

Cakras: The Psychic Channels in the Body: A Study in Tantra Philosophy

Prabir Tripura

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Tripura University

Abstract:

Chakras or plexus are the energy centres of the body through which life energy flows throughout the human body. The present work is an attempt to understand the Cakras and the psychic channels in the body from Tantra philosophical perspective. It was revealed that in Upanishads thousands of years ago that human body has highly developed energy field. In this article I have analysed the function of energy channels in the human body. The system of energy centres is called cakras – it literally means wheel of subtle power, which act as storehouse of energy. They are situated in the energy body and function as centres for receiving and assimilation the life force or Vital Energy. In Veda and Upanishads stated the human body is composed of five elements which are earth, water, air, fire and ether. In this sense the human body called Panchabhuta Sarir or Fivefold body. Almost all the system of Indian philosophy accepted human body categories into three parts, namely. Gross body (*Sthula sarira*), Subtle body (*Suksma sarira*) and Causal body (*Karana sarira*). The link between the physical body, subtle body and the casual body is the *prana*. The main centre of this *pranic* energy in each body are called *Cakras*.

Keywords: chakra, nadi, ida, pingala, susumna, muladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahat, visudha, Ajna, plexi.

Introduction:

According to the teaching of Tantra yoga, human body has three bodies and three associated minds, one in each of the three major dimensions of being. In Tantra philosophy, human being can transcend himself and attain a state of being unified with and equal to the Supreme being, the Absolute. Human being can liberate himself from the limitations of the three bodies and their corresponding minds, and finally entering the supreme being. In Indian philosophy human body categories into three types, namely, the Gross body (*Sthula sarira*), the Astral body or Subtle body (*Sukshma sarira*) and the Causal body (*Karana sarira*). The link between the physical body, subtle body and the casual body is the *prana*. The main centre of this *pranic* energy in each body are called Cakras.

Chakras

The literal meaning of the word *chakra* is ‘wheel’ or ‘circle’, but the in the yogic context a better translation of the Sanskrit word is ‘vortex’ or ‘whirlpool’. The *chakras* are vortices of psychic energy and there are visualized and experienced as circular movement of energy at particular rates of vibration. The *chakras* relate to physiological as well as physic centres whose structures correspond more or less with the traditional description. These nerve centres are not situated inside the spinal cord itself, but lie like junctions on the interior walls of the spinal column. A *Chakra* is like a centrally placed electricity pole

from which electrical wires are run to different places, houses and street lights in the vicinity. The *nadis* which emerge from each *chakra* carry *Prana* in both directions. There is a forward and backward *pranic* motion in the *nadis*, which is analogous to flow of alternating current in electrical wires. There are six *chakras* in the human body which are directly connected with the higher unilluminated centres of the brain. All the *chakras* are inter connected to teach other.

Muladhara Chakra: The first *chakra* is *Muladhara*. It is situated in the pelvic floor and corresponds to the coccygeal plexus of nerves. In the masculine body it lies between the urinary and excretory openings, in the form of a small dormant gland termed the perineal body. In the feminine body it is situated inside the posterior surface of the cervix. *Muladhara* is the first *chakra* in the spiritual evolution, where one goes beyond animal consciousness and starts to be a real human being. It is also the last *chakra* in the completion of animal evolution. It is said that from *Muladhara chakra* right down to the heels there are other lower *chakras* which are responsible for the development of the animal and human qualities of instinct and intellect. From the *Muladhara Chakra* upwards lie the *chakras* which are connected with illumination and evolution of the higher or superman. *Muladhara Chakra* has control over the entire range of human excretory and sexual functions.

Swadhisthana Chakra: The second *Chakra* is *Swadhisthana*, the Sanskrit word *swa* means one's own' and *adhisthana* means 'dwelling place or residence'. *Muladhara* occupies a very important place in the scheme of *chakras*, *Swadhisthana* which is located very near to *Muladhara*, is also involved in and responsible for the awakening of *kundalini shakti* in *Muladhara*. *Swadhisthana* corresponds to the reproductive and urinary systems in the gross body and physiologically related to the prostatic or utero-vaginal plexus of nerves. The location of *Swadhisthana* is at the base of the spinal column, at the level of the coccyx or tailbone. It is related to water element, and to emotion and sexuality. Activation of this *Chakra* the aspirant becomes in freedom from stomach ailments, increase in sex power, and cure of sexual debility, increase in courage and fearlessness and magnetism, etc. located at the lowest point or termination of the spinal cord. It corresponds to the sacral plexus of nerves and controls the unconscious.

Manipura Chakra: The third *Chakra* is *Manipura*, situated in the spinal column exactly at the level of the navel. It corresponds to the solar plexus and controls the entire process of digestion, assimilation and temperature regulation in the body. *Manipura* is derived from two Sanskrit words: *mani* meaning 'jewel' and *pura* meaning 'city'. Therefore, *Manipura* literally means 'city of jewels. In the Tibetan tradition, this *chakra* known as *mani padma*, which means 'jewelled lotus'. *Manipura* is a very important centre as far as the awakening of *kundalini shakti* is concerned. It is the centre of dynamism, energy, willpower and achievement and it is often compared to the dazzling heat and power of the sun, without which life on earth would not exist.

