

## Chakras By Deb Auden

Yoga is a journey in which one of our major discoveries is our own body. If we choose to hear we begin to understand its subtle whispering, we begin to recognise what we need to do to keep our body, our mind and our spirit healthy. Amongst the more obvious alignment and balance of body and breath is the awakening and balance of the chakras.

Hatha Yoga is a process of awakening the chakras and as we move through our various āsanās we stimulate and balance the different chakras.

To begin our understanding of the chakras we first need to think about the body. The body is seen to be made up of layers or sheaths known as koshas. The second of these koshas is the prānamayakosha, found within the subtle body and it is here that we find the nādīs, astral tubes or meridians that carry prāna our vital life force, around the body. There are believed to be 72,000 nadīs but the three most important are the *Sushumnā*, *Idā* and *Pingalā*. The shushumnā, sometimes known as ‘the most gracious channel’, follows the same line of the spine and the idā and pingalā begin at the bottom of the sushumnā. The idā rises from the left, at the base, and the pingalā from the right. They weave their way around the sushumnā in a figure of eight motion meeting at ājnā chakra.

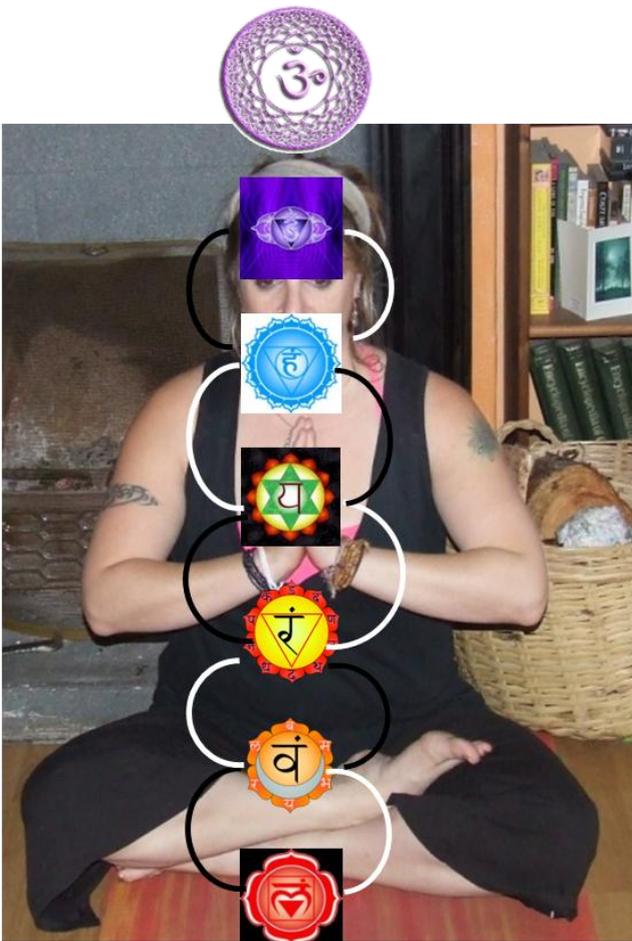
Prāna rarely flows freely through our body because the nādīs are blocked and narrowed and the aim of yoga is to begin the process of unblocking them so that prāna flows without any obstructions. Our eventual aim is to encourage prāna to flow along shumumnā nādī in the form of kundalinī-shakti/ serpent power, the latent stored energy that blocks the base of shushumnā. When prāna flows freely along this major nādī, then our full spiritual potential is achieved.

Kundalinī means *she who is coiled* and this divine energy, known as kundalinī-shakti, is locked away in the human body at the base of the sushumnā. It is considered to be of a negative charge and once ‘*uncoiled*’ it rises, like any negative charge, towards the positive charge at the top of the skull. Here is the Seat of Shiva and when kundalini rises it is united with

Shiva in *the mystic marriage*. This divine marriage or union of Shiva and Shakti, God and Goddess, is the supreme goal of yoga. The body is flooded with divine nectar, the *kula-amrita* or *soma*, divine bliss is experienced and knowledge of the Self known.

