

# Subtle Body: Chakras, Koshas, Gunas



## About the Chakras (the Energy Centers)

### Introduction

Chakras are centers of energy and consciousness within the subtle energy body. They are directly connected with the physical body. The balance of the chakras provides the foundation for physical, mental, emotional health. There are hundreds of chakras connected to the human body, but there are seven main chakras that are the focal point to begin to understand the energetic anatomy and how it relates to your biology and your psychology.

Although descriptions of similar energies have been described in many ancient cultures, the word “Chakra” is a Sanskrit word which means “wheel”. Each chakra looks like a three dimensional circle that has a color of resonance. The spinal column supports the complex interconnection between the chakras and each chakra is related to a gland in the endocrine system.

The chakras are always present, but as you begin to actively pursue yoga the life force in your body begins to awaken your energy body. As you become more aware of the subtle workings of your body self awareness comes in the form of elevated states of consciousness which ultimately lead to union of the individual self with the Cosmic Self.

Mantra	#	Location	Color	Sanskrit Name
Lam	1 <sup>st</sup> chakra	Base of Spine	Red	Muladhara
Vam	2 <sup>nd</sup> chakra	Sacral Plexus	Orange	Svadisthana
Ram	3 <sup>rd</sup> chakra	Solar Plexus	Yellow	Manipura
Yam	4 <sup>th</sup> chakra	Heart Center	Green	Anahata
Ham	5 <sup>th</sup> chakra	Base of Throat	Turquoise	Vishuddha
Om	6 <sup>th</sup> chakra	Btwn Eyebrows	Indigo	Ajna
Om	7 <sup>th</sup> chakra	Crown of head	Violet	Sahasrara

### Additional Resource:

- *The 7 Chakras: Psychic Centers of Consciousness* by Sri Dharma Mittra (PDF)





## First Chakra Muladhara “Foundation”

The first chakra is your foundation, the root of your mind, spirit and body. It is the location of the source of individual consciousness. It contains tribal survival guidelines, culture, superstitions and fears. It includes the values of honor, loyalty and justice that form your basic personality. This chakra is the strongest attachment point for your spirit to this world. This crucial connection is a source of spiritual power and the home of Kundalini. In the path to full consciousness this is the beginning, the material base. The sacred truth is All is One.

### Organs and Glands:

- o Body support: legs, feet, bones
- o Base of spine, coccyx
- o Rectum and anal sphincter.
- o Reproductive organs of the male
- o adrenals

### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Physical family safety and security
- o Emotional and psychological stability
- o Ability to provide for life’s necessities, success
- o Ability to stand up for self
- o Feeling at home
- o Social and familial law and order
- o Honor, loyalty, justice and the basis of personality, patience

**Description** - “Root Support” from mula (root) adhara (support)

**Location** - between the coccyx and the genitals

**Depiction** - a deep red, four-petaled lotus

**Element** - Earth, matter

**Sense** - Smell

**Food** - protein in meat, soy beans, beans and nuts

**Mantra** - Lam

**Color** - Red

**Other** - seat of the dormant kundalini-shakti, issue-place of the sushumna







## Second Chakra Svadisthana “Her Special Abode”

The second chakra is about partnership, the flow of power between the self and others. This is the center that enables the development of relationships with family, friends, teachers and other individuals. These relationships satisfy personal and physical needs. The information gathered and stored in this chakra happen from about 9-12 years old. Center of creativity and financial stability. When this center is dis-empowered there is frigidity or sexual promiscuity. When it is empowered there is the sacred truth of Honoring One another through creative expression.

### Organs and Glands:

- o Ovaries, testicles, penis, hormones of the reproductive system
- o Large intestine
- o Lower spine above coccyx
- o Pelvis
- o Appendix
- o Bladder
- o Hip Area
- o Spleen

### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Causes extreme empathy, sometimes cause us to live emotionally for others
- o Lack of emotion and passion or overindulgence and explosiveness
- o Friendliness or lack of manipulation, obsessiveness (thoughts, sex)
- o high low energy

**Description:** own base, “Her Special Abode”

**Location:** Genitals, behind the pubic bone, lower abdomen below navel.

**Element:** Water

**Color:** Orange

**Sense:** Taste

**Mantra:** Vam

**Depiction:** crimson six-petaled lotus





## Third Chakra

### Manipura “City of the Shining Jewel”

The third chakra is about personal power in relation to the external world. This chakra, the dominant energy during puberty, forms individualization, the self and the ego. Exploration through this chakra goes beyond survival identity to true exploration self and purpose. The personality begins to grow beyond the needs of society and other people and starts to service personal power in relation to the external world. This chakra holds personal power, will and control. The sacred truth of this chakra is Honor Oneself.

