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### Kundalini Yoga as Represented in the Sri Chakra

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#### Abstract

This paper attempts to study the process of awakening of the Sri Chakra in the human body through yogic practises as described by the venerable eight century saint Adi Shankaracharya in his work Saundarya Lahiri. The diagrammatic description of the Sri Chakra, the

representation of Shiva-Shakti in its evolution as the Cosmos, as also as the Sahasrara inclusive of the six Chakras in the individual and the ascent of the Kundalini through meditation have been discussed.

**Keywords:** Kundalini, Sri Chakra, Shiva-Shakti

#### Sri Chakra as Propounded in the Kundalini Yoga

According to Tantra Shastra, man is a microcosm which contains the supreme energy of Shiva – Shakti which is also exists in the entire universe and worlds (Krishnakumar, 1993) [4]. Adi Shankaracharya has expostulated on the Sri Chakra in his stupendous work Saundaryalahari. The thinkers of the philosophy of Si Chakra also find a correspondence between the different parts of it and the six plexuses along the spinal column and the thousand petalled plexus of the Sahasrara in the brain. When we speak of the brain and the spinal cord in this description, it would be clearly understood that these are only the roughly corresponding physical regions forming the counterpart of the subtle body wherein the Chakras have their location. These is described in detail in verse 9 of the Saundaryalahari. Corresponding to the spinal column and the central nervous system is the system of psychic nerve currents having their origin at the back of the brain. The yogis call that region the thousand petalled lotus with which Sri Chakra is identified through super imposition. It is the ultimate source of powers known as *Ichha*, *Jnana* and *Kriya* or will, knowledge and action. It is these powers that manifest through the various of knowledge and action. All these organs are regulated by a central control in the brain, and that is identified with the *Baindava – sthana*, the central circle of the Sri Chakra. It is the seat of Shiva, Pure Being, and is the *Jyotirmandala*, the Sphere of Light because the eternal spiritual moon illumines it with its blissful light.

This Sahasrara is also the source of the three nerve currents of psychic significance. In Yogic language these nerve currents are called *Ida* on the left, *Susumna* in the centre, and *Pingala* on the right. Through the *Susumna* runs a narrow hollow canal (the *Kula* path), which is closed at the end, above the level of the anus at the base of the spinal column. These yogic nerves are psychic factors relating to the subtle body and having some correspondence with their physical counterparts. At the bottom of the *Susumna* against the level of anus, is the basic plexus known as *Muladhara*, described as a *Trikona* (triangular – shaped). Pictured as a lotus of four drooping petals. *Muladhara* is called the cave of the Kundalini, because Kundalini, the Serpent Power, remains sleeping, that is, inactive there, after having completed its evolutionary purpose with the production of the Earth Element, the last of the twenty-five categories, which forms the constituent of the *Muladhara*. Just as *Tripurasundari*, the Divine Mother is the Shakti, pictured as the Consort of Shiva, the Supreme Being, the Kundalini is the segment of that Cosmic Power as the Shakti of the Jiva, who is none other than an *Amsha* (particle) of the Supreme Shiva embodied as the individual (microcosm). It is this Shakti that evolves in the individual the counterparts of all the twenty-five Cosmic Categories. The first four pure categories: *Sadashiva*, *Ishvara*, *Shuddhavidya* and *Maya* are considered pure and therefore included within the thousand petalled lotus itself and the remaining twenty-one categories are included in the six plexuses or Chakras described as lotuses descending along the *Susumna* up to and inclusive of the *Muladhara*. Of these, the topmost located between the eyebrows is *Ajna* Chakra, a lotus of two petals constituted of the element Mind (*Manas*) which includes the five organs of knowledge and the five organs of action. Below that at the level of the throat is the *Vishuddhi* Chakra of sixteen petals

constituted of the Element Akasha. Next at the level of the heart is the Anahata Chakra, a lotus of twelve petals, having the Element Air as its constituent. Below that at the level of the navel is the Manipura, a lotus of ten petals of which the Element Water is the constituent. Still below at the level of the genitals is the Svadhisthana – Chakra in the shape of the six petalled lotus with Fire as the constituent element. Still below at the bottom of the Susumna is the basic plexus, the Muladhara, which has already been described as a four petalled lotus. It is constituted of the Earth element, the last and the twenty fifth category into which Shakti evolves. Just as the Cosmic shakti, Tripurasundari, evolves these twenty-five categories which go to combine into the manifest universe, the individual aspect of that Shakti evolves into these Centres representing the different categories and the body-mind, and having completed the evolutionary process sleeps or remains contracted or coiled up in the final category earth represented by the Muladhara which is also called the Trikona (the Triangle). The Yoga propounded in the Saundaryalahari is one of rousing the Kundalini through the Japa of the Mantra and concentrated meditation and leading the Power through the Susumna up to the Sahasra in the brain and uniting it with Shiva there. This results in perfect Samadhi. During its ascent the power touches and penetrates the six lotuses or plexuses in the hollow path of the Susumna, known as the Kula path. (Tapasyananda Swami, 1987) [6].