The chakras are found along the line of the sushumnā where idā and pingalā cross. Chakra means wheel and derives from the root *car* to move. They are swirling vortexes of prāna and for kundalinī-shakti to rise it must pass through each chakra. There are seven well known chakras and they are believed to coordinate with the endocrine centres in the physical body. Imbalances in any of these chakras cause blockages in the flow of pranā. Through yoga āsana, prānāyāma and meditation we can begin to unblock the chakras and allow vital life force to flow, bringing balance to the body.

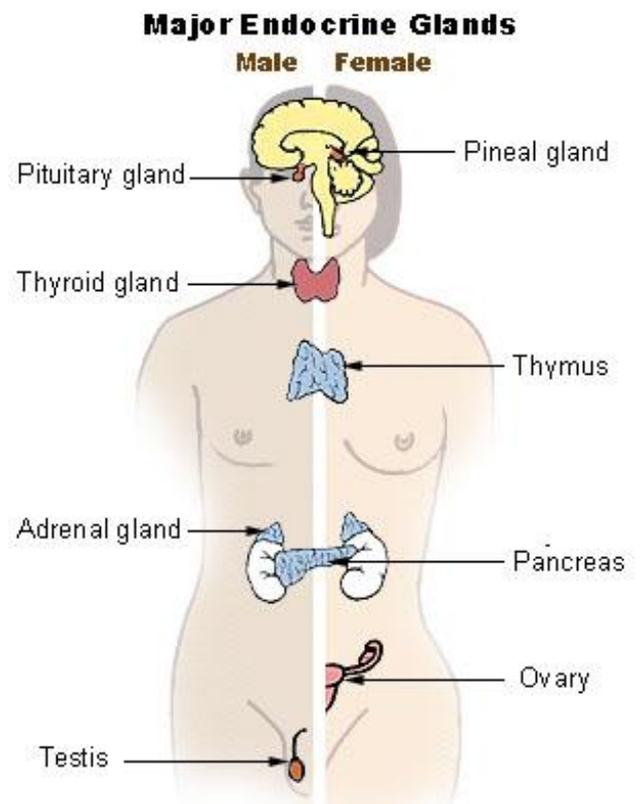
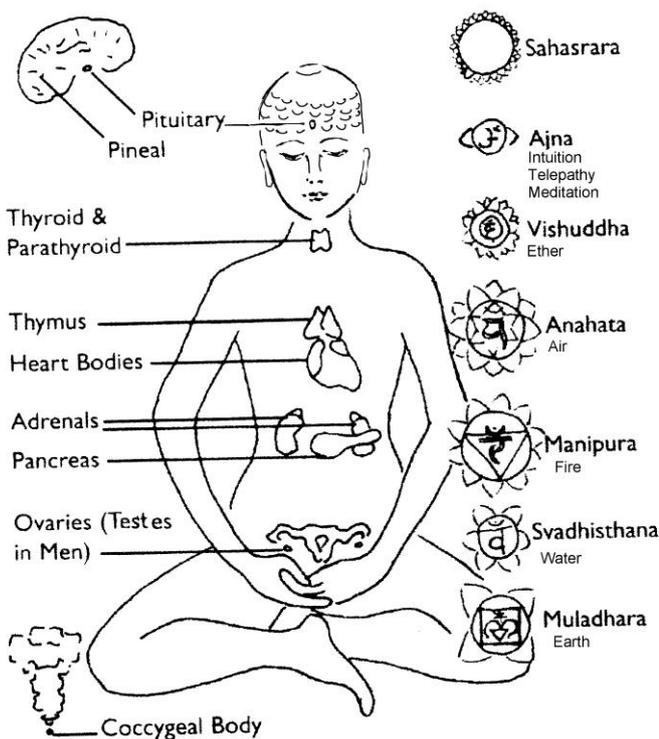
Prānāyāma and the use of bandhas/energy locks, in particular influences the flow of prāna in the chakras and weakens the granthis. Granthi are knots of attachment that prevent kundalinī to flow. There are three of them which bind us to negative attitudes and prevent advancement. The granthis have an important job as safety valves, preventing us from advancing too quickly. They need to be opened slowly to aid the flow of prāna through the chakras.



