is the source of our personal power and the Adrenals work to supply sugar (energy) to the body. I prefer the link between the pancreas and Manipura because it link into the digestive system (where it secretes pancreatic juice containing digestive enzymes) which is the source of where we get our energy.
- The pancreas plays two roles having both digestive and hormonal functions. One part of the pancreas, the exocrine pancreas, secretes digestive enzymes. The other part of the pancreas, the endocrine pancreas, secretes hormones.
- The pancreas produces the hormones insulin and glucagon that work together to maintain a

steady level of glucose, or sugar, in the blood and to keep the body supplied with fuel to produce and maintain stores of energy.

- The navel chakra and is often considered our center of “will”. It is where we most keenly experience our ego and self esteem. It can also regulate how we let “sweetness” into our life.

Anahata and the Thymus

- The endocrine gland often linked to the heart is the thymus which plays an important part in the immune system in early life.
- The thymus gland will not function throughout a full lifetime, but it has a big responsibility when it’s active—helping the body protect itself against autoimmunity, which occurs when the immune system turns against itself.
- Before birth and throughout childhood, the thymus is instrumental in the production and maturation of T-lymphocytes or T cells, a specific type of white blood cell that protects the body from certain threats, including viruses and infections. The thymus produces and secretes thymosin, a hormone necessary for T cell development and production.
- Once T cells have fully matured in the thymus, they migrate to the lymph nodes (groups of immune system cells) throughout the body, where they aid the immune system in fighting disease.
- Though the thymus gland is only active until puberty, its double-duty function as an endocrine and lymphatic gland plays a significant role in your long-term health.
- Science has proven that T-cell count increases when we are feeling the emotions of love. It is directly affected by our ability to give and receive love.
- It is often considered that our Heart Chakra acts as our “Centre” as it is powerfully affected by feeling and emotion. When we are feeling bitter, angry, or hateful towards another, or ourselves our ability to fight infection and disease is reduced (and we become ‘run-down’). A healthy thymus gland is directly associated to the development of compassion and kindness (towards both **ourselves** and each other).

Vishhudhi and the Thyroid Glands

- Derived from the Greek word meaning *shield*, the thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland located in front of the windpipe (called the trachea) and just below the larynx or Adam’s apple in the neck. It is comprised of two halves, known as lobes, which are attached by a band of thyroid tissue called the isthmus.
- During development, the thyroid is actually located in the back of the tongue and has to migrate to the front of the neck before birth.
- The thyroid (and parathyroid) gland hormones control the rate at which cells burn fuel from food in order to produce energy. An over active thyroid means that the heart beats fast, the body becomes thin and sexual desire increases and the mind works overtime and there is a lot of ‘internal chatter’ which contributes to stress. An underactive thyroid has the opposite effect.
- Vishhudhi chakra is deemed to be the location of the ‘nectar of immortality’. One way of making sense of this idea is to think of the thyroid gland as being like tortoise (the Chinese symbol of immortality) - the slower it goes, the longer it lives.

Ajna and the Pituitary and Hypothalamus Glands

- The pituitary gland is a pea sized; double-lobed gland nestled in the spheroid bone at the roof of the nose. The spheroid bone is the only bone that connects to all the other bones of the cranium and its movement is responsible for "milking" the pituitary gland to secrete its hormones.
- The pituitary gland is considered a master gland and produces hormones that specifically affect all the other endocrine glands. It has been called the "Generals Headquarters". The hypothalamus controls the pituitary function and can be considered as the "Central Processing Unit" for our entire hormonal system.
- Another metaphor that may be helpful to use to explain this is that the pituitary is the CEO of the "Company" who reports directly to the "Board" (hypothalamus) who provides direction and governance on behalf of the shareholders (the rest of our endocrine glands and organs)!
- Interaction with the Third Eye and Crown Chakras will directly affect the pituitary gland and hypothalamus.
- Additionally, the **medulla oblongata** works directly with the hypothalamus and thus the pituitary gland. Both the hypothalamus and medulla oblongata are responsible for controlling **involuntary processes** such as the regulation of the heartbeat, breathing, constriction and dilation of blood vessels and body temperature. The medulla oblongata is integral in the transmission of nerve impulses between the spinal cord and the higher brain centres, including the pituitary gland. The medulla oblongata is the gateway between the spinal cord and the brain.
- The tiny pituitary is divided into two parts: the anterior lobe and the posterior lobe. The anterior lobe regulates the activity of the thyroid, adrenals, and reproductive glands. The anterior lobe produces hormones such as
 - somatotrophin, which stimulates the growth of bone and other body tissues and plays a role in the body's handling of nutrients and minerals
 - prolactin which activates milk production in women who are breastfeeding
 - thyrotrophin which stimulates the thyroid gland to produce thyroid hormones
 - corticotrophin which stimulates the adrenal gland to produce certain hormones
- The pituitary also secretes endorphins chemicals that act on the nervous system and reduce feelings of pain. In addition, the pituitary secretes hormones that signal the reproductive organs to make sex hormones. The pituitary gland also controls ovulation and the menstrual cycle in women.
- The posterior lobe of the pituitary releases antidiuretic hormone, which helps control the balance of water in the body. The posterior lobe also produces oxytocin which triggers the contractions of the uterus in a woman having a baby.
- The production and secretion of pituitary hormones can be influenced by factors such as emotions and changes in the seasons. To accomplish this, the hypothalamus provides information sensed by the brain (such as environmental temperature, light exposure patterns, and feelings) to the pituitary.

