



Your Three Lower Chakras and the Material World

- One way to understand the chakras is through a developmental model, which we observe from several perspectives:
 - the correlation between the *chakra* and the time of life in which it predominates
 - the chakras' relationship to psychological stages of development
 - the chakras' contribution and limitations as they relate to our actions, speech and thoughts
- 1st *chakra* is dominant from birth to the age of approximately eighteen months.
 - its inherent qualities compel you to put your own survival above everyone and everything else—no matter the cost to others
 - to satisfy your need to survive, you are prepared to take whatever, from whomever; this is the impulse that fuels hunter/gather mentality
 - the first three of the four biological urges (sleep, hunger, survival, sex) dominate all other concerns
 - 1st *chakra* dominance drives war, gang activity as well as the behavior of those who perceive their survival is threatened (e.g. natural disasters)
- 2nd *chakra* is dominant between the ages of two to five years old.
 - this *chakra* is characterized by an overwhelming sense of attraction and attachment
 - from the most animalistic-like urges of 1st *chakra*, the 2nd *chakra* now compels you to desire,



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attract or create "more;" you seek an abundance of things you like

- the transition from 1st to 2nd reflects an evolutionary step in humankind and, from a historical perspective, becomes the basis for the development of civilization as a whole
- it becomes the basis for agrarian societies, where mankind determined that their desire for abundance could be satisfied through planning and engineering (delayed gratification), while cooperating with the cycles of nature
- in this stage, desires are less based on need and more on want, nonetheless the intensity that fuels these desires may be just as forceful as those related to 1st *chakra* drives
- 3rd *chakra* moves to the fore between the ages of five and seven.
 - the basis for this shift is moving from a purely biological and/or material focus to a personal focus, reflecting a new concern/orientation: how one is perceived by the world
 - self-perception, in which you judge yourself by how others perceive you, your standing related to another's standing; personality begins its process of becoming crystallized
- From the viewpoint of tantra, most human beings don't evolve past the influence and conditioning of the first three chakras. Most are ruled primarily by survival, attachment and ego.
- Unless the chakras beyond the first three are activated through meditation, prayer, contemplation, some other form of self-reflection or a profound, life-changing experience in which these lower urges are objectified, it is said that the higher chakras do not exist.



The Higher Chakras and the Sublime World

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- 4th *chakra* holds the power that steadies the mind and subdues the forces of the lower chakras; it provides access to the sense of self that grants stability and the capacity to overrule the destructive tendencies of the lower chakras.
 - one of the most poignant teachings on the heart center is that it can hold 1,000 times more *shakti*—spiritual power—than the lower three chakras combined
 - thus, a clear sign of the 4th *chakra* being awake is that one has control, that you are no longer at the mercy of the lower impulses of the first three chakras
 - opening your heart means a significant departure from your lower nature; if you continue to struggle with the negative aspects of your lower chakras, it is a clear sign that your heart center is not awake or active
 - the heart sets you free and awakens a way of being that sets you on your spiritual path
 - it harmonizes both worldly and spiritual sensibilities
 - the heart is the seat of non-dual awareness, self-essence and Divinity
- The heart marks the beginning of the end of the seeker's journey—where seeker and sought merge.
 - through the heart, consciousness shifts from self-identification to collective consciousness (unconditional love, compassion, generosity etc.)
 - the heart also guides one into emotional equilibrium, the balance of dependence, independence and



interdependence—the ideal atmosphere for loving and fulfilling relationships

- 5th *chakra* awakening is characterized by mastery of the 24 tattwas.
 - the signs and symptoms include self-mastery and the capacity to influence the constituents of nature (*tattwa*)
 - in addition, the 1st *chakra* acts as a portal to the higher realms, the capacity to communicate the teachings at the highest levels
 - the teachings are now expressed through you and you are a living expression of the teachings
- 6th *chakra* is the center of inner and outer command.
 - on an internal level, you rest on the seat of the Teacher, the light that is the source of all teachings and traditions
 - the 6th *chakra* is the ruler of the conscious mind
 - this is where the highest expression of *buddhi*—pure, discriminative intelligence is ever-unfolding
 - informed by *dharma*, your vision is constantly tuned to the greater good; even in a sea of turbulence, you rest in the light of wisdom and guidance
 - your life reflects these higher truths and is a reflection of awakening at the 6th *chakra*
- 7th *chakra* is the final realization of pure consciousness.
 - pure transcendence; where all limitations, time, space and duality have dissolved
 - you are no longer confined to human perception; you rest as the king of all kings, the queen of all queens—the Ruler of the universe, the seat of consciousness