Anahat Chakra: The fourth *Chakra* is *Anahat*, the word *anahat* actually means 'unstruck' or 'unbeaten'. This centre is known as such because of its relationship with the heart, which throbs, beats or vibrates to a constant unbroken rhythm. It is said that in many of the scripture that there is a sound which is non-physical and non-empirical, which is transcendental in nature, and this sound is endless and unbroken in the same way that the heart beats faithfully and continuously from before birth up until death. *Anahat Chakra* is situated in the spinal column on the inner wall, directly behind the centre of the chest. It corresponds to the cardiac plexus of nerves, and also controls the functions of the heart, the lungs, the diaphragm and other organs in this region of the body.

Vishuddhi Chakra: The fifth *Chakra* is *Vishuddhi*; *Vishuddhi Chakras* is known as the 'purification centre'. The Sanskrit word *Shuddhi* means 'to purify', and in this *chakra* the purifying and harmonizing of all

opposites take place. *Vishuddhi* is also known as the ‘nectar and poison centre’. Here, the nectar which drips down from *bindu* is said to be split into the pure form and the poison. The poison is discarded and the pure nectar then nourishes the body, ensuring excellent health and longevity. Vishuddhi chakra is in the cervical plexus directly behind the throat pit. Its *kshetram* is in the front of the neck, at the throat pit or thyroid gland. The physiological concomitants of *vishuddhi* are the pharyngeal and laryngeal nerve Plexi. This chakra corresponds to the cervical plexus of nerves and controls the thyroid complex and also some system or articulation, the upper palate and the epiglottis.

Ajna Chakra: *Ajna*, the sixth and most important *Chakra*, corresponds to the pineal gland, lying in the midline of the brain directly above the spinal column. This chakra controls the muscles and the onset of the sexual activity. Tantra and yoga maintain that *Ajna Chakra*, the command centre, has complete control over all the functions of the disciple’s life. The six chakras serve as switches for turning on different parts of the brain. The awakening which is brought about in the chakras is conducted to the higher centres in the brain via the *nadis*.

There are also two higher centres in the brain which are commonly referred to in kundalini yoga: *Bindu* and *Sahasrara*. Bindu is located at the top back of the head, where Hindu brahmins keep a tuft of hair. This the point where oneness first divides itself into many. Bindu feeds the whole optic system and is also the seat of nectar or *amrit*. *Sahasrara* is supreme; it is the final culmination of kundalini shakti. It is the seat of higher awareness. *Sahasrara* is situated at the top of the head and is physically correlated to the pituitary gland, which controls each and every gland and system of the body. *Chakras* are the psychic centres in the body. Energy moves through the *Cakras* to produce different psychic states. Modern biological science explains this is the chemical changes produce by endocrine glands, ductless glands whose secretions mix into the body’s bloodstream directly and instantaneously.

Nadis

In this section I have analyse the various psychic channels in the body. The link between the Physical body, Subtle body and the Causal body is the *prana*. The main centre of this *pranic* energy in each body are called *Cakras*. It is collection of glands and sub-glands, and the location of these glands and sub-glands differs from animal to animal. In human body the *cakras* are situated at the intersecting points of the *ida*, *susumna* and *pingala* (psycho-spiritual channels). *Chakras* wherever there is an interlacing of several nerves, arteries and veins, that centre is called as plexus. similarly, there are plexues or centre of vital forces in the Sushumna nadis. These are called *chakras* or *padmas*. All *nadis* spring from *kanda*. It is in the junction where the *sushumna nadi* is connected with the muladhara chakra. Among the innumerable *nadis*, *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Susumna* are the most important. *Ida* and *Pingala nadis* are on the two sides of the spinal cord and *Susumna* is within the spinal cord. *Ida* operates through the left nostril and *pingala* through the right nostril. When the breath operates through *Susumna*, the mind becomes steady. this steadiness of the mind is termed *unmani avastha*, that is also called the highest state in Raja-yoga. When the *nadis* are full of impurities, the breath cannot pass through the middle *nadi*.

Nadis are the channels through which the energy from these centres is disseminated. *Nadi* is a means for transfer from these centres is disseminated. *Nadi* is a means for transfer of *prana* from the *chakras* of the subtle body to the physical and causal bodies. In the physical body, there are tissue vessels, in the subtle body, there are channels and, in the causal body, the channels are there in the form of *ojas* (spiritual energy). Among all *nadis*, three- *susumna*, *ida* and *pingala*-are the basic channels. After enlightenment,

all *nadis* appear like channels of divine light. There are two views regarding the origin of *nadis*-one is the *kanda sthana* and the other the navel.

In the Jabaladarsanopanisad, we find that this centre is actually of nine finger breadth above the *Muladhara* and it is the navel region. That means, the *kanda sthana* or the centre of *nadis*, is nine finger breadths above the navel in biped beings, like the human and, above the heart, in quadrupeds. It is from this centre that the *nadis* rise above and extend below. The text Yogasikhopanisad states that the navel encircled by the *vilamba nadi* as the *nabhi chakra*, which it states is egg-shaped and, from here, the *nadis* originate. The *nadis* and their effect can be controlled through physical and mental means. A perfect harmony can be maintained among the *nadis* through asanas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, thus, attaining a disease-free physique and spiritual emancipation.

