

The Chakras, the Etheric Body and the Evolution of Consciousness

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Course 150

Everything in the manifested universe possesses an energy form, subtle and intangible yet substantial, which controls, governs and conditions the outer physical body. This is commonly known as the Etheric Body, or Etheric Double. The etheric body is the fiery extension of the sutratma (the “silver cord” which connects the Monad with the lower personal man, via the causal body).

The chakras, or energy centres, in the human being deal fundamentally with the FIRE aspect in man, or with his divine spirit. They are definitely connected with the Monad, with the will aspect, with immortality, with existence, with the will to live, and with the inherent powers of Spirit. [CF 165] ⁵

The Etheric Web:

This underlies and interpenetrates the entire physical body and nervous system, and is the blueprint upon which the physical body is constructed. ⁶

The Soul informs the mechanism through:

- a) The “thread of life” anchored in the heart. From there it pervades the entire physical body through the blood stream. ⁶
- b) The “thread of consciousness” or of intelligence is anchored in the head, in the region of the pineal gland, and from there the Soul orders or directs the physical plane activities, through the medium of the brain and nervous system. ⁶

The Soul connects with lower man through seven major centres. They are located in matter of the fourth ether. The centres are vitalised and controlled by thought and feelings, and are safely developed through right thought. Premature development of the centres through intense meditation or other practices is dangerous and this is not recommended. [CF 521] ⁵

The one main objective of the Etheric Body is to vitalise and energise the physical body thereby integrating it into the energy body of the Earth and of the Solar System. It is made up of a web of energy streams, or lines of force and of light. It constitutes part of the vast network of energies, which underlies all forms whether great or small (microcosmic or macrocosmic). Along these lines of energy the cosmic forces flow, as the blood flows through the veins and arteries. This constant, individual – human, planetary and solar – circulation of life forces through the etheric bodies of all forms is the basis of all manifested life, and the expression of the essential non-separateness of all life. [EH 2-3] ¹

This pranic energy, radiating constantly from the Sun, is absorbed by the etheric body, and stimulates animal activity and physical plane development. It affects the atoms of the physical body in three ways:

- a) It preserves the animal health of the body.
- b) It constructs and repairs the body keeping it in good physical health.
- c) It is the means by which man comes into physical contact with others.

The Three Etheric Spinal Channels

These carry a constant flow of life force up and down the spine, interweaving in a continuous interplay of light and motion. Symbolically, this is depicted by the Caduceus, derived from the stick carried by Hermes. The medical profession use the caduceus in their logo - two serpents are coiling

up a stick towards a pair of wings at the top. This symbolises the raising and purifying of the bodily fires until spiritual enlightenment is achieved. These three threads have specific functions:

- 1) PINGALA: Fire-by-friction flows along this channel, feeding matter and developing the personality.
- 2) IDA: When there is some alignment between soul and personality, solar fire will begin to flow.
- 3) SHUSHUMNA: As we near the end of our spiritual journey, the Rainbow Bridge (antahkarana) between the personality and the soul will have been built and the previous two fires (Fire-by-Friction and Solar Fire) will have been brought into equilibrium. This allows the Monad to reach the personality and arouse the Serpent Fire (Kundalini) from the Base Chakra, sending it up the central channel (shushumna). The link has now been made, and Monadic electric fire (Will-Power) is now able to descend and ascend via the etheric brain, passing without hindrance through the seven major Chakras.

The Etheric Body and the Nadis

The etheric body is composed of four types of highly specialised etheric substance, each of which manifests on one or other of the four etheric sub-planes of the Physical Plane. In time, when man has developed spiritually, through conscious growth and initiation, each of the four types of etheric substance will respond to the four higher levels of the Cosmic Physical Plane.

Seen clairvoyantly, the etheric body appears to be made up of a network of channels, or fine tubes (nadis), woven into an intricate web.

These nadis are the carriers of energy. They are in fact the energy itself and carry the quality of the energy from some area of consciousness in which the “dweller in the body” may happen to be focussed. This may be the astral plane or the planes of the Spiritual Triad, for none of the energies can control the physical body from any plane, no matter how high, except in manner. [TEV 145] ²

The nadis underlie man’s entire nervous system, making possible the transmission of nerve impulses and sensations via the etheric brain to the inner man, to the person who is in charge, so that he can guide and direct his physical actions.