The ascent of the Kundalini is also helped by the scientific practice of Pranayama. In the enlightened person in whom the Kundalini is asleep, the Jnana shakti (cognitional power) and Kriya Shakti (volitional power) function through the Ida and the Pingala nerves that flank the Susumna. By the power of concentration generated by the Japa and the Pranayama, the Kundalini is awakened, and it forces its way up the Kula path, opening the closed bottom of the Susumna. Along with its upward course it gathers up also all the life energies that are functioning at the lower levels of the body, leaving these portions cold. For, all these energies are only what are dispersed from the Kundalini and therefore they are gathered up with the upward course of that Power. As the power touches one plexus after another, consciousness is raised to subtler levels, described in texts as the seven higher spheres. The Kula path and the Chakras situated in them are divided into three segments namely Brahma-granthi up to the Svasdhisthana which is considered the region of Agni (Fire) and of darkness, Vishnu-granthi up to the Anahata which is the reason of the sun and of alternating light and darkness, and Rudra-granthi up to the Ajna the region of the pure light of moon. The Sahasrara at the topmost end of the Kula Path in the brain is the region of the eternally blissful Spiritual Moon which is different of the Ajna Chakra. All these six chakras are involved in the Sahasrara and are only the gross expressions of what is involved in the Sahasrara. In the case of the aspirants who get absorption in the Shiva - Shakti in the thousand petalled lotus in the brain, all these Chakras too are absorbed in the Sahasrara, so long as the Samadhi lasts. As the six Chakras are gross manifestations of the Sahasrara, it is natural for them to get absorbed in their matrix along with the rise of the Kundalini, and manifest again when the Kundalini descends.

All this yogic psychology becomes important in the study of the Sri Chakra because it is supposed to represent Shiva-Shakti in its evolution as the Cosmos, as also as the Sahasrara inclusive of the six Chakras in the individual.

Thus, the Sri Chakra is made into a comprehensive symbol for worship and practising identification with Shakti even by those who follow the Samaycara through the external worship of the Sri Chakra in the Mahakasa (external sky), as contrasted with the true and fully competent worshippers of this class, who do worship internally, without any external symbols of ritual, through meditation in the Daharakasa (the sky of the heart). (Tapasyananda, Swami, 1987) [6].

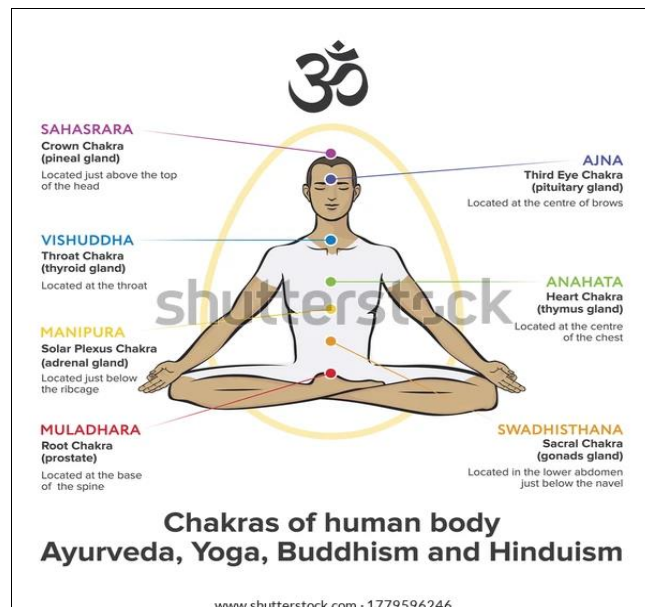


Fig 1: Chakras System Human Body Used Hinduism Stock Vector (Royalty Free) 1779596246, n.d.