Sahasrara and the Pineal Gland

- The pineal gland is a little gland located in the centre of the brain and yet is outside the blood-brain barrier**, so it is in fact not part of the brain. Our brain stem is an extension of our spinal cord and our mid-brain is the highest part of the brain stem. The pineal gland is located within the mid-brain, behind the thalamus and literally hangs from the roof of the 3rd ventricle of the brain. The mid-brain is literally as such; it joins the lower parts of the brain stem and spinal cord with higher parts of the brain. Though not directly connected to the spine, it does affect the entire spine especially in relation to our motor coordination and posture.
- While researchers are still learning about the full purpose of the pineal gland (named after a pine cone due to its similar shape), it is considered one of the three master glands (along with the pituitary and hypothalamus glands). The most important function of the pineal gland is maintaining the biological clock, on a daily basis according to the sun, on an annual basis according to the length of day, and in women on a lunar basis as well.
- While the pituitary and hypothalamus glands are responsible for the regulation for ALL of the other endocrine glands, the pineal gland secretes the hormone **melatonin**. Melatonin is stimulated by Darkness (we create more in darkness) and inhibited by Light (daylight slows its production) and it regulates our sleep-wake cycle via the degree of light coming through the retina of the eyes.
- Some texts refer to the pituitary gland being linked to Ajna chakra and the pineal to Sahasrara. Other texts refer to them both being closely linked and inevitably both involved. Yogic, occult teachings and common folklore all say that the pineal gland is the psychic centre.

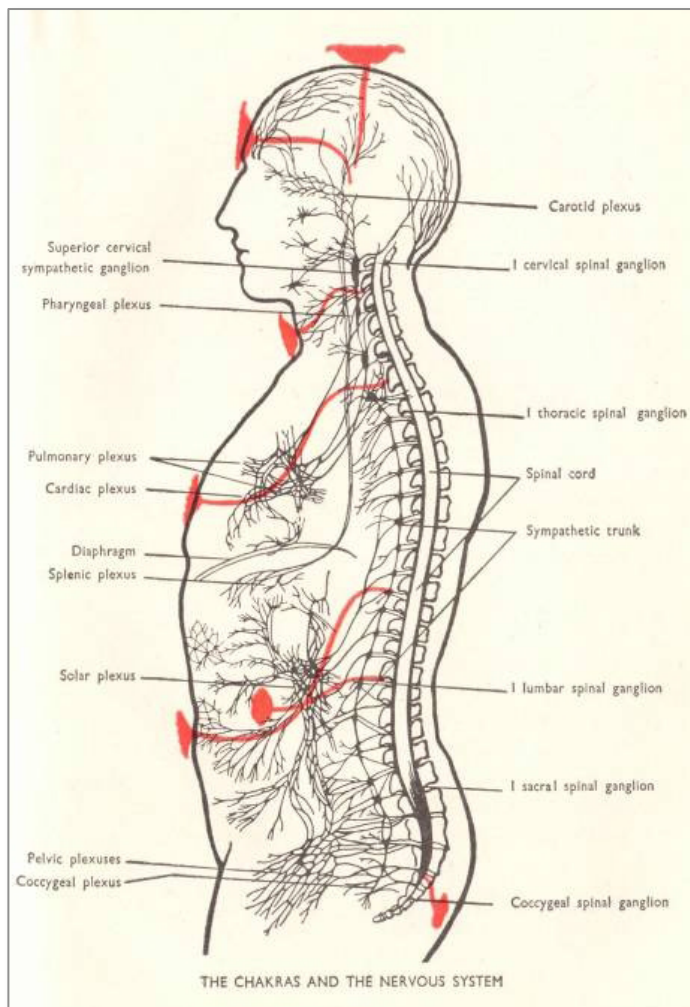
**The BBB is semi-permeable; that is, it allows some materials to cross, but prevents others from crossing. In most parts of the body, the smallest blood vessels, called capillaries, are lined with endothelial cells. Endothelial tissue has small spaces between each individual cell so substances can move readily between the inside and the outside of the vessel. However, in the brain, the endothelial cells fit tightly together and substances cannot pass out of the bloodstream. Some molecules, such as glucose, are transported out of the blood by special methods.