Through these tubes, may flow all or any of the possible energies – emotional, mental, egoic, manasic, buddhic or atmic, according to the point in evolution, which the man concerned has reached. This always means that several energies are pouring through these tubes, unless the point in evolution is exceedingly low or unless one is dealing with a cleavage. [TEV 154] ²

A cleavage, mentioned above, is what can occur when the lower self is cut off, or disconnected from, the soul as in the case of a very selfish man, or a black magician, one who has “sold his soul to the devil” and consciously cut off communication with his soul.

Each of these tiny lines of energy are fivefold in nature and resemble five strands or fibres of force, closely knit together within a covering sheath of a different force. [EP II 592] ³

The energy lines (nadis) are fivefold because there are five different types of prana, (the major pranas) within the planetary life force we receive from the Sun. These pranas are used to energise and repair the physical body. If we look up into the sky on a sunny day, and slightly defocus our eyes we should be able to see lots of little silvery-white pinpoints of light darting and dancing about at high speed, continually in motion. These are vitality globules, or prana. The reason most people can see them is that they manifest very close to the physical plane, and are virtually physical.

This etheric web follows the general shape of the associated physical body, extending beyond its periphery to a distance of about two inches in every direction. In the average man, the etheric body extends outwards, creating what is known as the “health aura”. By examining the condition of the health aura, the state of health can be determined.

The Formation of the Energy Centres

At places where a number of these channels cross over each other, energy centres (chakras) can be seen:

- 1) The seven major energy centres are found where the lines of force cross 21 times;
- 2) The twenty-one minor centres are where the lines cross 14 times;
- 3) The forty-nine focal points are where they cross 7 times.
- 4) The many hundreds of other minute centres are scattered all over the body.

Associated with the seven major chakras are seven head centres, which lie within the influence of the Crown Centre. They are linked to the other centres in the body, and through them the force of the Ego is spread and circulated. There are also seven correlating physical head centres: The Alta Major Centre (situated at the base of the back of the skull), the Pineal Gland, the Pituitary Body and four lesser centres which are blended in the Alta Major Centre. [CF 168]

All these centres and focal points ...are connected each to each by larger channels than the mass of channels which constitute the etheric body as a whole, because many lesser channels and lines of forces or energy merge and blend as they near a centre or focal point. [TEV 152]²

There are five areas up the spinal column and two in the head where the energies are more potent and concentrated than elsewhere. These give rise to the seven major centres.

The word Chakra is Sanskrit for a wheel. It is applied to a series of wheel-like vortices, which exist in the surface of the etheric body of man. The Chakras or force-centres are points of connection at which energy flows from one vehicle or body of man to another.⁴

Master DK warns us not to concentrate on the etheric centres, not to try to force their opening prematurely. The unfoldment will take place naturally as a consequence of our evolutionary development.. It must be realised that the colours observed will vary from one person to another, and also according to the degree of spiritual development attained by the subject.

Description of the Chakras

The following is a description of the seven major chakras, seen through clairvoyant investigation:

1) The Crown Chakra (Sahasrara) is at the top of the head, and when in full activity, it is the most resplendent of all. It is the halo around the heads of saints, shown in religious paintings. The crown chakra is predominantly violet, though full of indescribable chromatic effects, and vibrates with almost inconceivable rapidity. It has a total of nine hundred and seventy-two petals. No wonder that it is referred to as the thousand petalled lotus. The number of the radiations of its primary force in the outer circle is nine hundred and sixty. In addition to this it has a sort of subsidiary central whirlpool of gleaming white flushed with gold in its heart – a minor activity which has twelve undulations of its own.⁴

2) The Brow Chakra (Ajna) is situated between the eyebrows and has the appearance of being divided into halves, one chiefly rose-coloured, though with a great deal of yellow, and the other predominantly a kind of purplish-blue, again closely agreeing with the colours of the special types of vitality that vivify it. This is the reason that in some Indian books it is said to have only two petals. However each half has forty-eight petals, making ninety-six in total.⁴

3) The Throat Chakra (Vishuddha) is the laryngeal centre at the throat and has sixteen petals. There is a great deal of blue in it, but the effect is silvery and gleaming, with a kind of suggestion as of moonlight upon rippling water. Blue and green predominate alternately in each petal.⁴

4) The Heart Chakra (Anahata) is located over the heart and is of a glowing golden colour. Each of its quadrants are divided into three parts, which gives it twelve petals, because its primary force makes for it twelve spokes.⁴

5) The Solar Plexus Chakra (Manipura) is also called the navel centre and is located just above the site of the umbilical. It receives a primary force with ten radiations, so it vibrates in such a manner

as to divide itself into ten petals. It is closely associated with feelings and emotions. Its predominant colour is a curious blending of several shades of red, though there is also a great deal of green. The petals are alternatively chiefly red and chiefly green.⁴

