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The 7 Chakras and Their Significance to Your Life

Chakras are energy centers. Although most people have heard of seven chakras, there are actually 114 in the body. The human body is a complex energy form; in addition to the 114 chakras, it also has 72,000 "nadis," or energy channels, along which vital energy, or "prana," moves. When the nadis meet at different points in the body, they form a triangle. We call this triangle a chakra, which means "wheel." We call it a wheel because it symbolizes growth, dynamism and movement, so even though it is actually a triangle, we call it a chakra. Some of these centers are very powerful, while others are not as powerful. At different levels, these energy centers produce different qualities in a human being.

Fundamentally, any spiritual path can be described as a journey from the base chakra, called the "Mooladhara," which is located at the base of the spine, to the "Sahasrar," which is located at the top of the head. This journey of movement from the Mooladhara to Sahasrar is from one dimension to another. It may happen in many different ways, and various yogic practices can effect this movement.

Mooladhara is really made up of two terms: "Moola" means the root or source, and "adhar" means the foundation. It is the very basic foundation of life. In the physical body, your energies need to be in the Mooladhara chakra to some extent. Otherwise, you cannot exist. If the Mooladhara chakra alone is dominant, food and sleep will be the predominant factors in your life.

We can speak in terms of lower and higher chakras, but such language is often and too easily misunderstood. It is like comparing the foundation of a building to the roof; the roof is not superior to the foundation. The foundation of the building is more basic to the building than the roof, and the quality, life span, stability and security of the building depends, to a large extent, on the foundation rather than the roof. But in terms of language, the roof is higher, and the foundation is lower.

The second chakra is "Swadhisthana." If your energies move into Swadhisthana, you are a pleasure seeker. The Swadhisthana chakra is located just above the genital organs. When this chakra is active, you enjoy the physical world in so many ways. If you look at a pleasure seeker, you will see that his life and his experience of life are just a little more intense compared with a person who is only about food and sleep.

If your energy moves into the "Manipuraka" chakra, located just below the navel, you are a doer in the world. You are all about action. You can do many, many things. If your energies move into the "Anahata" chakra, you are a creative person. A person who is creative in nature, like an artist or an actor, is someone who lives very intensely -- more intensely, perhaps, than a businessman, who is all action.

The Anahata literally means the "un-struck." If you want to make any sound, you have to strike two objects together. The un-struck sound is called "Anahata." Anahata is located in the heart area and is like a transition between your lower chakras and your higher chakras, between survival instincts and

the instinct to liberate yourself. The lower three chakras are mainly concerned with your physical existence. Anahata is a combination; it is a meeting place for both the survival and the enlightenment chakras.

The next chakra is the "Vishuddhi," which literally means "filter." Vishuddhi is located in the area of your throat. If your energies move into Vishuddhi, you become a very powerful human being, but this power is not just political or administrative. A person can be powerful in many ways. A person can become so powerful that if he just sits in one place, things will happen for him. He can manifest life beyond the limitations of time and space.

If your energies move into the "Aghna" chakra, located between your eyebrows, you are intellectually enlightened. You have attained to a new balance and peace within you. The outside no longer disturbs you, but you are still experientially not liberated.

If your energies move into "Sahasrar," at the crown of your head, you become ecstatic beyond all reason. You will simply burst with ecstasy for no reason whatsoever.

Chakras have more than one dimension to them. One dimension is their physical existence, but they also have a spiritual dimension. This means that they can be completely transformed into a new dimension. If you bring the right kind of awareness, the same Mooladhara that craves food and sleep can become absolutely free from the process of food and sleep. If one wants to go beyond food and sleep, one needs to transform the Mooladhara to an evolved state.

To move from Mooladhara to Aghna, from the lowest of these seven chakras to the second highest, there are many procedures, methods and processes through which one can raise his energies. But from Aghna to Sahasrar, the sixth chakra to the highest chakra, there is no path. You can only jump there. In a way, you have to fall upward. So, the question of going step by step to that dimension does not really arise. There is no way.

It is for this reason that spiritual traditions have emphasized the significance of a guru's role in one's realization; guru literally means "dispeller of darkness." You can only jump into an abyss -- the depth of which you do not know -- if you have an absolutely insane heart, or if your trust in someone is so deep that you are willing to do anything in their presence. Most people, due to a lack of either of these two aspects, just get stuck in the Aghna chakra. When this happens, peacefulness is the highest state they will know. It is only from this limitation that there has been so much talk about peace being the highest possibility. But for someone seeking their ultimate nature, peace is only the beginning; it is not the ultimate goal.

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