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Constituents of the Chakras: *Chitta, Prana, Tattwa*

- The word *chakra* has various definitions, including: “wheel,” “circle,” or “cluster.”
- As clusters/collections of subtle forces and qualities, each *chakra* has a unique effect on perception, overall awareness and the state of the *kundalini*.
- The teachings on *kundalini* yoga detail seven major chakras; other yogic and tantric traditions list 9, 12, even 14 or more chakras.
- The classic teachings on the chakras—unfamiliar to many modern yoga students—can be summed up by the intent of the practices outlined in *laya* yoga (the “yoga of dissolution”), the practice of which is synonymous with *kundalini* yoga.
 - the ancient intent of working with the chakras is to dissolve them
- Why would you want to dissolve your chakras? The answer is that the chakras:
 - house your deepest, unconscious patterns
 - condition your perception, actions and thoughts, shape unconscious thought and behavior and thus, hinder you from self-realization/*kundalini* awakening
 - in short, dissolving the chakras transforms you on every level and, in the ultimate sense, allows you to reshape your *karma*
- The chakras are made up of three specific constituents: *chitta*, *prana* and *tattwa*.
 - *chitta*—your unique storehouse of memories
 - *prana*—varying degrees of life-force flow through each *chakra*, influenced by previous actions and the quality of your awareness at any given moment



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- *tattwa*—refers to one of the five elements of the natural world: earth, water, fire, air and ether, plus what it described as the sixth element—mind—each of which are the seed for each of the first six chakras (the 7th is beyond all)
- Consider how the elements and their qualities affect you.
 - Maui with its dominant elements of water and wind affect you and your thoughts, emotions and behavior very differently than, say, New York with its dominance of earth and fire
 - people who are more earthy (1st *chakra*) or more spacey (6th *chakra*) have a unique set of characteristics, affecting their sensibilities and proclivities
 - *tattwa*—the five elements impact you whether or not you are aware of them affecting you
 - the unique characteristics of each *chakra* are shaped to some degree with the element associated to it
- The chakras and their associated elements:
 - earth – 1st *Chakra*
 - water – 2nd *Chakra*
 - fire – 3rd *Chakra*
 - air – 4th *Chakra*
 - ether – 5th *Chakra*
 - mind – 6th *Chakra* or third-eye center
- As it relates to *prana*: depending upon which of your chakras has more (or less) *prana* flowing through it, you will be more (or less) influenced by that *chakra* in the shaping of your perception, actions and thoughts.
- As it relates to *chitta*, your memories (even those from previous lives) are held in the chakras, constantly

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shaping perception, actions and thoughts.

- Because chakras are part of conditional/dualistic phenomena, they are forever determining your character, your responses, your perceptions—your destiny.
- The rationale for dissolving the chakras has everything to do with the understanding that the extent to which you are ruled by your chakras, you are not free—you are less than fully yourself; you are disconnected from the light of pure consciousness.
- Laya yoga consists of dissolving the conditional qualities of the chakras, so that the luminous light of spirit subsumes all limitations, including those that subtly bind you to the elements and to your storehouse of memories—*chitta*.
- Once you have dissolved them, you are no longer governed by them. Once memory, the elements, and even your partially awakened *prana shakti* is absorbed into the Infinite, you have access to unconditional and complete freedom.

Know Your Chakras, Know Your Self

- Pure, unfiltered light when divided becomes the color spectrum. The purest sound, the source of all sound (inaudible vibration) becomes many sounds.
- Similarly, the chakras are seven different gradations of pure consciousness.
- It is important to understand that the chakras were seen, not devised.
 - they are not a mental construct
 - they are part of your subtle anatomy, just as your spine is part of your physical anatomy

