

What is a Chakra

- Chakra means *Wheel* in Sanskrit.
- The body has spinning energy centres that look like spinning wheels and are called, Chakras.
- The word comes from the Sanskrit "chakra" meaning "wheel, circle", and sometimes also referring to the "wheel of life". The pronunciation of this word can be approximated in English by 'chuhkruh', with ch as in chart and both instances - the commonly found pronunciation 'shockrah' is incorrect.
- The chakras are thought to vitalise the physical body and to be associated with interactions of both a physical and mental nature. They are considered loci of life energy, or prana, which is thought to flow among them along pathways called *nadis*.

Chakras and Nadis

- In Mysticism, a Nadi (plural: Nadis) is an energy channel in which prana energy flows and may connect chakras. It is not accepted by mainstream science. The main nadis include Shushumna, Ida and Pingala.
- The Ida and Pingala nadis are often seen as referring to the two hemispheres of the brain. Pingala is the extroverted, solar nadi, and corresponds to the right hand side of the brain. Ida is the introverted, lunar nadi, and refers to the left hand side of the brain.
- The two nadis are stimulated through the practice of pranayama, which involves alternate breathing through left and right nostrils, which would alternately stimulate the left and right sides of the brain. The word nadi comes from the Sanskrit root nad meaning "channel", "stream", or "flow".

Where are the Chakras

- The seven main chakras are described as being aligned in an ascending column from the base of the spine to the top of the head. Each chakra is associated with a certain color, multiple specific functions, an aspect of consciousness, a classical element, and other distinguishing characteristics.
- The seven chakras run along the length of the sushumna nadi. These chakras, which also correlate with key nerve centres or plexuses of the outer physical body, are like whirlpools of pranic energy, and each one signifies a different level of awareness. They are symbolic stepping-stones along the spiritual path.

1 Muladhara Chakra

- Muladhara chakra -root centre. mul = root or source; adhara = place or vital part..
- Muladhara chakra is the source of all energy available to humanity, whether it be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or psychic. As this energy (known as kundalini-shakti) is released and drawn up through the chakras, it is purified, and spiritual awakening begins.

- Physical location: perineum in men, posterior side of the cervix in women, pelvic plexus.
- Element: *prithvi tattva* (earth element).
- Seed mantra: *lam*.
- Sense: smell.
- Sense Organ: nose.
- Organ of Activity: anus.
- Symbolism: a lotus flower of four deep-red petals. At the centre of the lotus flower is a glowing yellow square, representing the element of earth. Within the yellow square is an inverted red triangle, whose apex points downwards. This is shakti – the symbol of creative energy.

2 Swadhisthana Chakra

- Svadhisthana chakra – dwelling place of the self. *sva* = self or soul; *adhisthana* = abode or seat.
- This chakra is associated with relationships, procreation, pleasure and desire. It is the dwelling place of deep-rooted instincts and of all *samskaras* – mental and emotional impressions of the past.
- Physical location: two finger widths above *muladhara* chakra and directly behind the genitals, hypogastric plexus.
- Element: *apas tattva* (water element).
- Seed mantra: *vam*.
- Sense: taste.
- Sense Organ: tongue.
- Organ of Activity: sexual organs, kidneys and urinary system.
- Symbolism: a lotus flower of six deep-crimson petals. A bluey white crescent moon sits within the lower half of the lotus's circle, symbolizing the moon's influence on the ocean's tides and human emotion. Concentrating on the image of a silvery blue crescent moon above a deep open ocean helps to restore emotional calm and balance desirous cravings. This helps in freeing us from compulsive behaviour and unhealthy habitual patterns of the past.

3 Manipura Chakra

- Manipura chakra – city of jewels. *mani* – gem or jewel; *pura* – city.
- The solar plexus chakra, Manipura, is related to energy, assimilation and digestion, and is said to correspond to the roles played by the pancreas and the outer adrenal glands, the adrenal cortex. These play a valuable role in digestion, the conversion of food matter into energy for the body.
- Physical location: situated behind the navel, solar plexus.
- Element: *agni tattva* (fire element).
- Seed mantra: *ram*.
- Sense: sight.
- Sense Organ: eyes.
- Organ of Action: feet.
- Symbolism: a lotus flower of ten petals. Within the circle of the lotus is a downward-pointing fiery red triangle, like a gleaming ruby signifying energy and power. Visualizing golden light radiating out from the fiery triangle and spreading throughout the body cultivates physical, mental and psychic energy, dynamism and vitality.