#### Organs and Glands:

- o Abdomen, stomach
- o Liver
- o Gall bladder
- o Kidney
- o Pancreas - secretes insulin and glucagons that metabolize carbohydrates to glucose.
- o Spleen
- o Upper intestines
- o Middle spine
- o Upper colon

#### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Trust
- o Ego, Self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect, personal honor, self-discipline
- o Care of oneself and others
- o Responsibility for making decisions
- o Ability to generate action, handle a crisis
- o Generosity, ethics and strength of character
- o Personal power, will, control
- o Gut feelings
- o Ambition, courage to take risks

**Location:** Solar plexus and navel

**Description:** jewel city, “City of the Shining Jewel”

**Depiction:** bright yellow lotus of ten petals

**Sense:** Visual

**Element:** Fire

**Color:** Yellow

**Mantra:** ram



**Other:** associated with the anus, the ram (symbol of fiery energy)





## Fourth Chakra Anahata “Unstricken”

The fourth chakra, when in balance, houses un-conditional love, compassion and forgiveness. It is also the physical center for the heart organ and the thymus. Balance in this chakra also creates healthy emotions and a properly functioning immune system. The sacred truth is love is divine power.

### Organs and Glands:

- o Heart
- o Circulatory system
- o Lungs, diaphragm
- o Bronchial tubes
- o Shoulders and arms
- o Breasts
- o Thymus

### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Love of self
- o Forgiveness
- o Hope and trust
- o Commitment, following one’s heart
- o Openness to others, harmony, peace
- o Unconditional love of others, relationships, understanding
- o Touch and compassion

**Description:** unstruck, “Not Struck” - the pure, unmechanical sound of creation

**Location:** Over the sternum

**Depiction:** blue lotus of twelve petals (heart lotus)

**Element:** Air

**Sense:** Touch

**Color:** Green

**Mantra:** Yam





## Fifth Chakra Vishuddha “Pure”

The fifth chakra is about faith in others and our own higher Self. It gives us the ability to follow the guidance of our Self, to submit to the will and guidance of the Cosmic Consciousness. We overcome the fear of losing our physical satisfactions and gratifications. It is the gateway of the dissolution of the individual self with the Source. The purification center of choice where the sacred truth is Surrender Personal Will to Divine Will.

### Organs and Glands:

- o Throat, trachea, esophagus
- o Neck vertebrae, cervical spine
- o Mouth, teeth and gums
- o Thyroid - growth, temperature control, energy production and carbohydrate and fat metabolism, also intellectual development in babies.
- o Parathyroid - four glands metabolize calcium for bone, and tooth health, muscles and heart muscle. Helps metabolize Vitamin D, affects kidney and gastrointestinal tract.
- o Hypothalamus
- o Skeletal system
- o Carotid plexus - main blood flow to brain
- o Skin

### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Communications by sound, vibration, telepathy
- o Faith
- o Self-knowledge
- o Capacity to make decisions
- o Choice and strength of will
- o Personal power of creativity
- o Vocation
- o Truth, integrity
- o Channeling knowledge from above
- o Doorway to telepathy

**Description:** pure, purity and “Purified”

**Location:** Throat

**Depiction:** sixteen petaled lotus

**Sense:** Auditory

**Element:** Ether



**Color:** turquoise

**Mantra:** ham



## Sixth Chakra

### Ajna “Authority or Unlimited Power”

The sixth chakra is about the power of the mind, it is the chakra of intuitive wisdom. It challenges us to open the mind, develop an impersonal mind and avoid artificial or false truths. Learn to act on internal direction and discriminate between thoughts motivated by strength and those by fear and illusion. It is the culmination point of the ida and pingala, the equal and opposite energies of the body. The sacred truth is Seek Only the Truth.

#### Organs and Glands:

- o Brain
- o Nervous system
- o Eyes, ears
- o Nose, sinus
- o Hypothalamus - regulates hormone flow from pituitary. Directed by limbic system.
- o Pineal gland - secretes melatonin. Stimulates sleep, regulates internal clock (biological rhythms, jet lag), effects libido, maternal behavior, aging.

#### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Self-evaluation
- o Truth
- o Emotional intelligence intellectual abilities
- o Openness to ideas of others
- o Ability to learn from experience
- o Inner vision, insight
- o Imagination
- o Commitment
- o Telepathy
- o Visualization
- o Intuition from gut feelings
- o Transcending rational thought

**Description:** “Command” or “The Qualified Absolute”

**Location:** Brain, between eyes up to center of the forehead.

**Depiction:** indigo (dark) blue, pale gray or white two-petaled lotus.

**Element:** Light

**Sense:** manas

**Color:** indigo

**Mantra:** Om



**Other:** also known as the guru-chakra for telepathic communication with your teacher.



## Seventh Chakra

### Sahasrara “Thousand Petaled Lotus”

The seventh chakra is about our spirit. It represents our connection to the transcendental aspects of the universe. Seventh chakra energy motivates us to seek an intimate connection to the Deity in everything we do. After the full activation of this chakra everything we do is directed toward God Consciousness and enlightenment. The only thing that exists is the beauty and perfection of the present moment. The sacred truth is Live in the Present Moment.

#### Organs and Glands:

- o Muscular system
- o Central nervous system
  
- o Pituitary gland regulates whole endocrine system

#### Mental/Emotional Issues:

- o Ability to trust life
- o Humanitarianism
- o Values, ethics and courage
- o Selflessness
- o Ability to see the larger pattern
- o Spirituality and devotion
- o Faith and inspiration in the presence of the deity
- o Inner guidance
- o Insight into healing
- o Quality of trust that eclipses ordinary human fears
- o Thought, understanding
- o Awareness, knowledge
  
- o Universal Truth and Knowledge

**Location:** crown of the head

**Sense:** none

**Element:** Thought

**Color:** Violet, white to full spectrum of the rainbow

**Mantra:** silent

**Description:** “Thousand Petaled” or “The Unqualified Absolute”



**Depiction:** thousand petaled lotus

## **Awakening The Serpent -- Kundalini Energy**

In the classic Hatha yoga and Tantra traditions, each person is believed to possess a great reservoir of dormant feminine energy. This raw creative energy lies tightly coiled at the base of the spine. It is often associated with the serpent. Kundalini energy is part of the life force, so there is always a minute amount flowing through your subtle body. Only when properly understood and awakened can it express its full potential, rising through you and energizing your senses. It is possible to awaken your Kundalini through different forms of meditation or yoga, though the process should be undertaken slowly. A hasty opening of the Kundalini center can cause headaches and other physical symptoms. Raised properly, Kundalini energy has the potential to spring forth as active kinetic energy that may result in altered states of consciousness.

Once you have tapped into your Kundalini, what you experience will be unique. Some people experience the rising of the Kundalini upward through the chakras as spreading warmth and a feeling of extreme well being. Others find they have more energy and libido and are consistently happier. If you awaken your Kundalini, you may find yourself getting sick less often. The results vary from person to person, but the benefits are generally positive. You may be thinking about raising your Kundalini on your own. One way to do this is to draw the Kundalini up through the Shushumna, the passageway that travels through the center of your body toward the head, by visualizing the energy as a serpent traveling upward. But only bring it up a little at a time and use caution. If you experience headaches or a burning sensation, you may be going to fast and should consult a teacher.

Though awakening the Kundalini can be a difficult experience, it can also be a rewarding and exciting one. As the raw energy of the Kundalini is transformed into a potent storehouse of refined energy waiting to be utilized, you will be tapping into a rich source of creativity and awareness.

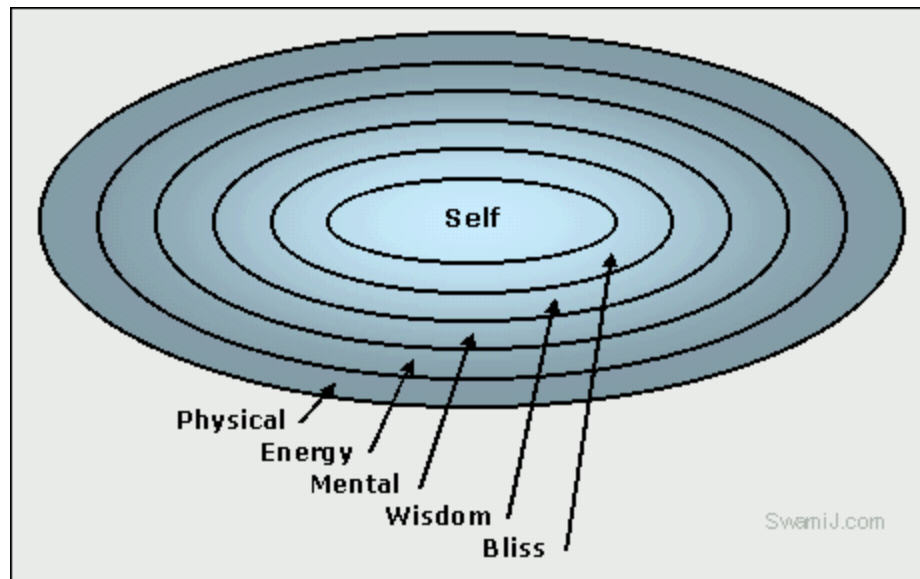


## The 5 Sheaths or Koshas

by Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati

[SwamiJ.com](http://SwamiJ.com)

We humans are like a lamp that has five lampshades over our light. Each of the lampshades is a different color and density. As the light shines through the lampshades, it is progressively changed in color and nature. It is a bitter-sweet coloring. On the one hand, the shades provide the individualized beauty of each lamp. Yet, the lampshades also obscure the pure light.