The BBB has several important functions:

- **Protects the brain from "foreign substances"** in the blood that may injure the brain.
- **Protects the brain from hormones and neurotransmitters** in the rest of the body.
- **Maintains a constant environment** for the brain

Chakra	Gland	Secretion	Governing	Higher concepts
Muladhara	Adrenals	Epinephrine	Actions	How we behave and interact with others and ourselves
Swadhistana	Gonads	Oestrogen / Testosterone	Sexual development	Creating and nurturing life and ideas. Partnerships and relationships
Manipura	Pancreas	Insulin	Digestion	How we consume (food or material things) How we preserve
Anahata	Thymus	Lymphocytes	Immunity	How we protect and sustain
Vishuddhi	Thyroid	Thyroxine	Metabolism	The means by which we use and direct our energy
Ajna	Pituitary	Somatrophin	Growth	How we expand and develop
Sahasrara	Pineal	Melatonin	Body Rhythm	How we flow with the energy rhythm within our bodies and with the energy in the environment around us

Chakras and the Nervous System



The nervous system is the highway along which your brain sends and receives information about what is happening in the body and around it. This highway is made up of billions of nerve cells, or neurons which join together to make nerves.

A nerve plexus is a system of connected nerve fibers that link spinal nerves with specific areas of the body. Fibers in a plexus connect the spinal cord and the body by grouping themselves into one larger nerve.

The main function of a nerve plexus is to ensure that all areas of the body are innervated, thereby equipping each region with the ability to send and receive messages from the peripheral nervous system. The different plexuses are charged with innervating different portions of the body and help to control the functions unique to each portion.

Root Chakra & Coccygeal Plexus

The coccygeal nerve supplies nerves to a limited area near the coccyx bone. Rooted in this nerve is the coccygeal nerve. This important nerve transmits sensation to and from the skin over the coccyx area.

Sacral Chakra & Sacral Plexus

The sacral plexus sends nerves to and from the buttocks, feet, and pelvis. One of the main responsibilities of this plexus is the transmission of sensory and motor stimuli from the spinal cord. The lumbar plexus serves a number of the same areas including the calves and the thighs. Given its relationship with the lumbar plexus, both regions are sometimes lumped together under the term lumbosacral plexus.

Naval Chakra and the Solar Plexus

One of the most important nerve plexuses in the body is the solar plexus, sometimes known as the coeliac plexus. This region innervates the body's internal organs. A number of the areas served by the solar plexus include the stomach, pancreas, and specific areas of the heart. The widely-radiating incoming and outgoing nerves of this area, linking the two coeliac ganglia, are likened to the sun's rays.

Heart Chakra and the Cardiac Plexus

The cardiac plexus provides a connection to the central nervous system, as part of the heart's conduction system. Branches end near the sinoatrial node, which provide electrical pulses to control heart rhythm, and the atrioventricular node that serves as an electrical link between the heart's atria and ventricles.

Parts of the cardiac plexus are usually connected to spinal nerves that transmit pain. Researchers believe that these connections between the plexus and the nerves of the chest, arm, and neck may be why heart problems can cause pain in these areas.

Throat Chakra and the Cervical Plexus

The cervical plexus gives rise to numerous branches which supply structures in the head and neck. They can broadly be divided into two groups – muscular branches and sensory branches.

The muscular branches of the cervical plexus are located deep to the sensory branches. They supply some of the muscles of the neck, back and the diaphragm. The cutaneous branches of the cervical plexus supply the skin of the neck, upper thorax, scalp and ear.

The Third Eye Chakra and the Carotid Plexus

The carotid plexus is a network of nerves on the common carotid artery, supplying sympathetic fibers to the head and the neck, with branches that accompany the cranial blood vessels. The common carotid plexus is formed by the internal and external carotid plexuses and by the cervical ganglia of the sympathetic system.

