

Introduction to the Chakra System

What are chakras?

Over the last three thousand years, sages, philosophers and mystics have described the subtle energies in our environment and within our bodies in many different ways. Several systems have developed from different philosophical backgrounds. However it was noticed that wherever dynamic energies meet together in nature they form spinning circular patterns, or vortices. The Vedic seers of ancient India also perceived similar energy vortices within the energy of the human body. Wherever two or more channels of subtle energy met, there was a vortex, which they named “chakra”, meaning wheel.

Where major energy flows coincided on the midline of the body in the front of the spinal column, there the seers of India saw seven main chakras that seemed to mirror both health and spiritual wellbeing. These seven chakras were like multi-dimensional gateways that would allow the individual to access different experiences and states of consciousness. The use of visualisation, sound, chant, meditation and exercise to activate, cleanse and integrate these seven chakras became an important part of spiritual practice especially in the Himalayan regions of India, Nepal and Tibet.

Many of the original Vedic texts discuss the development of psychic skills and supernatural powers as a natural result of the spiritual exercises. Translations emphasised the development of the higher chakras echoing the desire to go beyond or escape from the bonds of the physical world. This false division into lower, mundane and higher, spiritual chakras misses the continually reiterated point in the original texts that ALL chakras are of equal practical value both in everyday life and in spiritual development.

Chakra Imagery

Whatever their correlation to physical structures within the body, chakras are entirely non-physical. It is the mind rather than the sense organs that is the traditional tool for accessing and exploring the energy of each chakra. The main features of each chakra are described as in the original texts in the same order as a meditator would mentally construct the necessary visualisation. Each image includes a god and goddess whose form and attributes encapsulate the inherent qualities that arise when the chakra is functioning in a balanced way.

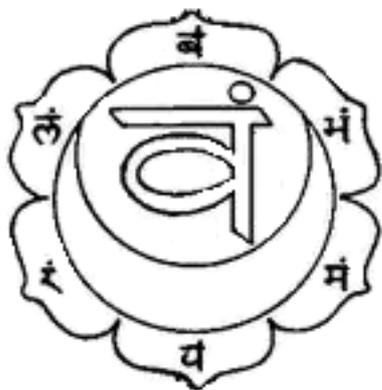


The Root Chakra

Named ‘Muladhara’ – meaning foundation, it has four vermillion petals around a yellow square. This represents the element of Earth and the four directions, north, south, east and west. Within the square is a downward pointing red triangle. The animal form representing the base chakra is a seven trunked elephant. This is shows solidity and assuredness. On the elephant’s back rests the bija (seed) mantra – the sound that stimulates the energy of this

chakra: Lam (pronounced with a short ‘a’ and a nasal ‘ng’ sound, rhyming with ‘nun’).

The Sacral Chakra



Called ‘Svadhista’, meaning sweetness, this chakra has six red petals around a crescent moon of light blue, representing the Water element. The animal is a crocodile – the sensuous, watery and deceptively strong energy of this chakra. On the crocodile rests the bija mantra : Vam. (short ‘a’, nasal ‘ng’).

The Solar Plexus Chakra



This chakra is called ‘Manipura’, meaning ‘city of gems’. There are ten luminous blue petals surrounding a downward-pointing red triangle, the symbol for the element of Fire. The animal is a ram – headstrong and direct, his fiery nature controlling the group of which his is the leader. The deities represent control over anger and control of energy. The bija mantra is: Ram.

The Heart Chakra



The fourth chakra is ‘Anahata’ – translated as ‘unstruck’. It has twelve lotus petals of a deep red colour surrounding a hexagram – a six pointed star of grey-green, representing the element of Air. The animal is a black antelope, leaping with joy. On the back of the antelope rests the bija sound: Yam, the sound here controls breath and life-energy.

The Throat Chakra



The fifth chakra is Vishuddha – ‘pure’. It has a circle of sixteen lavender or smoky purple petals enclosing a silver crescent and white circle of the full moon. This represents where all the elements dissolve into their refined essence, akasha – ether or space, the pure cosmic sound. The animal is an elephant, the colour of clouds. He carries the bija mantra: Ham which empowers his voice.

