

Healing Chakras

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Editorial

For centuries we have heard the word 'Chakra' used in Pranayama, Yoga and Ayurveda. What exactly are they and what is their function in the natural healing system?

Chakras are a discovery of the Indian Rishis and Yogis of ancient India. Chakras are high energy centers in the body that are not seen physically but only through the subtle science of meditation practice that leads to an extrasensory vision. The main purpose of the utilization of the chakras and to awaken them was for reaching higher stages of intuition and consciousness, thus the founding of Kundalini Yoga.

Chakras work as electromagnetic vibrations that are affected by our lifestyle such as diet, yoga, breath, environment and mental state. For the purposes of health, the aim is to have a balanced flow of energy through all the chakras. For the purposes of a higher consciousness the aim is to have a healthy heightened flow i.e., Awakening of the chakra center, and this yoga can only be performed with the guidance of an experienced Guru that can ascertain the viability of the function within each person and whether the individual has the capacity to withstand the energy levels. Kundalini Yoga is not to be performed without a healthy mental and physical disposition.

There are seven chakras that run from the base of the spine to the mid-brain and one at the top of the head, acting as 'steamways' to the nervous system. These chakras, beginning from the base are called Mooladhara Chakra associated with the reproductive system; Svadhisthana Chakra associated with the excretory system; Manipura Chakra associated with the skeletal system; Anahata Chakra associated with the circulatory system, Vishuddhi Chakra associated with the respiratory system; Ajna Chakra associated with the nervous system; and Sahasrara Chakra associated with the endocrine system.

Patanjali Ayurveda Yogpeeth has experimentally ascertained that the balance of these chakras maintains the salts, hormones, and enzymes necessary for the body to function properly without taking external medications. Each chakra indirectly affects the physical and mental domains through the pranamaya kosha when we perform breathing exercises. Koshas are layers of subtle energy sheaths encircling the human body beginning with the gross layer, Annamaya kosha i.e., 'food layer' depending upon food, water and air; the second sheath is Pranamaya kosha dependent upon prana in food, water and mainly air; the third sheath is Manomaya kosha holding the afore mentioned koshas as a whole, this is the conscious mind linking the external to the intuitive; the forth layer is the Vijnanamaya kosha that links with the mind bringing about clarity and intuition; the fifth layer is Anandamaya kosha, the most subtle called the transcendental body. With the purification of each layer beginning with the Annamaya and Pranamaya kosha, the next sheath may be penetrated and purified to the subtle most.

Through pranayama, yoga asanas and kriyas (special cleansing practices) that work on the 'inner' and 'outer' zones, the purification and balance of the physical, mental, doshas, chakras and sanskaras (inherent tendencies) take place. It is worthy to note here that exercise alone, although it includes various heavy breathing, only affects the 'outer' physical and mental areas. In the same regard diet and herbs (including any medications) will only effect the outer physical and mental health, not the inner-self. The science of chakra awakening, though its main purpose was intended for enlightenment, the Rishis saw through direct experience that each chakra is associated with certain organs and tissues of the body as well as the mind, and altered certain physical functions in the body and mind. Thus the sages were able to establish a healing technique with the practices of pranayama, mantra and asanas that enables the balancing of the chakras and in turn the physical body and mind functions. Below are details of each chakra function with the absence of heightened flow, regarding spiritual awakening. For the purposes of this article, a description of the chakras normal, low and increased flow is provided.

The Mooladhara chakra is located between the genital organs and the anus and is associated with Annamaya kosha, earth and the pingala nadi. It is related to the mind and low level instincts such as 'flight or fight' and panic. It is connected with the sense of smell. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Lum'. The chart below shows the physical functional relationship with this chakra.

The Svadhisthana chakra is located near the coccyx and is associated with Pranamaya kosha, water and the sense of taste. It is related to the reproductive organs, sensual pleasures and food. Both ida and pingala nadis are important here. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Vum'. The chart below indicates the relations of this chakra on a physical and mental level.