4 Anahata Chakra

- Anahata chakra – unstruck sound. Anahata = unstruck, referring to cosmic sound, which does not arise from two objects being struck (as with all other sounds) but is always present in the heart.
- From this centre the internal vibration and pulsing of the heart can be heard, sending out waves of compassion, unconditional love and understanding of equality and brotherhood.
- Physical location: behind the sternum, level with the heart (for this reason this chakra is often called the “lotus of the heart”) cardiac plexus.
- Element: *vaya tattva* (air element).
- Seed mantra: *yam*.
- Sense: feeling or touch.
- Sense Organ: skin.
- Organ of Action: hands.
- Symbolism: a lotus flower of 12 petals. At the centre of the lotus is a star of six points like a hexagram, which is created by two triangles interlacing, one with an apex pointing up and the other with one pointing down. The upward and downward triangles denote the midway balance of the lower chakras of the physical existence and the upper chakras of spiritual and transcendental levels. Within the star there is a gentle burning flame – the symbol of the individual soul (jiva). Focusing on the steadiness of the inner flame of the heart connects us to our individual soul, internal truth and compassion, which remain steady and undisturbed by the external activities of the world.

5 Vishuddhi Chakra

- Vishuddha chakra = wheel of purity. shuddi = purification.
- It is at this centre that all dualities, polarities and dichotomies of opposites are accepted within ourselves without judgement.
- Physical location: behind the well of the throat, pharyngeal plexus.
- Element: *akasha tattva* (ether element).
- Seed mantra: *ham*.
- Sense: hearing.
- Sense Organ: ears.
- Organ of Action: vocal chords.
- Symbolism: a lotus flower of 16 violet petals. Within the lotus flower is a white circle like a silvery full moon, with a teardrop shape of nectar at its centre, symbolizing the harmonizing and purifying of all polarities and opposites. Visualizing and sensing a sweet teardrop of nectar, like calming balm at the level of the throat as you breathe, is said to help smooth internal conflicts of heart and mind. This helps to cultivate understanding and a non-judgemental attitude to mind and heart.

6 Ajna Chakra

- Ajna chakra – command centre. ajna = command.
- This energy centre is the gateway to our intuition, where communication and command from the internal guru is heard. At this point the link between the mental and psychic aspects of our being is created as the three channels of sushumna, ida and pingala converge.
- Physical location: behind the space in between the eyebrows, mid-brain at the medulla and pineal plexuses. Because of its location at the third eye it may also be referred to as *jnana chakshu* – the eye of wisdom.
- Element: *maha tattva* (cause of the mind element).
- Seed mantra: *om*.
- Sense: mind.
- Sense Organ: mind.
- Organ of Action: mind.
- Symbolism: a two-petalled silver lotus, one petal representing the sun (pingala) and one the moon (ida). The circle of the lotus is of silvery white shade, with a lingam (a symbol of masculine creative energy) in its centre, placed within a downward-pointing triangle, which is a symbol of the feminine principle (shakti). Focusing on a glowing circle of light at the centre of your eyebrows, radiating wisdom and intuition, enhances insight and inner knowing.

7 Sahasrara Chakra

- Sahasrara chakra – thousand petalled lotus. sahasrara = thousand-spoked; also known as sunya, the voidless void of totality.
- Some say this is not really a chakra, but the dwelling place of our highest awareness. It is the union of all consciousness and all energy.
- Physical location: crown of the head, top of the skull
- Seed mantra: entire Sanskrit alphabet
- Symbolism: a circular lotus blossom of a thousand shining petals overlying one another. Inscribed on each petal is a letter (matrika) of the Sanskrit alphabet. In the centre of the lotus is a full moon (purna Chandra), and within the full moon is a *dyotirlinga* – a lingam of light shining upwards, symbolizing pure consciousness. It is said that the experience of sahasrara is beyond words and all definition – it has to be felt to be understood. Practitioners of different religions describe it in different words: Christians refer to it as heaven, the Buddhists call it nirvana, yogis name it as Samadhi and Hindus call it *kaivalya*. It is the perfect merging of all things – it is yoga itself.