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- The sages revealed several principles as it relates to working and transforming the chakras:
 - each *chakra* consists of a specific number of nadis (energy channels) that intersect, commonly they are represented by petals
 - each of these energy lines is identical to a unique sound/vibration, more specifically a letter in the *Sanskrit* alphabet, which is called *matrika*
 - in total there are 51 petals or nadis leading into the seven chakras; it is no coincidence that in total there are 48 audible and 3 inaudible letters in the *matrika*
- Each *chakra* also has a unique form or *yantra*; all of them include a circle along with specific shape(s) or geometric pattern(s) within the circle.
- Finally, each *chakra* has a seed sound (*bija mantra*) that is the sound body of the element corresponding to that particular *chakra*.
- There are additional elements that can be meditated upon or used for transforming the chakras, but for the purposes of this discussion and as it relates to the practice of *bhuta shuddhi*, this compilation will suffice:
 - 1st *muladhara chakra* (*mula* = "root, base" *dhara* = "foundation, position"); 4 petals with a square; *bija mantra*: *lam*—earth element
 - 2nd *svadhisthana chakra* (*swa* = "self" *dhistana* = "abode" meaning the abode of the Self); 6 petals; a lit crescent moon resides within the circle and refers to the unconscious; *bija mantra*: *vam*—water element
 - 3rd *manipura chakra* (*mani* = "self luminous gem" *pura* = "city" meaning "the city of the

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self-luminous and wish-fulfilling gems");
10 petals surround the circle, inside an
upward pointing triangle; *bija mantra*:
ram—fire element

- 4th *anahata chakra* (*anahata* = "unstruck," refers to the heart as the seat of the eternal sound, the source of creation; it also means "unstricken," in other words, "the place where no pain can enter"); 12 petals with two overlapping, smoky-blue triangles, of which a single luminous flame (depicting the light of the Self) resides in the center; *bija mantra*: *yam*—wind element
- 5th *vishuddhi chakra* (*vishuddhi* = "pure"), 16 petals with the full moon residing within the circle; *bija mantra*: *ham*—ether element
- 6th *ajna chakra* (*a* = "I" *jna* = "command" meaning "I command center"); 2 petals; inside is a yellow upward pointing triangle, surrounding a flame; *bija mantra*: *soham*—the mind
- 7th *sahasrara chakra* ("thousand-petaled") 1,000 or 1 petal(s); all color and form dissolve here; countless rays of light; pure, universal sound: *om*—beyond all elements and mind



Introduction to the Practice of *Bhuta Shuddhi*

Name	Location	Mantra	Yantra	Attributes
Muladhara ("root foundation")	Base of Spine	<i>Lam</i>	Yellow Square, surrounded by 4 petals, a sleeping serpent wraps 3 1/2 times around a shiva lingam	Survival, plane of aversion, fear of loss (death), biological imperatives, stability, embodiment
Svadhithana ("dwelling place of the Self")	Top of sacrum	<i>Vam</i>	A white crescent moon within an ocean-blue circle, surrounded by 6 petals	Plane of sexuality, desire and attachment, productivity, procreation and creativity
Manipura ("city of gems")	Navel	<i>Ram</i>	Upward pointing red triangle surrounded by a circle with ten petals	The seat of transformation, self-confidence, strength, power, psychic ability
Anahata ("unstruck"—the place no pain can enter")	Between shoulderblades, in spine	<i>Yam</i>	Two smoky-blue interlocking triangles (i.e. star of David) within a circle, surrounded by twelve petals	Balances the worlds of spirit and matter, body, mind/emotions and soul, the plane of joy, compassion and love
Vishuddhi ("pure")	Throat	<i>Ham</i>	Sky-blue circle (full moon-like) surrounded by sixteen petals	Plane of willpower and one-pointedness, purity. Access to understand and communicate the spirit of the teachings
Ajna ("I command")	Mid-brain	<i>Soham</i>	Yellow upward pointing triangle, surrounded by a circle, in the center is a white flame	Spiritual vision, self-mastery, pranic control center, seeing the good in all things
Sahasrara ("thousand petaled")	Crown, space between brain and skull	<i>OM</i>	Countless rays of white light, pinkish aura, thousand petaled lotus	Pure consciousness, beyond time, space and form. Singular, non-dual awareness, access to the realm of all knowledge

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- The *Bhuta Shuddhi Kriya* Meditation is a master practice. It is a systematic approach to *laya* yoga.
- As previously discussed, the aim of the practice is to dissolve each of the chakras and their corresponding elements.
- The practice is a form of *kundalini* yoga, rooted in the tantric vision that the body houses the most sacred altar of life—where you are able to directly experience and worship Divinity.
- The practice has three stages:
 - stage 1: see the *kundalini* awakening as light, experience its ascent; as it rises through each successive *chakra*, it subsumes all the conditions and limited qualities of the *chakra*, dissolving each one into pure consciousness and light
 - stage 2: apply the three prescribed cycles of *pranayama*, with accompanying *kriyas*, these incorporate the purification of the subtle body and unconscious
 - stage 3: descend the *kundalini* through the chakras, reaffirming the purified essence of each element in each corresponding *chakra*
- The practice of *laya* yoga requires preparation. These are the main considerations and signs of being properly prepared:
 - once steadiness is achieved in posture, familiarity and comfort with silent *mantra* and *pranayama* practice are all highly recommended prior to a committed practice of *laya*
 - prior to starting the practice, familiarize yourself with the name, *mantra*, element, and *yantra* of each *chakra*
 - contraindications include: heart disease, nervous disorders, high blood pressure,