The Brow Chakra



The sixth chakra is Ajña, meaning ‘command’. It has two petals of luminescent pearly blue. Within a white column, the ‘colour of light’ is a representation of unified consciousness – a combined male and female deity. There is no animal here – the bija mantra, Aum, rests on the finest quality of sound itself, known as Nada.

The Crown Chakra



This is not traditionally referred to as a chakra, but has become known as such in recent years. Sahasrara, the ‘thousand-petalled’, is the seventh chakra at the crown of the head. Sometimes it is described as formless, sometimes as a moonlike sphere above which is an umbrella of a thousand petals with all the colours of the rainbow. The bija mantra is the ‘nng’ sound, known as Visarga.

Because they cannot be seen by normal means, the chakras and their related system of subtle channels, are represented by diagrams and other symbolic maps of the body. This is

necessary to clarify the relationship of the subtle centres to physical organs and structures with which we are familiar. However, this can lead to a very static, inflexible and two-dimensional view of what is an elegant, dynamic, ever-changing interaction of energies. Being non-physical, influencing matter but not consisting of matter, chakras are not bound by the laws of matter.

Physical Correspondences (See other free downloads for more details)

Near each chakra, echoing its function, is one of the main endocrine glands in the body, a concentration of nerves known as a plexus, and concentrations of blood vessels and lymph nodes. As the correspondences are not always linear, some discrepancy creeps into different systems of comparison, though there is general agreement of the relationships.

The Root Chakra

The first or base chakra is located at the base of the spine. In some systems the base is related to the testicles, in others the adrenal glands. Although physically a long way from the base, the adrenal glands reflect the survival instinct of this chakra. The coccygeal plexus is the name given to the concentration of nerves in this area.

The Sacral Chakra

The second or sacral chakra, sometimes called the sex chakra, is located in the lower abdomen, between the navel and the pubic bone. It is related to the sacral vertebrae in the spine, the sacral plexus of nerves and the sex glands – the ovaries and testicles. The chakra is associated with emotions and sensuality.

The Solar Plexus Chakra

The third chakra is known as the solar plexus located on the front of the body between the bottom of the ribcage (diaphragm) and the navel. It is concerned with personal energy and power. The glands associated with this centre are the adrenals and the pancreas. The solar plexus chakra is named after the complex of nerves located here and is connected to the lumbar vertebrae of the spine.

The Heart Chakra

The fourth chakra is the heart, located in the centre of the chest, associated with the thoracic vertebrae of the spine. The related gland is the thymus, a small gland above the heart, vital for growth and maintenance of the immune system. Two nerve centres are located here – the pulmonary plexus and the cardiac plexus. This chakra deals with love and relationship.

The Throat Chakra

The fifth chakra is the throat, located near the cervical vertebrae and the base of the throat. It manifests communications and creativity. The thyroid and parathyroid glands (controlling metabolic rate and minerals levels) and the pharyngeal plexus can be found here.

The Brow Chakra

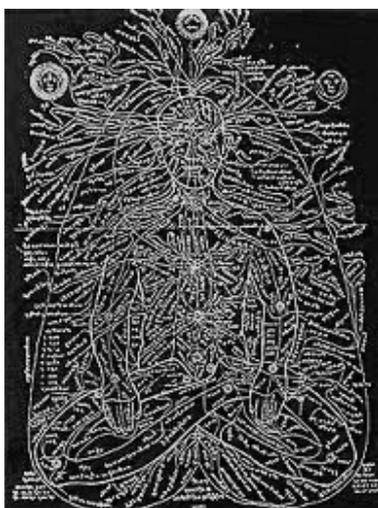
The sixth chakra is the brow, in the centre of the forehead. This is linked to the pineal gland that maintains cycles of activity and rest, and the carotid plexus of nerves. The brow directs intuition, insight and imagination.