### Ascent of Kundalini through Meditation

Verse 9 of the Saundaryalahari describing the awakening of the Kundalini through the adoration of the Divine mother are as follows:

*Mahim Muladhare kam api manipure hutavaham  
Sthitam svadhisthane hrdis marutam akasam upari;  
Mano' pi bhru-madhye sakalam api bhittva kula-  
patham  
Sahasrare padme saha rahasi patya viharase*

Through the above verse in the Saundaryalahari, Adi Shankaracharya has described the meditative adoration of Tripurasundari. This meditation consists in the awakening of the Kundalini and directing that Power to the Sahasrara in the head. Kundalini is the Shakti or Power of the Jiva (or the Individual Spirit). The Jiva is a part of Shiva, his Shakti is part of Tripurasundari. It is this Shakti of the Jiva or the individual that is known as the Kundalini. Shiva as the Jiva is in the subtle sphere represented by the brain in the body, which is described technically as Sahasrara or thousand petalled lotus; and the Shakti of the Jiva, known as Kundalini, is resting in the sphere represented by the base of the spine called the Muladhara, which is also called Trikona. It is called Kundalini or the coiled-up Power, and conceived as a coiled-up serpent, because the Shakti, having finished the evolution of the body together with the nervous system and the subtle body of the Jiva, has become contracted, as a result of which the Jiva is established in body consciousness and awareness of the physical world as the sole reality. The Jiva in this state is in the imprisonment of the nervous system and apprehends Reality only through it. Now this

state is the state of ignorance and involvement in the Sahasrara. The spinal column is what connects the Shiva as Jiva in the brain with his Shakti as Kundalini, and spiritual enlightenment comes when the Shakti, which is sleeping or lies contracted in the Muladhara, is roused up and enabled to unite with Shiva in the Sahasrara. The Samaya or internal worship of Shakti consists in this awakening of Her through concentrated meditation and uniting her with Shiva. This is what is described in this verse.

In this process the nervous and psychic structure of the human personality are involved. The brain, the seat of Shiva is what makes knowledge (Jnana – shakti) and action (Kriya – shakti) possible. The impulses connected with the above functions comes from the brain, and travel through two main Nadis (nerves), which proceed to the left and right side of the spine. They are called Ida and Pingala and correspond to the afferent and efferent nerves of modern physiology (Tapasyananda Swami, 1987)<sup>[6]</sup>.

Nadi in Sanskrit means nerve, tube, or blood vessel is a term for the channels through which, in traditional Indian medicine and spiritual theory, the energies such as prana of the physical body, the subtle body and the causal body are said to flow (“Nadi (Yoga),” 2023)<sup>[5]</sup>.

Pingala is the nerve or Nadi of the sun, through which solar energy flows. Ida is the Nadi of the moon through which the Lunar energy flows. The Pingala starts from the right nostril and Ida starts from the left nostril and move down to the base of the spine. The Susumna – Nadi is situated inside the spinal column. The Pingala and the Nadi intersect each other and at the Susumna at various places. These junctions are called chakras or wheels and they regulate the mechanism of the human body (Naragatti, 2020).

Through the Ida, sensations of external contacts by the senses are carried to the brain, and through the Pingala the reactions of the self - conscious principle in the brain are communicated to the mind and the senses. They thus link the brain centre with the base of the spine where Kundalini is resting. Besides, from them proceed all the subsidiary nerves to all parts of the body conveying all the sense impressions to the brain and the reactions of the brain centres to them, resulting in knowledge and action.

Between the Ida and the Pingala, through the centre of the spine runs another nerve, the canal centralis. In the Yogic language, this canal centralis is called the Susumna (or Kula patha) Though the Susumna or canal centralis is full of spinal fluid, in Yogic parlance it is considered hollow. Susumna is closed at the bottom and is inactive in a man in ignorance. Now the psychic process involved in spiritual enlightenment consists in the opening of the closed orifice of the Susumna by restraining the flow of energy through the Ida and the Pingala. This is achieved by the restraint of respiration through the practice of Pranayama, or the concentration achieved through the intense devotion of the Bhakta or the Vicara (discriminative process) of the Jnani. The collected and concentrated energy strikes on, and awakens, the Kundalini, which thereupon rises up through the hollow mystic path of Susumna, piercing its bottom, which is closed in the state of ignorance. In its upward flow the awakened Kundalini draws up all the life forces in the parts of the body below, leaving those parts cold. For, all those life forces are only emanations from the Kundalini. It is only when the Susumna is thus opened and the psychic energy restrained from its course along the Ida and the Pingala and made to go up the Susumna towards the centre

in the brain, that consciousness is released from the imprisonment of the nervous system, which the Spirit as the Jiva has evolved for close association with material Nature.