The path of Self-realization is one of progressively moving inward, through each of those lampshades, so as to experience the purity at the eternal center of consciousness, while at the same time allowing that purity to animate through our individuality. These five levels are called *koshas*, which literally means *sheaths*.

<b>Physical</b>	Annamaya kosha
<b>Energy</b>	Pranamaya kosha
<b>Mental</b>	Manamaya kosha
<b>Wisdom</b>	Vijnanamaya kosha
<b>Bliss</b>	Anandamaya kosha
<b>Self</b>	Atman

## The Light Within - The Koshas “Sheaths of Being”

The Upanishads discuss five sheaths (this concept is a common thread in other spiritual traditions also).

Humans are composed of increasingly subtle sheaths of matter, energy, intelligence and consciousness. To achieve true balance and wholeness, these layers must be integrated and in harmony with each other.

*“When these subtle sheaths are in disharmony, they become sullied like a mirror reflecting the tarnished images of the sensory and sensual world. The mirror reflects what is in the world around us rather than letting the clear light of the soul within shine out. It is then that we experience disease and despair. True health requires not only the effective functioning of the physical exterior of our being, but also the vitality, strength, and sensitivity of the subtle levels within.” BKS Iyengar*

Practicing yoga encourages connection and experience with each layer, bringing life and clarity to each layer, so that we may live fully and in harmony.

**Anna-maya-kosha** *“sheath of food” - gross layer - physical (skin, bones - all that encompasses our physical form)*

Anna means food. In yoga, we train this aspect of ourselves, take care of it, nurture it, so that we can both enjoy our external lives and go inward without it being an obstacle during meditation time.

**Prana-maya-kosha** *“sheath of energy” - energetic body - sheath of energy that is the link between the physical body and the mind (breath/ life energy/chi)*

It is vital that that this level of our being be trained, regulated, and directed, so that it flows smoothly and efficiently to allow us to delve deeper into self.

**Mano-maya-kosha** *“mental body” - represents the basic functions of the mind (incessant thoughts of human life occur here)*

Mana means “mind”. It is the level of processing thoughts and emotions. It is in direct control of the operation, through the prana, of the physical body and senses. It gives instructions, but is not supposed to be the manager of the factory of life. Because of this, it naturally has doubts, and creates illusions. When it receives clear instructions from the deeper level, it functions quite well. However, when it is clouded over by its illusions (also called maya -- includes idea we are separate from the world) the deeper wisdom is clouded over.





**Vijnana-maya-kosha** *“subtle mind” - the mind which includes higher wisdom and discernment (judgement)*

Vijnana means knowing. This is the wisdom that lies underneath the processing, thinking aspect of mind. It knows, decides, judges, and discriminates between this and that, between useful and not useful. It is also the level of ego consciousness, meaning the powerful wave of I-am-ness. This I-am-ness itself is a positive influence, but when it gets co-mingled with the memories, and is clouded over by the manas, it loses its positive strength. Through our spiritual practice we can get in touch with this inner wisdom/inner voice to help us live most authentically and seek the truth of ourselves. Once we live authentically our life flows more effortlessly.

**Ananda-maya-kosha** *“sheath of bliss” - pure insight - where the soul resides (here we embrace the universal oneness)*

However, it is not the bliss we experience when we achieve something desired or receive a fabulous gift. It is beyond the emotion of happiness. Ananda is a whole different order of reality from that of the mind. It is peace, joy, and love that is underneath, beyond the mind, independent of any reason or stimulus to cause a happy mental reaction. It is simply being, resting in bliss called ananda. According to the upanishads - this sheath is still a sheath and therefore still covers the pure light of consciousness (Atman).

Atman is the Self, the eternal center of consciousness. Atman is never “born” and never “dies”. It is the deepest light that shines through the koshas when they are truly balanced. Atman, the Self, has been best described as indescribable. The realization of that, in direct experience, is the goal of Yoga meditation.

