

[The Chakras](#)

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WHAT IS HINDUISM?

The Chakras

Exploring the 14 mystical forces that govern awareness

There are fourteen great nerve centers in the physical body, in the astral body and in the body of the soul. These centers are called chakras in Sanskrit, which means "wheel." These spinning vortices of energy are actually regions of mind power, each one governing certain aspects of our inner being, and together they are the subtle components of people. When inwardly perceived, they are vividly colorful and can be heard. In fact, they are quite noisy. When awareness flows through any one or more of these regions, the various functions of consciousness operate, such as memory, reason and willpower. The physical body has a connection to each of the seven higher chakras through plexuses of nerves along the spinal cord and in the cranium. As the kundalini force of awareness travels along the spine, it enters each of these chakras, energizing them and awakening in turn each function. By examining the functions of these great force centers, we can clearly cognize our own position on the spiritual path and better understand our fellow man.

In any one lifetime, one may predominantly be aware in two or three centers, thus setting the pattern for the way one thinks and lives. One develops a comprehension of these

seven regions in a natural sequence, the perfection of one leading logically to the next. Thus, though we may not psychically be seeing spinning forces within ourself, we nevertheless mature through memory, reason, willpower, cognition, universal love, divine sight and spiritual illumination.

There are six chakras above the muladhara, which is located at the base of the spine. When awareness is flowing through these chakras, consciousness is in the higher nature. There are also seven chakras below the muladhara, and when awareness is flowing through them, consciousness is in the lower nature. The lower chakras are located between the coccyx and the heels. In this age, the Kali Yuga, most people live in the consciousness of the seven force centers below the muladhara. Their beliefs and attitudes strongly reflect the animal nature, the instinctive mind. Thus, the muladhara chakra, the divine seat of Lord Ganesha, is the dividing point between the lower nature and the higher. It is the beginning of religion for everyone, entered when consciousness arrives out of the realms below Lord Ganesha's holy feet. Through personal sadhana, prayer, meditation, right thought, speech and action and love of God, we lift our own consciousness and that of others into the chakras above the muladhara, bringing the mind into the higher nature.

The functions of the chakras are aspects of our being that we use every day. In the same way, we use our arms and hands everyday without thinking. Yet, if we study the physiology of the hands, we encounter layer after layer of intricate interrelationships of tissues, cells, plasma. We examine the engineering of the structural system of bones and joints, the energy transmission of the muscular system, the biochemistry of growth and healing, the biophysics of nerve action and reaction. Suddenly a simple and natural part of human life

seems complex. Similarly, we use the various functions of consciousness, the chakras, every day without even thinking about them.

The chakras do not awaken. They are already awakened in everyone. It only seems as if they awaken as we become aware of flowing our energy through them, because energy, willpower and awareness are one and the same thing. To become conscious of the core of energy itself, all we have to do is detach awareness from the realms of reason, memory and aggressive, intellectual will; then turning inward, we move from one chakra to another. The physical body changes as these more refined energies flow through it. And the inner nerve conduits, nadis, inwardly become stronger.

It may help, as we examine each of these centers individually, to visualize ourselves as a seven-storied building, with each story being one of the chakras. Awareness travels up and down in the elevator, and as it goes higher and higher, it gains a progressively broader, more comprehensive and beautiful vista. Reaching the top floor, it views the panorama below with total understanding, not only of the landscape below, but also of the relation of the building to other buildings and of each floor to the next. Venturing below the muladhara, we enter the basement levels of consciousness.

Planetary patterns: During each predominant age throughout history, one or another of the chakras has come into power. When the Greek God Cronus, the God of time, was worshiped, the mass consciousness came into memory--the muladhara chakra--with its new-found concern for time, for a past and a future, dates and records. Next the mass consciousness came into the svadhishthana and its powers of reason. Reason was a God in the Golden Age of Greece. Discourse, debate and logic all became instruments of power and influence. If it was not reasonable, it was not true. Next

the chakra of will came into power. Man conquered nations, waged wars, developed efficient weapons. Crusades were fought and kingdoms established. Our world was experiencing force over force. Direct cognition, the anahata chakra, came when man opened the doors of science within his own mind. He cognized the laws of the physical universe: mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy and biology. Then he unfolded the mind sciences by looking into his subconscious mind, into the chakras where he had previously been. With man's look into his own mind, psychology, metaphysics and the mind-religions were born.