6) The Sacral Chakra (Svadisthana) is also known as the spleen centre. It is devoted to the specialisation, subdivision and dispersion of the vitality, which comes to us from the Sun. That vitality is poured out again from it in six horizontal streams, the seventh variety being drawn into the hub of the wheel. This centre has six petals, all of different colours, and is specially radiant, glowing and sun-like. Each of the six petals is predominantly the colour of one of the forms of vital force: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet.⁴

7) The Base Chakra (Muladhara) is at the base of the spine, and has a primary force, which radiates out in four spokes. The undulations give the effect of its being divided into quadrants, alternatively red and orange in hue, with hollows between them. It appears as if it is marked with the sign of a cross, the symbol often used for this centre. Sometimes it is portrayed as a flaming cross, indicative of the serpent fire (kundalini), which resides within it. The four quadrants can also be thought of as petals of a flower.⁴

The Centres in the human being... found on mental, emotional, etheric levels, are formed by force pouring down from the Ego, who transmits it from the Monad. Because the action of the centres is rotary, the result produced in matter is a circular effect that can be seen by the clairvoyant as fiery wheels. [CF 166-7]⁵

Thus, the etheric centres have astral and mental counterparts which together act as channels for the creative, energising, spiritual forces to pour down into the denser levels of manifestation.

The Unfolding of the Chakras

The degree of unfoldment of a man's chakras can be used to indicate his spiritual status. The chakras unfold in various stages:

1) As a child develops from an infant into a full-grown man of 21 years of age, the chakras also unfold until they have reached the same stage as was attained in the previous life, at the point when the man passed out of it. The man will then be able to take up his present life at the point he had reached in the last one, thereby picking it up where he left off last time round.

2) During adult life, as a man gains new life experiences, the chakras are able to awaken further. In some lifetimes only one chakra will be brought to a state of greater awakening; in other lifetimes several chakras may be further awakened. The development of the chakras during life varies with individuals.

3) The Chakras can be further awakened through the process of spiritual development and initiation, as the man consciously treads the Path of Enlightenment. [EH 37]¹

<u>CHAKRA</u>	<u>IN MOST PEOPLE</u>	<u>IN INITIATES</u>	<u>GLANDS</u>
1) CROWN	Ray 1	Ray 1	Pineal
2) BROW	Ray 5	Ray 2 (4)	Pituitary
3) THROAT	Ray 3	Ray 3	Thyroid
4) HEART	Ray 2	Ray 4	Thymus
5) SOLAR PLEXUS	Ray 6	Ray 5	Pancreas
6) SACRAL	Ray 7	Ray 6 (5)	Gonads
7) BASE	Ray 4	Ray 7	Adrenals

The Relationship between the Chakras, Rays and the Endocrine Glands

Each of the seven major energy centres governs that part of the physical body where it is located. The condition of the chakras directly affects the condition of the physical body and the associated

endocrine glands in the sympathetic nervous system. When the centres are awakened and balanced, there is an associated highly electrified nervous system, energised and responsive. This will result in a well-balanced endocrine system and a healthy physical body. The vitality and life pouring through the entire body will then be of such potency that automatically the physical body will be resistant to disease and ill health. In the world today, the development of the chakras in the average person is uneven, with some centres unawakened, others over stimulated, and with the centres below the diaphragm overactive. This causes imbalance in the physical body leading to over stimulation and over activity in some parts of the body and a serious lack of vitality in others. [EH 197-8] ¹

This results in disease (or dis-ease) and ill health.

Disease is caused by:

- 1) Inherent or hereditary tendencies or predispositions present in the bodily tissue,
- 2) As the result of the radiation or the non-radiation of the centres, working through the nadis,
- 3) from external impacts or from contact with infectious and contagious diseases and epidemics.

These, man is unable to resist, owing to the lack of development of his centres.

Many different aspects of ill health can be traced directly to the condition of the centres, as they determine the activity or non-activity of the nadis. These in turn affect the nervous system, making the endocrine system what it is in the individual man, and the blood stream is responsible for this condition reaching every part of the body. [EH 194] ¹

Triangles of Fire ⁶

As evolution proceeds, spiritual fire rises through the centres, moving always in triangular formation. Once it has free passage along any triangle it flames continuously, but always there is one triangle more radiant and luminous than the others, and it is from this that the teachers of the race can appraise a man's evolutionary position. The triangles are composed as follows:

- 1) Base-sacral solar plexus (average man)
- 2) Base-throat-heart (advanced man)
- 3) Head-heart-throat (the initiate on the Path)

The third triangle forms when the higher centres are absorbing the force of the lower centres. Then the three physical head centres begin to awaken – the pineal gland, pituitary body, and alta major centre.