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- contraindications include: heart disease, nervous disorders, high blood pressure, emotional instability, early recovery from drug abuse
- a thorough understanding of yogic and tantric philosophy is also highly recommended prior to engaging in the practice
- a developed practice of *prana dharana* is also essential; remember that visualization will only interfere with an authentic experience of the practice
- begin with *prana dharana*, then allow the practice to reveal itself to you step-by-step
- any “concerns” you or your students might have regarding the practice can be put to rest provided you or they are established in these preparatory practices
- at some point, do forty consecutive days of *bhuta shuddhi*
- Do not teach it, until you have practiced no less than one hundred times!
- Do not assume that everyone, irrespective of their yogic experience or life circumstances, will benefit from the practice.
- DO NOT TEACH *BHUTA SHUDDHI* IN OPEN CLASS SETTINGS—this restriction is a safeguard for the benefit of you and your students and the tradition.

Refer to PDF page: 130 “*Bhuta Shuddhi Kriya*”



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- Of the Seven Components for Awakening *Kundalini*, “Worldview” is the cornerstone for experiencing greater continuity, for tearing down the wall between material and spiritual prosperity and for continuously weaving sacredness into the tapestry of your life.
 - if you are going to experience more Continuity and thereby sustain your highest state of being, your view of the world must be informed by the ultimate sense of the auspiciousness that is Reality
- As stated earlier, to heal the deep fabric of your consciousness and to recalibrate the way you perceive yourself and the world, you will first need to enter a meditative state.
 - once established in the Seer, your innate deep peace and luminous field of intelligence, you’ll reflect on tantra’s worldview
 - by aligning yourself to this revealed knowledge, you’ll gradually reweave the fabric of your deepest beliefs and perceptions
- This practice is rooted in the revealed knowledge of the 8th century master, Adi Shankara—the Seer and founder of *Vedanta*, the creator of the ten *swami* orders, commentator on the ten major Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita as well as the author of several key texts of the *Sri Vidya* tradition (including *Saundaryalahari*).
- In the last stage of his life, Shankara had a direct experience of the Divine Mother, the revelation of which is depicted in the *Saundaryalahari*.



- A revelation on *Sri*, the highest all-pervading, non-dual reality, Shankara's vision is not a wish, not a projection of a conditioned mind.
- Despite its descriptive beauty of Her, it is not a hoped-for vision of the world, it reveals the insights of an enlightened being, seeing what few have seen.

Introduction to *Sri Dharma Suktam* Contemplative Practice

- These five statements distill the essence of reality, according to *Sri Vidya*.
- Remember: these statements arise out of a direct experience of the Absolute/Divinity.
 - the term "*dharma suktam*" (*dharma* = "law, path, righteous" and *suktam* = "a brief statement revealing the highest truth") was coined by Yogarupa; the source of these statements is the *Saundaryalahari*
 - to fully experience them, it is vital to first enter a meditative state
 - because of the reach and depth of your beliefs and prejudices, it is likely that in the process of contemplating these statements or *suktam*, you may experience resistance, doubt or even confusion
 - be prepared to expand your heart, intellect and emotions
- The five *Dharma Suktam* are:
 - "the world is beautiful because it is a manifestation of the most beautiful one"
 - "life is a gift from the Divine"
 - "I am part of the Divine"



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- "the world is an endless ocean of ambrosia, the body is but an island"
- "all that happens is waves rising and falling, neither inauspicious nor meaningful"
- Remember, these are contemplations, not meditations.
- It is strongly suggested that you work with one *suktam* at a time, only after your mind has become still. This can be either at the onset of your meditation, after *prana dharana* or at the close of your meditation practice.
- Don't try to analyze or intellectualize the *suktams*.
 - instead of trying to judge these truths from your current level of understanding, approach them by first emptying your mind and then, to the best of your ability, allowing your mind to penetrate their meaning
 - experience them as the true depiction of existence; what obstructs you from fully identifying or embodying them is essentially your false understanding (*avidya*)
 - the culmination of the practice is to experience being the living embodiment of their sublime truth