Now, in our present time, the mass consciousness is coming into vishuddha--the forces of universal love. The forerunners of this emerging Sat Yuga, popularly called the New Age, are not worshiping reason as the great thing of the mind or trying to take over another's possessions through the use of force. They are not worshiping science or psychology or the mind religions as the great panacea. They are looking inward and worshiping the light, the Divinity, within their own body, within their own spine, within their own head, and they are going inward into a deep spiritual quest which is based on direct experience, on compassion for all things in creation.

As the forces of the vishuddha chakra come into prominence in the New Age, it does not mean that the other centers of consciousness have stopped working. But this new one coming into prominence is claiming the energy within the mass consciousness. When the center of divine love gains a little more power, everything will come into a beautiful balance. There will be a natural hierarchy of people based on the awakening of their soul, just as previous ages established hierarchies founded on power or intellectual acumen. With that one needed balance, everything on the Earth will quiet down, because the vishuddha chakra is of the new age of universal

love, in which everyone sees eye to eye, and if they do not, there will always be someone there to be the peacemaker. Look back through history and you will see how these planetary influences, these great mind strata of thought, have molded history and people.

Personal patterns: The same cyclical pattern of development in human history is evident even more clearly in the growth of the individual. In the seven cycles of a person's life, beginning at the time of birth, awareness automatically flows through one of these chakras and then the next one, and then the next, provided a pure life is lived, following Sanatana Dharma under the guidance of a satguru. Each one experiences the chakras somewhat differently, depending upon the amount of kundalini force [see page 36] that is released. Non-religious people, who have a minimal amount of kundalini released, may experience the chakra only in its physical and emotional manifestation. Those who perform sadhana will experience the chakras in a much deeper way. Yogis performing tapas, serious austerities, would likely experience each chakra in the depths of their soul body.

In reality, most people never make it into the higher four chakras, but instead regress back time and again into the chakras of reason, instinctive will, memory, anger, fear and jealousy. Nevertheless, the natural, ideal pattern is as follows. From one to seven years of age, one is in the muladhara chakra learning the basics of movement, language and society. The patterns of the subconscious are established primarily in these early years. From seven to fourteen one is in the svadhishthana chakra. One reasons, questions and refines the ability to think for oneself. Between fourteen and twenty-one, one comes into willpower. The personality gets strong. Likes and dislikes solidify. Generally, about this time one wants to run away from home and express oneself. From

twenty-one to twenty-eight one begins realizing responsibilities and gaining a new perspective of themselves and the world. Theoretically, one should be in anahata, the chakra of cognition, but a lot of people never make it.

If awareness is mature and full, however, having incarnated many, many times, one goes on at twenty-one to twenty-eight into the anahata chakra. Here we begin to understand "what it's all about." We comprehend our fellow men and women, their relationships, the world around us. We seek inwardly for more profound insight. This chakra is stabilized and smoothly spinning once one has raised one's family and performed one's social duty, and though one may yet continue in business, one would find the energies withdrawing naturally into the chest. It is most often the renunciate, the mathavasi, the sannyasin, who from twenty-eight to thirty-five or before, depending on the strictness of his satguru, comes into the vishuddha chakra, into inner light experiences, assuming a spiritual responsibility for himself and for others. This awakening soul appreciates people, loves them. His heart and mind broadly encompass all of humanity. He is less interested in what people do and more in what they are. It is here that, having withdrawn from the world, the world begins to renounce him. Then, from thirty-five to forty-two or before, he perfects his sadhanas and lives in the ajna chakra, experiencing the body of the soul, that body of light, awareness traveling within naturally at that time, withdrawing from mundane matters of the conscious mind. From forty-two through forty-nine he is getting established in the sahasrara chakra in a very natural way, having met all of the responsibilities through life.