Susumna: This is also called *Brahma-nadi* and *Vaisnavi-nadi*. There is difference of opinion regarding its point of origin. The text Sandilyapanisad, states that it originates from the *Muladhara*, while the text, Chandogyapanisad and Sat-cakranirupanam, consider the point of its origin to be the heart and the *kanda sthana*, respectively. But most of the Vedic texts and the texts of yoga consider the *Muladhara* to be its origin. All texts consider that it terminates in the *brahmarandhra* on top of the head. The omnipresent prana and the kundalini *sakti* having reached the *brahmarandhra* flow back to the *Muladhara* through *Susumna* and thereafter, the energy is disseminated through-out the body. This *nadi* affects all body system too.

Ida And Pingala: *Ida* and *Pingala* *nadis* rise from the *Muladhara* and move up entwining around the *Susumna*, forming a link with each *cakra* on its way to the *Ajna Chakra*, where both of them merge with the *Susumna*. Both these are part of the sensory and motor nerves systems. The *Ida* rises from the left side, while the *Pingala* rises from the right although they are said to entwine around the *Susumna*, as they rise, the texts state that they rise straight like two tubules. The *pranic* energy is supposed to rise through them in an entwining manner. When the *Ida nadi* is active, the *jnana-sakti* or power of thinking is active and when the *Pingala* is active, then, *kriya-sakti* or *pranic* energy is active. Thus, there is functioning of body systems like digestion, extrovertness, etc. and when the *susumna* is active, then, the mind turns inwards and one progresses, spirituality.

Conclusion

The conclusion of *chakras* is that understanding and balancing the seven *chakras* can help achieve harmony and well-being in the body, mind and Spirit. In the Yoga-Tantra and the science of kundalini, prana is supposed to originate from *pingala nadi*. Within the framework of the spinal cord, there are three channels known as *nadis* in yoga. One is called *ida*, another is called *pingala* and the third is *sushumna*. *Ida nadi* represent the mental energy, *pingala* represents prana or *pranic* energy and *sushumna* represents spirit or spiritual awareness. These three *nadis* originate in *muladhara chakra*, which is situated at the perineum or cervix. *Pingala nadi* flows to the right from *muladhara* and continues to cross *ida* at each *chakra* all the way up to *ajna*. It is *chakra* through the which *pingala nadi* passes. The first one is *muladhara chakra* from which it originates. The second is *svadhisthana* where the *nadi* crosses to the left. The third is *manipura chakra* where the *nadi* crosses to the right. And the fourth is *anahata* where the *nadi* crosses to the left. The fifth is *vishuddhi* where the *nadi* crosses to the right and the sixth is *ajna* where the *nadi* terminates from the right. Similarly, *ida nadi* also crosses at each *chakra* but in the reverse order. *Pingala nadi* is the distributing channel for prana in the body, and from each *chakra* the prana is disseminated to every organ of the body. From *svadhisthana* the *pranic* energy is distributed to the genito-urinary system. *Manipura*

chakra supplies prana to the digestive system and anahata supplies the respiratory and cardiovascular system. From vishuddhi, distribution takes place the ears, eyes, nose and throat, and ajna chakra is the distributor of the energy through which human brain is fed.

References:

1. Aiyar. K. Narayanasvami, Thirty Minor Upanishads, Madras, 1914, <https://archive.org>.
2. Anandamurti, Shrii Shrii, Yoga Psychology, Ananda Mrga Publication, 1991.
3. Bhardwaj, Ajay, Celebrating Life with Yoga, DK Printworld publishers,2019.
4. Chaube, Dr. Deo Brat, Mind-Body relation in Indian Philosophy, Tara book Agency, Varanasi, 1991
5. Chennakesavan, Sarasvati, Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy, South Asia Books 1980
6. Dasgupta, Surendranath, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.-2, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1992.
7. *Johari, Harish, Chakras*, inner tradition India,1987.
8. Kumar, Kamakhya, Yoga Psychology A handbook of Yogic Psychotherapy, DK Printworld, 2013.
9. Mishra, T.N., Yoga-Tantra and Sensuousness in Art, D.K. Printworld (p) Ltd, New Delhi,2003.
10. Motoyama, Hiroroshi, Theories of the Chakras *Bridge to Higher Consciousnes*, New Age books, 2003.
11. Ramacharaka, Yogi, Hatha yoga, Yogi Publication Society,1904.
12. Sahi, Dr. B.B., Vital Energy Energy for Normal Body Function, New age books, 2009
13. Saraswati, Swami Satyananda, Kundalini Tantra, Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India,1984.
14. Saraswati, Swami Shantidharmananda, The Holistic Yoga, published by Srikunj Sadbhavana Manch, 2004.
15. Sharamon, Shalila, and Baginski, Bodo J., The Chakra Handbook *From Basic Understanding to Practical Appllication*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers pvt. Delhi,2003.