The seven chakras are, (beginning with the lowest), *mūlādhāra chakra* or base centre, *svādhīsthāna* or sacral centre, *manipūra* or naval centre, *anāhata* or heart centre, *Visuddha* or throat centre, *ājñā* or brow centre and *sahasrāra* or crown centre.

Each of these chakras is responsible for a distinct set of characteristics and is associated with a part of the body and an element. They also have certain colours and symbols associated with them. Ken Dytchwald in *Bodymind* describes the chakras as a *map offered by the body itself, on his path to self-discovery*. As each chakra is developed and unlocked it brings new awareness to help and guide us along our path. It is believed that when we have blocked chakras we suffer from health problems, either physically or emotionally.

As with all yoga, there is always something practical behind the philosophical. The chakras possibly correspond to the endocrine system. The endocrine system secretes various hormones into the bloodstream that tell our bodies what to do. It is believed that yoga asana help keep these glands healthy by squeezing out impurities. The physical body needs energy just as the astral body needs prāna.



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## **The Yoga of Listening** Gordon Smith

**Nada Yoga** is listening for the subtle background of sound that underlies creation. To listen to sacred music or sit in quiet woodland aware of the subtle sounds of nature against a background of stillness is a help in becoming aware of the first movements toward manifestation. Stillness being the canvas on which the eternal presents its life forms, and listening to the subtle sounds of nature helps in refining the consciousness of listening.

To quote from Byron:-

There's music in the sighing of a reed;  
There's music in the gushing of a rill,  
There's music in all things, if men had ears,  
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.

Nada Yoga the Yoga of listening has been from the earliest times a reference to the mystical or inner sounds, which can be heard during this form of meditation. These sounds are referred to in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, and to quote a few lines from these early Sutras.

“Yogis who practise Samadhi (Contemplation) on those internal sounds experience an indescribable joy”.

“The Muni (Sage) should close his ears with his hands and fix his attention on the internal sounds until he attains perfect stillness”.

“At the beginning of practice various sound are heard, and as practice continues subtler and higher sounds”.

The Pradipika also describes the types of sounds, which are heard, such as the sounds of the ocean, small drum, a conch, a bell and a gong.

For many people sounds heard within the ears are an unwanted phenomenon and listed under the medical condition “tinnitus aurium”. It may be that some of these sounds are more than just a malfunction of the hearing system, as Yogi Dr Ramamurti Mishra, when a guest at Faith House Yoga and Natural Health Centre, put forward a remarkable theory, that some tinnitus was the result of psychic or higher levels of consciousness, attempting to make a break through whenever a change of direction was needed.

It is during the meditative process of stilling the mind and listening that we become aware of the profoundly subtle, and if we attempt to verbalise the intuitive response at this level it can resemble a Zen koan. For example one meditator described the transcendent sound of the breath as the ‘sound of unstruck gold’, which at one level appeared very apt, but at another not to make much sense.

The Yoga of listening is both therapeutic and healing as there is a level of transcendent awareness at which healing is more likely, help along the way is

listening to sacred music. Which one writer described as music that is not chained to the instrument, but which when released reaches heavenward, transforming the nature of the listener?

It is worth noting that there is a close link between the Sanskrit word Nada (sound) and Nadi (nerve Vessel), that is the channels in which the which the vital force travels around the body, and when listening to music the body becomes a sounding board and the music can be felt to resonate at different levels. The purer the tone the more specific is the level affected.