The Crown Chakra the Brain

The Crown chakra connects into the brain, the central computer that controls all of the bodily functions. The brain is truly extraordinary and the more we learn about it the more it continues to impress. Did you know that inside the brain there are 100 billion individual brain cells called neurons, and each neuron makes 1000 different connections with its neighbours and other areas of the brain? The brain makes 10,000 trillion calculations per second and you have 70,000 thoughts per day. Now that's amazing. It's no wonder that this part of the body is believed to be connected to universal consciousness!

Chakras mapped in the Brain

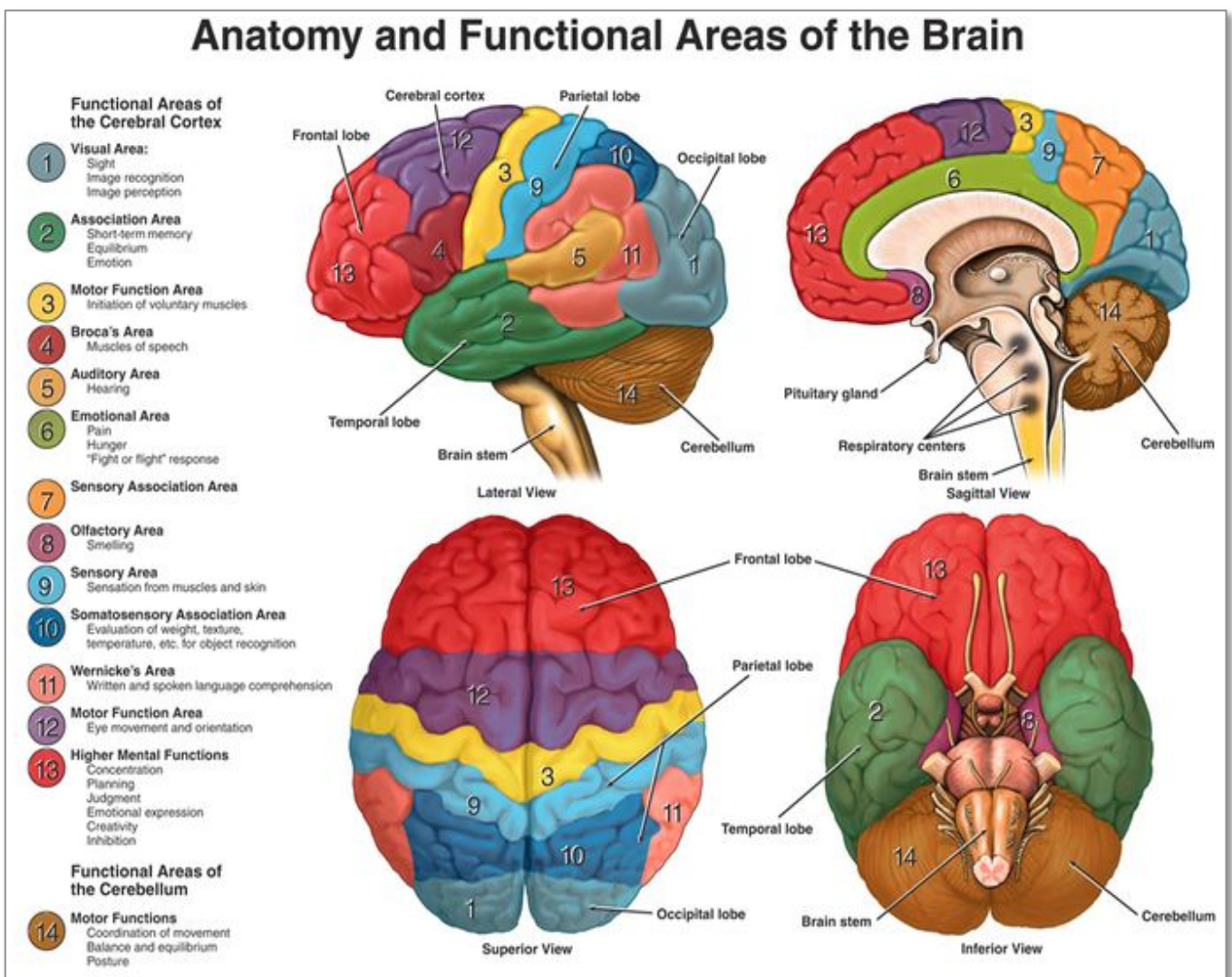
Perhaps modern science hasn't found the chakras because they have not been looking in the right place. In the book 'The Body has a Mind of its own', the authors traced the history of 'body maps' from the time of the neuroscientist Alfred Penfield. According to the book, Penfield successfully identified the functions of specific parts of the brain that run our bodies. He called this body map the homunculus which translates as 'little man' in Latin.