Esoterically, there are seven more chakras above and within the sahasrara. Agamic Hindu tradition cites them as seven divisions of Paranada, inner sound. They are, from highest to lowest: Unmana, Samana, Anasrita, Anatha, Ananta,

Vyomanga and Vyapini. These chakras are a conglomerate of nadis that slowly develop as a result of consistent and repetitive Self-Realization experiences.

The Seven Chakras of Higher Consciousness

Below we present a condensed overview of each of the seven principal chakras, followed by the seven chakras below the muladhara. For more details, and to see also how chakras correlate to the physical body, refer this month's gatefold, pages 3-5.

The muladhara: The memory center, muladhara, located at the base of the spine, creates a consciousness of time through the powers of memory. Whenever we go back in our memory patterns, we are using the forces of the muladhara. It has four petals or aspects, one of which governs memories of past lives. The other three contain the compiled memory patterns and interrelated karmas of this life. This chakra is associated also with human qualities of individuality, egoism, physicality (including sexuality), materialism and dominance. A person lives predominantly in this chakra during the first seven years of life, acquiring language skills, relationships and cultural ways.

Svadhishthana: Once the ability to remember has been established, the natural consequence is reason, and from reason evolves the intellect. Reason is the manipulation of memorized information. We categorize it, edit it, rearrange it and store the results. People in this six-petaled chakra research, explore and wonder, "Why? Why? Why?" They propose theories and formulate rational explanations. They often form a rigid intellectual mind based upon opinionated knowledge and accumulated memory, reinforced by habit patterns of the instinctive mind. It is in this chakra that the

majority of people live, think, worry and travel on the astral plane. We open naturally into this chakra between ages 8 and 14. This center controls the muladhara, as does each progressively higher chakra control those that lie below it.

Manipura: The third chakra is represented in the central nervous system by the solar plexus, where all nerves merge to form the "second brain." Of its ten petals, five face up and five down. Correspondingly, depending on how the energy is flowing, the forces of willpower from this chakra add power either to worldly consciousness through the first two centers or to spiritual consciousness through the fourth and fifth centers. When awareness is confined to the realms of memory, reason and aggressive willpower, men and women are instinctive in nature. They are quick to react and retaliate, quick to have their feelings hurt and quick to pursue the conquest of others while fearing their own defeat. In these states of mind, the ego rises to its greatest prominence, and emotional experiences are extremely intense. Young adults from 14 to 21 discover willpower, willfulness and individuality as this chakra unfolds.

Anahata: The center of perception and insight is often referred to as "the lotus of the heart." Its 12 "petals" imply that cognition can be expressed in twelve distinct ways or through as many masks or personae. People abiding here are generally well-balanced, content and self-contained. Even when in day-to-day life they become involved in the seemingly fractured parts, they are able to look through it all and understand. They have a deep understanding of human nature, which brings effortless tolerance and an innate ability to help others, to resolve conflicts and confusions. Between ages 21 and 28, perceptions deepen and understanding matures for those who enter this chakra. Many people regress back into reason and memory. But, if awareness is mature,

having incarnated many times, and well-trained all through youth, the soul proceeds smoothly into anahata consciousness.

Vishuddha: Universal or divine love is the faculty expressed by the vishuddha chakra. Whenever people feel filled with inexpressible love for and kinship with all mankind, all creatures large and small, they are vibrating within the sixteen-petaled vishuddha. When deeply immersed in this state, there is no consciousness of being a person with emotions, no consciousness of thoughts. One is just being the light or being fully aware of oneself as radiant force flowing through all form. One may sometimes see light throughout the entirety of the body. The exceptional soul who resides fully in this center, usually between the ages of 28 and 35, is able for the first time to withdraw awareness totally into the spine, into sushumna, the central spiritual current. Ultimately, he realizes that the inner being is the reality of himself.