- 1) Pineal Gland: As the crown chakra wakens so does the pineal gland, leading to the development of the "Third Eye". Man can then ascertain the purpose of the Ego, and draw energy from higher levels.
- 2) Pituitary Body: As the Heart Centre awakens the pituitary body also becomes active, receiving energy through the sutratma from the lower mental, astral and etheric planes. It enables man to mould and build in deva substance.
- 3) Alta Major Centre: When fully developed, it links the spinal column (kundalini fire), the pineal gland and the pituitary body. It is the physical correspondence to the antahkarana, enabling man to materialise and activate any desired form, which he may be in process of constructing. [CF 960-6] ⁵

When the triangle of force that these three physical centres form is in circulatory effect, the greater triangle can be seen in circulation; it becomes a "wheel turning upon itself." The major etheric centres are in full action, and the man is nearing the moment of liberation. [CF 965] ⁵

Eventually, the separating walls within the sheath of the nadis eventually dissolve under the impact of soul force. Now the disciple has the free flow of force through the Ida and Pingala pathways and gradually through the central Shushumna and out into the nadis.

The Soul can now deliberately raise the kundalini fire, which immediately burns all the etheric webs separating the various centres. The Soul is now able to withdraw at will from its physical vehicle. This process culminates at the third initiation. [EPII 62-7] ³

Kundalini Fire ⁶

The coiled serpent residing in the Base Chakra is the representative of the great cosmic power, (Shakti) which created and sustains the universe. Kundalini is the union of the three fires – solar, electric and fire by friction. As Kundalini rises up the body it steadily increases the vibration of every atom in the physical, astral and mental bodies. Moving through Shushumna it burns all dross from the etheric body. If this occurs naturally as result of soul impression, supernormal powers result. [EH184-5] ¹

Exercises designed to prematurely unfold the chakras and raise kundalini can result in severe physical and psychological illness, as they can cause damage to the physical nervous system, leading to insanity and possible death.

The Evolution of Consciousness and the Initiations

Initiations are new beginnings, which mark important stages along the Path of Enlightenment. Each initiation heralds an expansion in consciousness and corresponds to a plane of nature. Initiations 1 to 5 are the human initiations, after the completion of which the man becomes the perfected fivefold superman, a Master of the Wisdom. Initiations 6 and 7 give access to higher levels of consciousness and to cosmic realms outside the solar system.

In the following, DK gave an excellent overview of the initiations:

If you will study the nine initiations and look upon them from this angle, you will see how each does most definitely mark a point of attainment, and therefore the entire subject of initiation takes on a new beauty and appears more worthy of the pain and struggle of attainment. Let me give you an indication (no more than that) of what I mean.

Initiation I - Birth. Freedom from the control of the physical body and its appetites.

Initiation II - Baptism. Freedom from the control of the emotional nature and the selfish sensitivity of the lower self.

Initiation III - Transfiguration. Freedom from the ancient authority of the threefold personality, marking a climaxing moment in the history of all initiates.

Initiation IV - Renunciation. Freedom from all self-interest, and the renouncing of the personal life in the interest of a larger whole. Even soul-consciousness ceases to be of importance and a more universal awareness, and one closer to the divine Mind, takes its place.

Initiation V - Revelation. Freedom from blindness - a liberation which enables the initiate to see a new vision. This vision concerns the Reality lying beyond any hitherto sensed or known.

Initiation VI - Decision. Freedom of choice. I have dealt with these choices in an earlier part of this book.

Initiation VII - Resurrection. Freedom from the hold of the phenomenal life of the seven planes of our planetary Life. It is in reality a "lifting out of or above" the cosmic physical plane.

Initiation VIII - Transition. Freedom from the reaction of consciousness (as that word is understood by you) and a liberation into a state of awareness, a form of conscious recognition which has no relation to consciousness, as you understand that term. It might be regarded as complete freedom from sensitivity, yet with a full flowering of that quality to which we give the inadequate name "compassion." More I cannot say.

Initiation IX - Refusal. Freedom from all possible forms of enticement, particularly with reference to the higher planes. It must constantly be remembered (and hence my constant reiteration) that our seven planes are the seven sub planes of the cosmic physical plane.