The advancement of neuroscience has led to the discovery of more body maps within the brain. Now more than ever, we are seeing the body is a mirror of 'the little man' on the top floor, the one inside the skull.

We now know which part of the brain thinks of certain things – during brain scans different parts of the brain light up when we think of food, sex, religion or the next door neighbor.

If we were to overlay a diagram of the chakras on the human brain we will find a surprising match. It is though the chakras are running down a little man crouched in the fetal position inside our skulls. The amazing coincidence is,

not only are the parts of the brain consistent with the thought processes of the chakra groupings, they are also the exact anatomical equivalents of the human body.



Crown Chakra and the Prefrontal Cortex

The **pre-frontal cortex**, a feature of the human brain more developed than our ape cousins is the command centre. Many studies have shown that higher states of concentration, free will, feelings of 'oneness' and altruism are found in this region. If the brain was the little man crouching inside our skulls, the pre-frontal cortex is the crown of the brain, the way our crown is the crown of our head. It is located however, on the forehead, not on the crown.

Third Eye Chakra and the frontal brain

Next to the pre-frontal cortex is the rest of the **frontal brain**. Divided into 2 hemispheres, the left and the right each govern visual and verbal inputs. They gather this information from the ears and eyes. Working with the lobes, sound and sight perception of the outside world negotiate within a thin membrane between the hemispheres known as the '**corpus callosum**'. The **Pineal gland** that lies right below it has been linked to visions and 'third eye' experiences. It is here that the Ida (Female, left side of body) and Pingala (Male, right side of body) nadis unite paralleling the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

Throat Chakra and Broca's / Wernick's areas

Broca's area is a small part of the frontal brain, right below the frontal eye field. It is the region of the brain that helps us produce speech. It works with **Wernick's area** (at the bottom of the parietal lobe) to produce and decode language. These parts of the brain link in to the throat chakra's association with communication and expression.

Heart Chakra and the Hypothalamus

Beyond Broca's area, deep in the medial brain is the thalamus region where the **hypothalamus** lives. The hypothalamus is like the heart of the brain. It is responsible for the circulation of hormones the way the heart circulates the blood around the body. This area of the brain connects all parts, the front with the bottom, the left with the right. It is a major enabler of deliberate movement and is the thermostat of the brain. It is also said to be responsible for the generation of emotions.

Navel Chakra and the Parietal, Occipital and Temporal Lobes

Below the medial brain there are **3 lobes, Parietal, Occipital and Temporal**. This area works with the limbic system which in amongst other things, mediates emotions and memory. These lobes enable the sensation of space and time and help us to interpret reality, and thus effect our perception of things. With emotional, spacial and memory association influencing action, you know where and who you are in relation to the world.

In the human brain the amygdala is found within the Temporal lobe. The amygdala is where fight / flight responses are decided.

Sacral Chakra and the Cerebellum

Below the lobes, and separated from the cerebrum is the **cerebellum**, also known as the '**reptilian brain**'. It is responsible for the desire for social dominance and lust. The Pons connects the 2 halves of the cerebellum the way the thalamus region connects the hemispheres. It is mainly responsible for self-protection and the meeting of bodily needs. The second chakra is where primal energy is

derived from. The primitive brain is in charge of body memory. Activities such as driving, riding a bike, playing the piano etc become an automatic in this part of the brain. Perhaps when altruism and forward thinking become an automatic program in your brain, this can help with the awakening of Kundalini energy which is a primal powerful force that resides in this chakra.

Root Chakra and the Brain Stem

The last part of the brain is the part that connects it to the spinal column. The **brain stem** regulates involuntary functions of the brain that keep itself and the body going. It is also in charge of the sleep / wake cycles, breathing and excretion. All of these functions are very basic but very necessary functions that allow us to function on a day-to-day basis.