**Additional Resources:**

- You Are Here (the 5 Koshas) by Shiva Rea (PDF)
- The Koshas: Mystical Fivefold Sheaths by Sri Dharma Mittra (PDF)

**The Gunas**

(Excerpt from Life of a Yogi, Dharma Mittra pp. 98-101)

The gunas (primary qualities of nature or prakriti, the material world) are sattva (purity or peace), rajas (action) and tamas (inertia). All beings are subject to all three gunas, as they are part of prakriti (nature or matter), and are responsible for our illusions and suffering on earth. The Bhagavad-Gita aims to free us from these qualities by helping us gain an understanding of



the nature of these qualities and how they keep us in bondage and illusion. The purpose of describing the three qualities is not to encourage us to become sattvic or to eliminate the other qualities -even cultivation of sattva is not an end unto itself. Sattva is only the means to overcome passion and ignorance, thereby achieving Self-realization through purity of mind and heart. One should go beyond the three gunas to attain immortality and freedom from birth, death, old age and sorrow.

The gunas exist in all beings in various combinations and concentrations. Depending on their relative strength and concentration, they determine the nature of a being, its actions, behavior, attitude and its attachment to the world it lives in. The primary purpose of the gunas is to create delusion through desire and attachment. Under their influence, human beings cannot recognize the presence of God. Through understanding the three qualities and through right worship, study, knowledge, speech, devotion, faith, behavior and sacrifice, a process of purification occurs and one becomes established in tranquility. The quality of sattva then manifests in abundance. One can then realize the Supreme Self by attending to one's duty without desire or attachment, offering the fruit of all actions to God.

Sattva (peace, purity, harmony) is a quality void of impurity that is illuminating and free from sickness. It binds the soul through attachment with happiness and knowledge. Sattva names the pure state, leading to liberation. Moderation is observed in all actions, performance of spiritual obligations comes naturally and developing virtues is a priority. The sattvic state is balanced and does not last a long time due to sensitivities to the changes in life and impressions from the past -- it can quickly turn into rajas. When one is able to reach samadhi, tranquility can endure because it is connected with the true nature of the Self that does not change. Sattva is a perfect mirror to reflect spiritual bliss -- sattva is the dominant quality of a yogi. One who attains this state has good discrimination, worships higher beings, does regular spiritual practice and eats living, raw, vegan foods bursting with prana. Regular sadhana leads to the development of virtues: consciousness ascends, the chakras open a little bit, some knowledge of how to attain Self Realization is attained and retained, and one enjoys some spiritual bliss. Spiritual bliss is Supreme Bliss -- there is no feeling of "I" (the doer). Samadhi draws within reach as the sadhaka advances in self-control, action is perfected and one draws close to liberation.

Rajas (action) is a quality full of passion born of thirst, intense desire and attachment. It binds the soul through attachment with action, and attachment in all forms leads to pain and suffering. Conversely, freedom from attachment leads to liberation. Rajas is restless, intense, constant activity. Rajasic individuals often consume food that is spicy, hot, salty and/or sour, which disturbs the digestive system, and consequently leads to an agitated state of mind. This

type of state leaves one dependent on the senses for stimulation and gratification, initiating an endless and hard to break cycle.

Tamas (inertia) is the quality of darkness and crudeness born of ignorance, indolence and delusion. The lowest of the gunas, it binds the soul through recklessness, heaviness and sleep.

Tamas signifies all that is heavy, dull, inactive and inert. Those in whom the quality of tamas prevails eat food which is dead, frozen, stale, twice-cooked and fried. An abundance of alcohol, flesh and other poisons in the regular diet leave one feeling dead, cooked, frozen, fried and lifeless.

When sattva is predominant, all the gates of the human body illuminate knowledge. When rajas is predominant, greed and the striving for selfish activities appear. When tamas predominates, darkness, inactivity, recklessness and delusion are evident. At the time of death, a sattvic person attains higher worlds and, when reborn, takes birth among pious people. After death, a rajasic person remains in the middle worlds and, when reborn, takes birth in the family of those who are attached to actions. The tamasic person sinks to the lowest regions and is reborn among the ignorant and deluded.

When an individual overcomes the three gunas, he or she neither likes harmony, illumination, activity or delusion when they are present, nor dislikes them when they are absent. He or she remains unshaken and unconcerned, knowing that the gunas are carrying out their actions. Alike in pleasure and pain, remaining the same towards a piece of gold or a lump of clay, towards the desirable and the undesirable, equal in defamation and self-adulation, alike in honor and dishonor, the same to friends and foes, without any egoistic effort in performing actions. "He whose mind is not attached to anything, who has subdued his heart and who is free from all longing -- he, by renunciation, attains supreme perfection, which is freedom from action." (The Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 49 -- Nikhilananda translation)