

Chakra Workshop by Dr. Ananda in Berlin

First of all a very special thank you for letting me come back and be here in a very nice place, a place that has beautiful vibrations thanks to all of the yoga *sadhana*, the yoga practice, that all of you have been doing here, producing that very healthy external and internal environment.

Last time we were talking about yoga as a therapy and how we had fallen into pieces, because of our ignorance, and putting the pieces back together through knowledge and wisdom to regain our health, regain our sanity, regain our happiness. In the science and art of yoga – yoga is both, an art and a science. As a doctor I am lucky that I had the yoga training before I became a doctor, because it has enabled me to understand the art of medicine as well - because medicine is also an art and a science. Nowadays, there are many people in the world who consider it only as a science, forgetting the art part. The art part is that which enables you to know that the other person is also a human being and not a machine on which you practice your medicine. We “practise” it – we never perfect it, we keep on practising.

When we talk about Yoga as an art and a science we realize that we as an individual are not just the body, not just emotions, not just the mind, not just the spirit, but we are all of it. It is often said that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. There are the four letters y-o-g-a. They are just four letters, but when I put it together it becomes something more. If that happens with just letters and language, imagine what happens when we put all of our pieces back together again. It is so amazing that it can take our breath away. It can take our breath away – in a positive manner, of course, like when something is very beautiful – because we get the picture of what we really are.

If we want to understand what we really are, how we are, why we are.... The big question is: who am I? When you ask many people who they are, they will take out their passport. There was an official guy at the airport asking me when I came, “why are you here?” And actually, this is a good question. We should ask ourselves, “why are we here on this planet?” And when we will leave this planet, will we leave it as a better place or not? These are questions that come up in our heart and in our mind... heartfelt mind and mindful heart if I put it that way. Usually, we speak of either the mind or the heart. So, I prefer to put it as heartfelt-mind and mindful-heart.

We are all living, I think we know that much, but most of the people living on earth today are merely surviving. The lack of energy we see in the world today, especially within human beings! Animals seem still to be alright, but human beings lack energy - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. One of the highest-selling medicines in the world today is anti-depressants. That tells us something. One of my patients who had been severely depressed when she came to me, said when she came back: “Doctor, if had to define Yoga I’d say it is the best anti-depressant.” That is how she perceived Yoga. And she had been at a stage where she said, “I am not able to sit and worship God”. She wants to sit and worship God and she says, “I cannot do it”. Many people come

Credits: Recording- Ananda Leone; Transcription- Hemashri; Proofing- Jnanasundari

because their blood pressure is high, or their cholesterol is high, or their sugar is high, or their leg pains; but she wanted to worship God and could not mentally or emotionally do it because she was so down. Now she is really up, really good, she is very happy with God and God is very happy with her – that is the nice thing, when you can be really happy with God and God can be really happy with you. In fact, she has been practising Yoga for about five years now, and she says, “It is a new life, as if I was born again”.

The pharmaceutical companies don't like it. If everybody starts practising yoga, what will they sell, what will happen to the companies? When doctors like me start talking, they really don't like it. You don't really need your antidepressants, you don't need your sleeping pills. You **can** sleep without them.

It is said that life starts with the first breath of life. As long as we are still in the womb of our mother we are totally dependent on our mother for survival - we are not independent individuals. It is only when we come out and take the first breath of life that we actually start to become sort of independent. Of course, a newborn baby is still dependent on the parents for even some years. And many of us here, even when we are sixty we are still dependent on our parents... But the independence, the individuality, seems to start clicking like the “on-button” is being pressed when the baby comes out and takes the first breath, that first breath when the divine spirit can come in.

When you think about the translation of the Latin word *inspirare*, it is about bringing in the spirit. You bring in the spirit, and *expirare* you bring out the spirit. That is what we do – when we breathe in it is a chance for the divine, the universal energy to come inside us, and it is a chance for our individuality to go out each time we breathe out. We breathe in the universal energy and when we breathe out, we breathe out the individual energy, each in-breath an opportunity for the universal energy to come in, in other words for us to become aware of that universality that comes through us, and each out-breath an opportunity to become aware and conscious of our individuality being given up to merge with universality. The universality comes in when you breathe in, enabling you to be an individual. The universe is very generous, allowing you to be an individual, to grow up, to take responsibility, giving you a chance to play the game.