Chakras and bodily maps of emotions

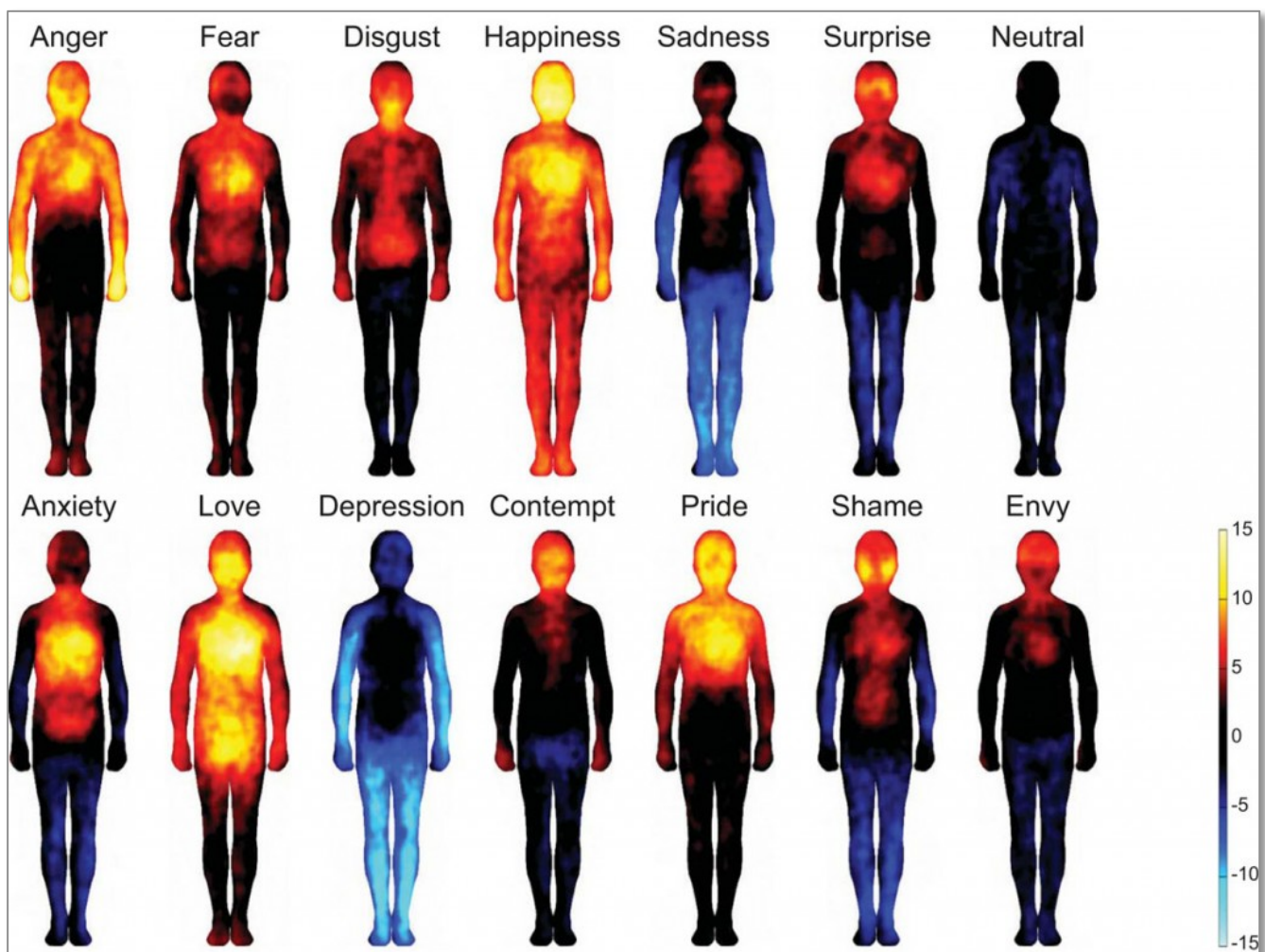
What are emotions? Emotions have been described as an affective state of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear etc is experienced, as opposed to cognitive or volitional states of consciousness.

They have also been described as being a bridge between thought, feeling and action, operating in every part of a person and affecting many aspects of a person.

Emotions can be quite complex to decipher, to make sense of and to manage, but if we are able to connect to their physical presentation as energy in the body, it may help us to understand them better.

Researchers have long known that emotions are connected to a range of physiological changes but **new research** published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2014* reveals that **emotional states are universally associated with certain bodily sensations, regardless of individuals' culture or language.**

More than 700 participants in Finland, Sweden and Taiwan participated in experiments aimed at mapping their bodily sensations in connection with specific emotions. Participants viewed emotion-laden words, videos, facial expressions and stories. They then self-reported areas of their bodies that felt different than before they'd viewed the material. By coloring in two computer-generated silhouettes — one to note areas of increased bodily sensation and the second to mark areas of decreased sensation — participants were able to provide researchers with a broad base of data showing both positive and negative bodily responses to different emotions.



NB: Yellow shows regions of increased sensation while blue areas represent decreased feeling in these composite images.
Image courtesy of Lauri Nummenmaa, Enrico Glerean, Riitta Hari, and Jari Hietanen.