To quote from an article by Roland Everett, Music in Teaching. The three families of the musical instruments are representative of the three elements of music, of melody, harmony and rhythm, and these again are closely connected with threefold Man in his thinking, feeling and willing.

<b>Instruments Man</b>	<b>Elements of Music</b>	<b>Faculties of</b>
Pipe – wind section Of an orchestra	melody	thinking
Lyre –string section Of an orchestra	harmony	feeling
Drum – percussion section Of an orchestra	rhythm	willing

Background music played in a Yoga class can prove to be a useful aid in creating a stress free and relaxing atmosphere as well as being conducive to healing, and to support this here is an extract from an article by June Kynaston “Can Music cure sick minds?” (Health for All, July 1958). Hephzibah Menuhin, the concert pianist and sister of violinist Yehudi Menuhin, claims to have made an extraordinary experiment with music. It is the curing and rehabilitation of the insane through social clubs in which music plays a very large part.

“Music is a mysterious thing” she said, “like the mind. Perhaps that is why I have found it a language that speaks directly to lost minds,” Between concerts and recording sessions, Hephzibah spends much time in mental hospitals playing, singing and talking to patients... In Australia, three hospitals have paid tribute to this novel approach to mental patients, which, is unlike the dangerous medical methods at present in vogue, may prove to be a humane contribution to the constructive treatment of mental illness.

There is no doubt as to the value of music in its ability to calm and relax and for sacred music in its power to build up and mould the organs of spiritual perception. It is however an aid under the control and direction of the Will, not

the earth bound Will conditioned by earthly expediency but the Will of the higher Self and Supreme that flows through life and nature and to quote Shopenhauer “music is the inner life of the Cosmos”. The aim of Nada Yoga does not lie in the separate notes which appear in time but in the space between and the transcendent harmonies, beyond which lies perfect stillness and the silent voice of the Universe.

Many inner sounds or voices are not mystical in origin, but suppressed thoughts long kept out of sight. By meditating with a still mind thoughts will rise like bubbles to the surface of a pool. You will hear the sounds of parents and educators telling you things. Some things you will agree with and others not. Some things will be said with great authority, none the less examine them all and say to yourself “do I really believe these things”? If they stand the test of your Conscious examination, affirm them and make them your own and keep them close to your heart. If not, throw them out, and by so doing avoid the second death, which will be the death of all your unrelated ideas. By so doing you will be working to be reborn in this lifetime to all that is universally true.

Listening to spiritual and uplifting music is simply a means to an end on the Journey toward experiencing Nada Yoga and the perfect stillness which is the living backdrop to life itself. The music, sounds or mantras that we choose are usually subjective and we have to discover our own as time and place will determine the music that is needed for the next step. The right music has the power to transform at the levels of Mind, Feeling and Will and to quote a line from Carlyle, “Music is a kind of inarticulate speech, which leads us to the edge of the infinite and let us for a moment gaze into that”

A good time to listen to relaxing and soothing music is immediately prior to sleep when it has the power to calm the mind after a busy day and transport us into the eternal presence of the Divine. Here is a quote from the writer Eleanor C. Merry in “The Flaming Door” (Rider)... (Music) is there in eternal and inaudible beauty and we speak of this – to us – inaudible beauty, as the “harmony of the spheres”. Sometimes, in the moment of waking out of a sleep we can feel ourselves streaming earthwards in a river of light and of great organ tones – a magnificent and indescribable harmony comes with us, “trailing clouds of glory”. Then suddenly we are awake, and it is silent.

The pure sounds and tones which we experience in music, mantra and the sounds of nature, remind us of God as Supreme Artist and the harmonies we establish within ourselves provide the subtle link between the world in which we live and the profound underlying stillness in which wisdom lies. Great teachers of the past such as Patanjali came to this realisation and to remind us of his sutra. “Yoga is controlling the activities of the mind (chitta)”. Which when achieved with full awareness we can truly listen to the pure tones subtle harmonies that we associate with Truth, Beauty and Goodness.