We are born on an in-breath and we die on an out-breath. Nobody has ever been born on an out-breath or died on an in-breath. The whole process of our birth is a process where life, the universal energy comes in, and you are supposed to represent the universe. How many of us represent the universe? Big question. But we were sent here to do that. But what happens, as we start to get our individuality and are able to walk around and eat and talk etc., we start to think that we are the greatest, and then, one day, we have to die. That is the only certainty in life – we are going to die one day, nothing to be afraid of, in fact. Swamiji often said: “The entire life is a preparation for the moment we die”. At that moment we should be at the best condition, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The whole of life is just that, every day, every minute, every situation, every person you meet, every spoon of food you eat and every breath you take is a preparation, so that you are at the best possible condition to merge back with the universe, giving a nice gift back to the universe, a gift of yourself. If you want to give somebody a gift, hopefully it should be the best. There is a story in our Indian historical mythology, mythological history – because in India you cannot separate history and mythology, they go together like mindful heart and heartfelt mind. The *Katha Upanishad* deals with this concept of death and life after death. In this part of

the *Vedas* it happens that a young boy sees his father giving away gifts during a ceremony where you have to give away everything that you have. And he sees his father giving away cows that are crippled and other things that are not good. Knowing that this is not the way it has to be done he asks his father: "To whom will you give me?" He was a young child only! But it is sometimes not about our physical age.

Nowadays we have the Intelligence Quotient, your intelligence compared to your age, and also the Emotional Intelligence Quotient, which is about the ability of dealing with people. Some people are very intelligent but they cannot even talk to anybody. And we should look at the Spiritual Quotient also. You can also speak of an Ego Quotient. Most of us are very high on that one! The higher we are on the Ego Quotient the lower we are on the Spiritual Quotient. Spirituality is about understanding our link with the universe, that each and every one of us is interlinked. It does not matter whether you live in Berlin and I live in Pondicherry; we are linked. It does not matter whether you live on this planet or on some other planet in another galaxy. You are linked. Once you understand that linkage you understand that you live in a happy universe, a healthy universe, and then you are happy and you are healthy. But the moment you separate yourself from everybody and everything and pity yourself, you fall apart from that happiness and health. But if you lock yourself up in the cupboard, who is to blame? But we – like the modern science and medicine – always try to find somebody else to blame – your parents, your friends, your partner, your doctor, society or the government or your yoga teacher... And then it is not your fault; you are the victim. But we have to be responsible for ourselves. That is the first step. If you want to be a responsible representative of the universe you have to be in tune with the universe. You have to be one with the universe. Every cell in your body must vibrate at the frequency of the universe if you want to be one with it. Being one is being in tune, like playing music together. When we all chant the *aum* together we all tune in, and the fact that all of us are able to chant the *aum* together is a very good message of yoga. Imagine if you took 20 people from the street here in Berlin trying to make them say the same thing at the same time ... But the common person is not even able to hear the other person.

The cosmic energy comes in as we breathe in and goes out as we breathe out. Each time you breathe in and breathe out it is like a lifetime, each time and with every breath, like a mini-lifetime. There are some organisms that only live that long, some minutes or an hour. For some beings a day for us is a lifetime. This is the concept the ancient Indians had with the "one day of Brahma". One day of the creator is thousands and thousands of years.

There is a joke about a guy asking God: "I heard that for you one million years is one second." And God says: "Yes." "And I heard that one million dollars is one dollar for you". And god says: "Yes". So the guy asks: "Can I have one million dollars then please?" And God says: "Sure, wait a second". Many people are complaining, "God never answers my prayers!" God always answers your prayers. Sometimes the answer is NO.

This energy that comes in with the first breath of life takes on the field of an individual, the *jiva atma*. It is beautiful to see the connection between the *atma* and the German word for breathing "atmen". We can find some very deep truth in language if we are open to it.