The Manipura chakra is located at the level of the navel and is associated with Pranamaya kosha, fire and the sense of sight. It is related to activity, strength and maintenance. It is the store house of prana. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Rum'. The chart below shows the physical and mental effects of this chakra.

The Anahata chakra is located at the level of the heart and is associated with Manomaya kosha, mind, emotions such as attachment and compassion, air, and the sense of touch. Ida nadi is the control. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Yum'. See the chart below for its effect on the body and mind.

The Vishuddhi chakra, where prana is purified, is located behind the throat and is associated with Vijnanamaya kosha, the thyroid glands and ether. It develops a higher state of consciousness within a person. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Hum'. See the chart below for details of the physical and mental effects.

The Ajna chakra is located in the mid-brain and is associated with the Vijnanamaya kosha, the pineal gland and subtle ether. All three

nadis influence this chakra and it establishes a higher sense of awareness or insight, called the 'third eye'. The connection to the psychic is here. Distribution of prana happens at this center. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Ksham'. See the chart below for the physical and mental influences of this chakra.

The Sahasrara chakra is located at the crown of the head and is not part of the spinal column. It is the highest point of consciousness, what we call self-realization. It is associated with the Anandamaya kosha, the endocrine system and causal ether. Pingala nadi is the control. The Bija mantra to activate this chakra is 'Ohm' (Table 1).

Chakra	Balanced Flow; Physical/Psychological	Low Flow; Physical/Psychological	High Flow; Physical/Psychological
Mooladhara	Normal elimination, urination, ejaculation, parturition, healthy bones; Mild and stable mind	Decreased elimination etc. Weak bones and loss of smell; Hyperactivity, unfocused, fearful, nervous	Increased elimination etc. Strong bones and increased smell sense; attachment, lethargic and lazy
Svadhishthana	Healthy body water content; ambition, emotions, relations, devotion	Increased water in local tissues; Deep emotions held in	Water held body dryness occurring within time; Deep expressive emotions that dry out
Manipura	Normal digestion and chemical functions; Focus, goal oriented	Low metabolism, reduced liver, spleen and gallbladder function; Loss of focus and drive	High metabolism with increased liver, spleen and gallbladder function; Intense focus and burnout
Annahata	Balanced circulation, respiration, thymus gland; steady movement of thought and expression	Decreased circulation etc. Touch sense lessened; Sluggish, cloudy thought movement	Increased circulation etc. Sensitivity of touch; Increased thought movement with little control
Vishuddhi	Normal muscular function; Fulfilled expression of ego	Decreased thyroid and para-thyroid function, bronchial constriction, loss of hearing; Repressed ego expression and speech	Increased thyroid and parathyroid function, bronchial dilation, hypersensitive hearing; inflated expression of ego and speech
Ajna	Balanced hormonal and autonomic functions; experiential and belief driven perceptions	Decreased pituitary, hypothalamus glands and autonomic output; dampened creativity and limited outlook	Increased pituitary, hypothalamus glands and autonomic output; Analytical with increased creativity, imagination and sees potential
Sahasrara	Balanced biorhythms and cortical function; grounded self-awareness	Decreased pineal and cortical function; Decreased self-awareness	Increased pineal and cortical function; Increased self-awareness

Table 1: The relationship between flow of energy through the Chakras and their effect on the physical and psychological functions of the body and mind.

In Ayurveda, Bija mantras are used to balance the doshas and target various organs and tissues. Vata dosha typically has an excess of flow through the Anahata and Vishuddhi chakra, thus to bring e.g. more water qualities to a vata imbalance, the Swadhishthana chakra would be

activated using the Bija mantra 'Vam'. Pitta dosha typically shows an excess flow through the Manipura chakra and Kapha dosha typically shows an excess flow through the Mooladhara and Svadhishthana chakra.