Through constant meditation, the Kundalini gets awakened, and this awakened Kundalini during its rise, touches and brings into operation the six psychic centres (Chakras or Plexus) corresponding to six points along the Susumna. These six Chakras (Plexuses) are represented as lotuses with drooping petals. The lowest at the level of the anus, is called Muladhara, represented as a lotus with four petals, wherein the Kundalini dwells contracted or asleep in the state of ignorance. It is formed of Prithvi Tattva (Earth Element). Earth is also the last evolute of Prakriti (Nature), after producing which the creative power remains contracted or coiled up as the Kundalini. Above it, at the level of the genitals, is Svasdhisthana, a lotus with six petals. It is made of Agni – tattva (Fire Element). Above it at the level of the navel is the Plexus known as Manipura having ten petals and composed of Jala – Tattva (water Element). Above that at the level of the heart is the Plexus called Anahata, a lotus of twelve petals consisting of Vayu Tattva (Air Element). Above that at the level of the throat is the Vishuddhi – Chakra, made of Akasha – Tattva (Sky Element), pictured as a lotus having sixteen petals. Above even that, at the level of the eyebrows is the Ajna Chakra as a two petalled lotus, composed of the Manas – tattva (Mind Element). Beyond that, that is above the Kula Path at the level of the middle brain is the Thousand Petalled Lotus known as Sahasrara, which is the seat of Shiva (Tapasyananda, Swami,1987)<sup>[6]</sup>.

The roused-up Kundalini touching each of the Chakras or Plexuses rises and unites with Shiva in the Sahasrara. As the Kundalini touches them, each of the lotuses is said to blossom, and reveal before the Jiva totally new and subtle dimensions of Reality. The gross world, which we are now aware of, is the vision of Reality when the Kundalini is at the lowest Chakra, the Muladhara and the *Svadhithana*. This gross world is perceived in the Mahakasa, gross space. Subtler and Subtler realms of Bliss Consciousness subsisting in the new dimension of Chittakasa (mental space) and the Chidakasa (spiritual space) are revealed as the Kundalini touches and awakens the higher and higher Lotuses or centres. These seven centres, it is said are related to their respective levels of consciousness in the cosmos. These levels are described as the seven regions, increasing in subtlety from the earth – the lokas known as *Bhu, Bhuvan, Suvar, Mahar, Tapa, Jana, and Satya*. The centres from *Muladhari* upwards are levels from which one can relate oneself to these subtle planes of consciousness. When the Kundalini is united with Shiva in the thousand - petalled Head - lotus known as Sahasrara, the higher evolution of the Jiva is completed and Absolute Consciousness, which is Absolute Bliss too, is attained by the meditating aspirant. This union takes place in the still subtler dimension of Chidakasa (Pure Consciousness). When the Kundalini comes down to the lower levels again, the Samadhi ends, and the earth consciousness is again attained. The goal of the spiritual aspirant through the Kundalini yoga is to unravel the serpent and unleash it up through the six chakras (Withanage, 2022)<sup>[7]</sup>.

## Conclusion

All orthodox systems of Indian philosophy have one goal in view: the liberation of the soul from all bondage and sorrow. The method of attaining this yoga. According to Ayurveda,

yoga has been accepted as a holistic method of curing the diseases of the body, mind, and the soul which in turn is necessary for the physical and mental wellbeing of the individual (Arumugam, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>. The word 'Yoga' is derived from two roots one meaning 'concentration' and the other meaning 'union'-union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. The central principal of Raja Yoga which is a branch of Tantra Shastra is the attainment of liberation by direct control of the mind. Mind is generally regarded as subtle matter. But in Raja Yoga, mind is regarded as a form of energy radiated by the self. This conscious energy is known as Prana. But out of the sum of *Pranic* energy only a small portion takes a kinetic *form* as psycho physical energy. The rest of the Prana remains dormant or 'coiled up' and is known as Kundalini. The locus of Kundalini is the region at the base of the spine. The method of Raja Yoga is to awaken this dormant *Pranic* energy. The awakened Kundalini rises through six Chakras or centres. When it finally reaches the centre in the brain, the mind attains its fullest development, the soul becomes omniscient and is liberated from all bondage and sorrow forever. Practitioners of Kundalini Yoga believe that it improves their mental wellbeing, changes their perspective, creates a new identity and a new perspective for everyday life (Kahkonen & da Silva, 2023) <sup>[3]</sup>.

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