When this very first breath of life comes in we become a *jiva atma*, an individual, a monad, the individual soul and representative of the universality. This energy, that is the *prâna*, comes into our five-fold existence. We have five layers of existence: the physical body, the anatomical existence, the *annamaya kosha*, maintained and sustained by the food and being the food for other beings like the microorganisms who are enjoying you every second. They are inside your body and all over your body and for them you are just food. When you take an antibiotic, they all get killed and then you have to take another thing because you have killed all the good bacteria as well as everything else.

In this physical existence you have all the body functions as well, the physiological existence, the *prânamaya kosha*, where you have a heart that beats, lungs that breathe, a brain where the neurons fire. Now, you have a body that works, but you need something else, you need a mind, the body needs the psychological aspect of your existence. We had the anatomical, the physiological, now we have the psychological aspect of your existence, the *manomaya kosha*. These three that we actually have in our hands to deal with, the physical, the physiological and the psychological, *annamaya*, *prânamaya* and *manomaya kosha*. *Maya* means to bind, to hold together, to glue together. The body that is held together by food is the physical. The body that is held together by the energy, the *prâna*, is the physiological, and the body which is held together by the mind is the psychological. Of course, that basic mind of the *manomaya kosha* does not have the power of that higher mind which is there in the *vijnânayamaya kosha* which is the intellectual existence, held together by the intellect, known as the *buddhi*. The “-dhi” symbolizes the higher intellect as in the word Buddha, who had the higher intellectual understanding. And, finally, there is the universal aspect of our existence, the *anandamaya kosha* which is blissful. When you are in tune with your universal existence bliss occurs automatically. All these five aspects of our existence are functional because of the energy of the universe that is the *prâna* or the *prâna shakti*. *Shakti* is a good word. It means the energy, especially the energy of power. That is the energy associated with the feminine spirit of the universe without the masculine spirit cannot do anything. Shiva, who represents the masculine spirit of the universe, is *shava*, a dead body, he cannot manifest without the feminine energy of *shakti*.

That *prâna shakti*, the universal energy of power, comes into the individual existence that we have, the *jiva atman*. In fact, it comes into a point that is physically related to the navel, the umbilical region. No wonder that we are connected for nine months to the mother and when you come out the umbilical cord is cut! Interestingly, this is the centre where the energy sort of condenses and then it travels into other parts of our existence, the *manipura* region. When this energy comes into our existence, the flow of the energy creates some vortices, some very power-packed points, centres of great energy. We are not talking about something like a light bulb; we are talking about energies that are more powerful than the sun even - that is the kind of energy we are talking about, energy that is faster than the speed of light. If I was faster than the speed of light, you could not see me. When scientists are looking for these energies in the body they cannot find them because our sensory apparatus is at a much slower frequency as those energies. We are struggling with equipment to understand that frequency. And if, one day, we have this equipment, science will suddenly say that they have found it, something that people have known for 5000 years. These vortices of energy are of two natures. There is the universal nature and the individual nature. You end up with six

centres that are of a universal nature and six centres that are of an individual nature. The six higher centres, which are linked to the universe, are called the *anda chakras*. *Anda* can also mean an egg. The universe is more egg-shaped than round, so it is interesting that they have always called it the *andacharâcharam*, the great universe. The six higher *chakras* that are of a universal nature are reflected in the six lower *chakras* that are of the individual nature. Because you have the six higher *chakras*, you have the six lower *chakras*. It is not the other way around. It is because you have an *anandamaya kosha*, the universal existence, that you have a *vijnânamaya kosha*, the intellectual existence. Because you have an intellectual *vijnânamaya kosha* you have the psychological *manomaya kosha*. Because of the mind you have the breath and because of the energy you have the physical body. It is because of the higher that the lower exists.

The six higher *chakras* are our connection to the universe, our connection to the ultimate reality which are imaged, reflected in the lower six *chakras* that can be correlated with our individual existence. And so we can give them different correlations, whereas for the six higher *chakras* we are not able to find physical correlates, because they are of a universal nature. The lower six *chakras* are called the *pinda*. *Pinda* means the body. In India, after somebody has died, a week or ten days later they make certain rice balls and then dissolve them in the waters, and this is called the *pinda*. The body is represented in these balls of food and is now dissolved in water as the person has completed his time on earth.