The findings enhance researchers' understanding of how we process emotions. Despite differences in culture and language, it appears our physical experience of feelings is remarkably consistent across different populations. The researchers believe that further development of these bodily sensation maps may one day result in a new way of identifying and treating emotional disorders.

I think this research is incredibly interesting, especially when we overlay the understanding of the chakra system and the link between where different emotions are held within the chakra centres.

Biography Becomes Biology

According to energy medicine, we are all living history books. Our bodies contain our histories – every chapter and every verse of every event and relationship in our lives. As our lives unfold, our biological health becomes living, breathing biographical statement that conveys our strengths, weaknesses and fears.

Every thought you have had has traveled through your biological system and activated a physiological response. Some thoughts are like depth charges, causing a reaction throughout the body. A fear, for instance, activates every system of your body...your stomach tightens, your heart rate increases, and you make break into a sweat. A loving thought can relax your whole body. Some thoughts are more subtle and still others are unconscious. Many are meaningless and pass through the body like wind through a screen, requiring no conscious attention, and their influence upon our health is minimal. Yet each conscious thought – and many unconscious ones – does generate a physiological response.

All our thoughts, regardless of their content, first enter our systems as energy. Those that carry emotional, mental, psychological or spiritual energy produce biological responses that are then stored in our cellular memory. In this way our biographies are woven into our biological systems, gradually, slowly, every day.

It is very easy to learn something new and only apply that knowledge only casually. The idea that biography become biology implies that we participate to some degree in the creation of illness. But – and this is a crucial point – we must not abuse this truth by blaming ourselves (or any patients) for becoming ill. People rarely choose consciously to create an illness. Rather, illnesses develop as a consequence of behavioural patterns and attitudes that we do not realize are biologically toxic until they have already become so. Only when illness forces us to review our attitudes do we come close to comprehending that our day-to-day fearful or bitter attitudes, are in fact, biologically negative substances.

Again, we all have negative feelings, but not all negativity produces disease. To create disease, negative emotions have to be dominant, and what accelerates the process is *knowing* the thought to be toxic but giving it permission to thrive in your consciousness anyway.

Energy is power, and transmitting energy into the past by dwelling on painful events drains power from your present-day body and can lead to illness. Power is essential for healing and for maintaining health.

Excepts takes from 'Anatomy of Spirit' by Caroline Myss.

Bringing it all together

Chakra	Endocrine system	Nervous System	Brain Area	Associated Body Parts	Bodily Systems	Bodily Sense	Physiological dysfunctions
Muladhara	Adrenals	Coccygeal Plexus / Sciatic Plexus	Brain Stem	Base of spine (chi / life force), legs, feet, teeth, bones, rectum, bladder, prostate, blood circulation	Elimination, Lymph	Smell	Chronic lower back pain, sciatica, varicose veins, rectal tumors / cancer, depression, immune-related disorders
Swadhistana	Gonads	Sacral Plexus	Cerebellum	Sexual organs, womb, large intestine, lower vertebrae, pelvis, appendix, bladder, hips	Reproduction, Assimilation	Taste	Chronic lower back pain, sciatica, ob/gyn problems, pelvic / lower back pain, sexual potency, urinary problems
Manipura	Pancreas	Solar Plexus	Parietal, Occipital and Temporal Lobes	Abdomen, stomach, upper intestines, liver, gallbladder, adrenal glands, spleen, middle spine	Digestion, Muscles	Vision	Arthritis, gastric or duodenal ulcers, colon, /intestinal problems, pancreatitis/diabetes, indigestion (chronic /acute), anorexia / bulimia, liver dysfunction, hepatitis, adrenal dysfunction
Anahata	Thymus	Cardiac Plexus	Hypothalamus	Heart, lungs, shoulders, arms, ribs, breasts, diaphragm	Immune, Respiration, Circulation	Touch	Congestive heart failure, heart attack, mitral valve prolapse, cardiomegaly, asthma, allergy, lung cancer, bronchial pneumonia, upper back, shoulder problems, breast cancer, high blood pressure,
Vishuddhi	Thyroid / parathyroid	Cervical Plexus	Broca's / Wernick's area	Throat, trachea, neck vertebrae, mouth, teeth, gums, esophagus	Metabolism	Hearing	Raspy throat, chronic sore throat, mouth ulcers, gum problems, jaw joint problems, scoliosis, laryngitis, swollen glands near throat, thyroid problems, flu, fevers
Ajna	Pituitary	Carotid Plexus	Frontal brain	Eyes, ears, nose, sinus, brain	Endocrine	Intuition	Brain tumour / hemorrhage/ stroke, neurological disturbances, blindness, deafness, full spinal difficulties, learning disabilities, seizures, sleep disorders, headaches
Sahasrara	Pineal	Brain	Pre-frontal cortex	Skin, skeletal & muscular system	Nervous	ESP	Energetic disorders, mystical depression, chronic exhaustion that is not linked to a physical disorder, extreme sensitivities to light, sound and other environmental factors