The Crown Chakra

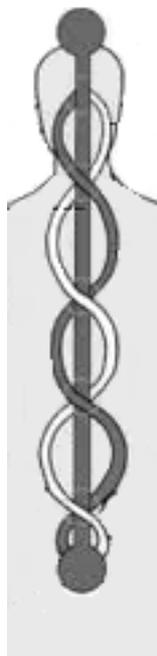
The seventh chakra, the crown, is located just above the top of the head, though it influences all the higher brain functions. It is connected to the pituitary, the master controlling gland for the whole endocrine system. The entire cerebral cortex is influenced by this centre. The crown is associated with knowledge and understanding.

Minor Chakras, Kundalini, Nadis

The seven main chakras are only part of a much larger complex of subtle energies that go to make up the human being. There are many other chakras throughout the body, all of which are expressions of different kinds of consciousness and energy. Surrounding each chakra are the main channels of energy or 'nadis' which flow from the centre and interact with the rest of the body. These nadis do have a relationship with some aspects of the autonomic nervous system and also with the meridian channels, but they are of a much finer subtle substance. There are said to be, in total, seventy two thousand nadis.



Fourteen are named and described in detail, and of these three are of prime importance: the ida, the pingala and the sushumna. These three main channels run parallel to the physical axis of the spinal column. The sushumna is the central channel which is the most important.



Ida, the left channel, carries a lunar energy that is nourishing and purifying.

Pingala, the channel on the right side of the sushumna, they are often shown in two different positions, the first has all three channels running parallel to each other, the second shows the solar and lunar channels weaving between the chakras until all three meet at the brow chakra.

Kundalini

The fundamental life energy of the individual is thought to reside in a quiet state near the base chakra. It is called kundalini, meaning 'coiled up'. As the chakras and their nadis are cleansed of stress and other energy blockages, more of the kundalini energy can move through the body. As this energy is pure consciousness its awakened state can create various degrees of realisation or enlightenment in the individual.

There is a lot of misleading information written about the experience and effects of kundalini activation. It is no 'quick fix' and not something to be sought after. The effects of activation can completely upset a person's life. Without adequate training beforehand and guidance afterwards, activation can lead to mental and physical health issues that are difficult to resolve.

Minor Chakras

Many of the main chakras located on the central channel have smaller associated energy centres. For example, the Muladhara at the base of the spine has related centres at the groin points, the knees and the soles of the feet. All these help to ground and balance the physical energies. The heart chakra, Anahata, has a smaller chakra within it that has eight petals. This is the spiritual heart, the Anandakanda, whose eight channels represent the emotions.

Gurudas	Tansley
Arm Pits (H1)	Above each breast
Base of arch of feet (K1)	On sole of each foot (K1)
Behind each knee (K10)	Behind each knee (K10)
Both heels	
Centre of ears (St45)	In front of each ear (St45)
	Behind each eye
Elbows	
Liver (Liv14)	Near liver (Liv14)
Above medulla oblongata	
	Ovaries/testicles
Palms of hand	Palms of hand
Pancreas	Near stomach
Where breastbones meet (K27)	Where clavicles meet (K27)
Spleen	Two superimposed on spleen
Tip of little fingers (H9, St1)	
Upper index fingers (LI1)	
Top of arch of feet	
Wrist between hand and pulse point	
	Near Thymus
	Near Solar plexus

(The brackets are the meridian points)

1. Arm pits – helps to absorb energy from environment, increases vitality
2. Base of arch of feet – linked to small intestine, absorption of nutrients, emotional stability
3. Behind knees – helps with reasoning and negotiating, physical flexibility
4. Heels – self-confidence and stability
5. Centre of ears – clears the nasal passageways
6. Elbows – release energy blocks in major chakras
7. Liver – reduces fear from subtle bodies.
8. Above Medulla oblongata – sharpens awareness and alertness
9. Palms of hands – stimulates throat and kidneys, absorption of minerals
10. Pancreas – calms emotions, balances pancreas
11. Breastbones/clavicles – spiritualises emotions, increases humility
12. Spleen – activates personal creative power
13. Little finger tips – stabilises pulses throughout the body
14. Upper Index finger – Higher wisdom, logic
15. Top of arch of foot – stimulates compassion
16. Wrists – eases hidden fear and anxiety