This goal of freedom is in reality the main incentive to tread the Path of Return. One of the most spiritually exciting things taking place in the world today is the use, in every country, of the word Freedom; it was that great disciple, F. D. Roosevelt, who "anchored" the word in a new and more universal sense. It now has a fuller and deeper meaning to humanity. [RI 685-687] ⁷

Before each initiation is taken, evolutionary work must be carried out upon certain of the chakras. As a man progresses along the Path of Development, there is an ordered transfer of energy from the lower centres to the higher ones. This is a natural process, which can be speeded up in those who wish to tread the Path, through special intensive training from the Masters of the Wisdom. The stages of transference are:

- a) We begin with the emotional, unintelligent person, whose centres are sluggish and virtually fully closed. Here the sacral centre is dominant.
- b) The average intelligent person will have a greater amount of activity in the lower centres, with the solar plexus becoming very active, as the focus of consciousness remains below the diaphragm. The higher centres remain relatively inactive. This person is dominated by his physical desires and emotions and to a lesser extent by his lower mind. [EPII 520-6] ³

The Transferences of Energy from the Lower to the Higher Centres

1) The first transference, from the sacral centre to the throat centre, usually takes place in the highly intelligent aspirant, over several lives. The centres below the diaphragm are fully awakened, but the sacral centre is still dominant. Energy streams are received from below by the sacral centre and are beginning to be deflected up to the higher centres. This covers the later stages of the Probationary Path, when the aspirant is making every effort to discipline his lower nature. The goal of this stage is "Purification and control of the lower appetites." Sacral forces are transferred to the throat and, to an almost negligible extent, from the solar plexus to the heart. Most aspirants in the world today are at this stage, which is preparatory to the expression of the Mystical Life when the heart and throat centres will become active. Once this stage has been completed, the 1st Initiation can be taken. The early stages of the Path of Discipleship take the aspirant towards the 2nd Initiation.

Goal of the 1st Initiation: to become a self-conscious, highly individualistic person, controlling the physical nature.

2) At the stage of the second transference, the disciple has a dominant personality, is in control of the lower forces, and is creative, ambitious and powerful. He is beginning to be governed and controlled by the throat and heart centres, and to transfer the forces, which have been raised to the heart and throat, to the brow (ajna) centre. This latter centre governs the integrated personality, which is becoming more active and dominant. The centres below the head are all active, but the centres below the diaphragm will be subordinated to and controlled by those found above.

The ajna centre is vivid and potent; the throat centre is intensely active and the heart centre is rapidly awakening. [EPII 520-6] ³

The powerful and ambitious stage occurs upon the Path, until the 3rd Initiation is taken, and the Soul gains control over the lower mind and then the entire personality. The period between the 2nd and 3rd initiations is often one of intense suffering. Light pours in only occasionally from the soul. [RI 684] ⁷

The objective of all training given on the Path of Discipleship and up to the 3rd Initiation is to induce that clear thinking which will render the disciple free from illusion and give to him that emotional stability and poise which gives no room for the entrance of any of the world glamour. [GL 33] ⁸

Goal of the 2nd Initiation: to gain freedom from the control of the emotional nature and the selfish sensitivity of the lower self. The solar plexus centre is being controlled by the will of the dominant personality.

3) This transference, from the base centre to the crown centre, takes place during the later stages of the Path of Discipleship, up until the time of the 3rd Initiation. More and more the Soul is expressing itself through the medium of the personality.

The crown centre becomes radiantly active, due to the uprising in a fresh and more potent manner of the mystical instinct, plus, this time, an intelligent approach to reality. This results in:

- 1) the soul begins to pour its energy into all the etheric or vital centres, via the head centre.
- 2) The point at the heart of each centre becomes so brilliant, that it “dims the light of all that lies around.”

All the centres in the body are then swept into ordered activity by the forces of love and will. Then takes place the final transference of all the bodily and psychic energies into the head centre through the awakening of the centre at the base of the spine. Then the great Polar opposites, as symbolised and expressed by the head centre (the organ of spiritual energy) and the centre at the base of the spine (the organ of the material forces) are fused and blended and from this time on the man is controlled only from above, by the soul. [EPII 526] ³

Goal of the 3rd Initiation: The understanding of the Divine Plan and consequent cooperation with it. [EP 528] ³

It can be seen from the above, that the chakras and the etheric body naturally come into greater activity as part of the normal evolutionary process. Those who wish to speed up their development can do so through right living, right relationships and correct meditational practices. Any attempt to force open the chakras before the necessary strengthening and purification of the lower bodies has taken place will lead to disaster. It is like trying to force open a rosebud to hasten the flowering of the rose.

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