Ajna: The sixth force center is called ajna. It is the "third eye," the center of divine sight and direct cognition. Of its two "petals" or facets, one is the ability to look into the lower worlds or states of mind and the other is the perception of the higher worlds, or spiritual states, of consciousness. It, therefore, is the connecting link, allowing the awakened soul to relate the highest consciousness to the lowest in a unified vision. We open naturally into this chakra between ages 35 and 42.

Sahasrara: The seventh center at the top of the head is called the crown chakra. According to the ancient mystics, it governs 1,008 aspects or attributes of the soul body. These personae are transparent, a crystal-clear white light, ever present, shining through the circumference of the golden soul body. Here the soul dissolves even blissful visions of light and is immersed in pure space, pure awareness, pure being. Within

the sahasrara is the brahmarandhra, or "door of God," an aperture in the sushumna nadi through which the kundalini exits the body, catapulting the mind beyond and into nirvikalpa samadhi, and the truly pure spirit escapes the body at death. We open naturally into the crown chakra between ages 42 and 49.

Often when people get older, if they have not learned to sustain consciousness in the higher chakras, they start to drop in consciousness, returning to reason and trying to understand why all the things that happened to them in their lifetime happened as they did. They get stuck in the muladhara and spend years just remembering the past, reliving old experiences, good and bad alike. But more mature souls rightly fulfill life's two final stages: senior advisor and religious solitaire. They utilize their golden years to manifest higher-chakra faculties of love, light, inner vision and God Realization through service, sadhana, pilgrimage, worship and meditation.

The Seven Sub-Muladhara Regions

Atala: The first lower chakra, located in the hips, governs the state of mind called fear, which is truly a bottomless abyss. Someone in this consciousness fears death, fears life, even fears God and other people. This center is also the home of lust and promiscuity.

Vitala: Here anger predominates, and burning resentment. Anger comes from despair, confusion, frustration or lack of understanding. People in the consciousness of this chakra, centered in the thighs, are always wrathful, mad at the world, even angry at God.

Sutala: This chakra, found in the knees, governs jealousy, wanting what one can't have. Jealousy is a feeling of inadequacy, inferiority and helplessness. People in sutala

consciousness covet everything, often deny the existence of God and are contentiously combative.

Talatala: Prolonged confusion dominates here, giving rise to instinctive willfulness: to get rather than give, to push others around and pursue materialistic advancement over all else. Greed and deceit prevail in this dog-eat-dog state of mind, centered in the calves.

Rasatala: This chakra of the ankles is the true home of the animal nature. Unmitigated selfishness prevails, of seeing to the well-being of "number one" first. The suffering of others is of no concern. Jealousy, anger and fear are intense, even high, states of consciousness.

Mahatala: This is the realm of consciencelessness, or inner blindness to the effect of one's actions, of negativity and deep depression. Those living in this chakra of the feet steal freely, taking what they justify as theirs anyway, feeling that the world "owes them a living."

Patala: Here, in the soles of the feet, is the abode of destructiveness, revenge, murder for the sake of murder, torture and hatred expressed through harming the properties, minds, emotions and bodies of others. Hatred and scorn abide here. Malice reigns supreme. Reason seldom reaches this state of mind.

This is the story of our evolution through the mind--from the gross to the refined, from darkness into light, from a consciousness of death to immortality. We follow a natural pattern that is built right in the nerve system itself: memory; reason; will; direct cognition; inner light perceptions of the soul which give a universal love of all mankind; psychic perceptions through divine sight; and the heavenly refinement of being in the thousand-petaled lotus.

Recommended Resources: Tools for Tantra and Chakras: Energy Centers of Transformation, by Harish Johari, Inner Traditions International, Ltd., Rochester, Vermont 05767 USA; Theories of the Chakras: Bridge to Higher Consciousness, by Hiroshi Motoyama, and The Chakras, by C.W. Leadbeater, Theosophical Publishing House, 306 West Geneva Road, Wheaton, Illinois 60187 USA; The Chakra Handbook, by Shalila Sharamon and Bodo J. Baginski, Lotus Light, PO Box 2, Wilmot, Wisconsin 53129 USA