Chakra	Energy Connection to Emotional & Mental Body	Symbolic / Perceptual Connection	Primary Fears	Primary Strengths
Muladhara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This energy centre is the foundation of emotional & mental health - Emotional and psychological stability originate in the family unit / early social environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for logic, order and structure - Orientation in time and space as experienced through the 5 senses - Sense of safety and connection to our physical world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical survival - Abandonment by group - Lack of physical order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tribal / family identity - Honour, justice, support, loyalty - Safety, connection to the physical world
Swadhistana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for relationships with other people - Need to control to some extent the dynamics of our external environment - All the attachments by which we maintain control over external lives eg: position of authority, control over other people, money etc are linked to this chakra - The energy here is essentially DUALITY. The unified energy of the first chakra (represented by the tribal mind) becomes divided into polarities here. - Duality is always challenging us to make choices, managing the power of choice with its creative and spiritual implications is the essence of human experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energy here helps to generate a sense of personal identity - We continually assess our personal strength in relation to the external world and its physically seductive forces such as sex, money, addictive substances, other people - Physical power is felt to come from having material things, authority and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of control or being controlled by others - Fear of loss of power of the physical body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability and stamina to survive financially & physically on one's own - Ability to take risks - Resilience to recover from loss
Manipura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person power centre, self esteem - Magnetic core of personality - Going out into the world and putting our needs and desires into action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our gravitational centre is partly internalised v's the base chakra which is external and v's sacral chakra focuses on relationships - Its about how we relate to and understand ourselves - Creating an identity apart from our tribal self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear of rejection, criticism, not meeting one's responsibilities - Fears related to physical appearance (eg baldness, obesity, age) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-esteem, self respect, self discipline, strength of character - Ambition, courage - Ability to generate action - Ability to handle a crisis
Anahata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional perceptions which determine the quality of our lives far more than the mention perceptions - As children we react to our circumstance with a range of emotions, as adults we are challenged to generate emotional steadiness from which to act consciously and with compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Letting go / releasing emotional pain - Accepting - Embracing the healing energy of forgiveness, release our lesser need for human self-determined justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear of loneliness, commitment (leading to jealous, bitterness, hatred) - Fear of not being able to protect ourselves emotionally - Inability to forgive oneself and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - love, forgiveness, compassion, dedication, inspiration, hope, trust - The ability to heal oneself and others
Vishuddhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resonates to numerous emotional and mental struggles involved in understanding the nature of the power of choice. - Learning to make choices that build our sense of truth and develop the purity of our values - Need to be heard, to be able to communicate freely, to express emotions and thoughts to ourselves and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Truth - Purity - Willpower to align ourselves to our true self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facing the truth (and its consequences) when confronted with a reality we may not like - Not being heard, not being understood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faith in self knowledge and personal authority - Conviction to stand for what is true and right
Ajna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links to our intelligence and psychological characteristics (what we know, believe, personal experience and memories) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links to wisdom – which we acquire from life experience and discriminating perceptual ability of detachment - A state of mind beyond the influences of the personal mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwillingness to look within and dig up one's fears / shadow side - Fear of relying on external counsel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intellectual abilities and skill - Conscious and unconscious insights - Great acts of creativity, emotional intelligence & intuitive reasoning

Sources and Resources:

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to the wisdom of the following Yogis and their work for inspiring us to offer this e-book and e-course

Energy Centres of Transformation, Harish Johari

The Chakra Bible, Patricia Mercier

The Chakras – A Monograph, CW Leadbeater

The Anatomy of Spirit, Caroline Myss

Bodily Mapping of Emotions, Lauri Nummenmaa, Enrico Glereana, Riitta Harib, and Jari K. Hietanen, PNAS, January 14, 2014

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Chakra Meditation, Swami Saradananda

Sacred Earth Celebrations, Glennie Kindred

Healing Mantras, Thomas Ashley-Ferrand

Chakra Mantras, Thomas Ashley-Ferrand

Chakras – Wheel of Life, Anodea Judith

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