So, you have the *anda chakras* and the *pinda chakras*. Normally, it is the *pinda chakras* that are well known and commonly understood as the *shat chakras*, the six *chakras*. This is due to a work called "The Serpent Power" by Sir John Woodroffe, Arthur Avalon, who translated the *shat chakra nirûpana*, an ancient tantric text about the six *chakras*. He was a very talented author with some amazing writings. But now it has settled into everybody's psyche that we only have six *chakras*. That is the danger of writings. It is like with history. History is much more than what you read in a book. The victors write the history. Swamiji had very interesting views on history, very different views, and I am starting to understand that his views might be more accurate. This is why coming to Berlin is very special to me, because Berlin, over the last hundred years, has played such an important role in history. Very few places have had the transformation that has been going on in Berlin. There must be a reason, of course, because everything happens for a reason. This is something that you learn very early when you are walking this path. Everything has a reason. And this power of change, power of transformation, which is revolution also, is very strong. Walking around in Berlin and seeing the remains of the Berlin Wall and understanding what humans have gone through and the transformation, the power of change that is there. And that is what yoga is about: change. Definitely, Berlin is a good place for yoga.

At the lowest level of the six *pinda chakras* we have the *mûlâdhâra chakra*. It is the lowest, slowest and grossest aspect. *Mûla* means the root. The root -*adhara*, *adhara* means support, the root support. Slow with regard to a *chakra* is still very much faster than the speed of light. Swamiji, when talking about speeds, said *mûlâdhâra* moves at something like twenty times the speed of light. To think of the speed of light we are already beyond our comprehension, to think of twenty times this and that that speed is the slowest – that is frightening... Just think of it as infinite. Infinity is much easier to understand than one of these numbers. We all have this feeling that we know what

numbers are – five billion? Ok, we know. But if you really want to know what five billion is, the day you have to walk five billion steps... or the day you have to count five billion Euros in one euro coins... That day you will know. Like for knowing what three minutes are, you do *dhanur âsana*, the bow posture, for three minutes or you stretch in *paschitmottâna âsana* for three minutes. Not sitting and having ice cream for three minutes, that doesn't count. We all think we know these numbers, but we have actually no comprehension of it, no experience.

Mûlâdhâra is the lowest, the slowest of the *chakrik* energies.

The second *chakra* is *swadhisthâna*. *Swa* refers to the self, the sense of the individuality. *Swa* as in the *niyama swâdhyâya*, trying to understand one's own self through introspectional self analysis. That is what *swâdhyâya* is. One of the tools of *swâdhyâya* is the study of the scriptures because when you study the scriptures you can see that what you are going through, the depression you have - thousands of years ago Arjuna had it too! And when you see what Krishna tells Arjuna how to get out of it you will say: "Ok, maybe I can get out of it too." He went through it, Lord Râma went through it when he was a teenager. These things are good for teenagers to know, that everybody goes through those terrible things.

Swa refers to the self, self-analysis not in the negative sense of how bad I am, but *swâdhyâya* is about really understanding what we are, how we are, why we are here, to follow our *dharma*. The word *dharma* – Amma has given a beautiful definition. She says: "Doing the right thing at the right time in the right way at the right place for the right person". Everything has to be right. Doing everything as it should be, that is what *dharma* is. Often *dharma* is translated as duty. Duty seems to be one of those four letter bad words. It sort of has a negative touch. In India, somebody does something nice for you and you thank him and then he says: "Oh I was just doing my duty". And then it feels odd, like being something impersonal, that he did not do it because he likes you or wanted to help you, but because he had to do it. But they don't mean it this way. What he means is he did it because it is his *dharma*. It is the correct thing to do at the correct time, in the correct place, in the correct way and you were the correct person to whom I was able to do it. Just imagine what that means and how it comes out: "I was just doing my duty." It is totally different.

It is said that the highest *dharma*, the best way to live, is *swadharmâ*, the *dharma* for the self. This is not the ego. It is what we do, the way we live in the highest manner for the self. That is the highest *dharma*. The word *swarâj* – *râj* means the king, the ruler. *swarâj* means freedom, independence. You are your own ruler.

All these words with *swa* are related with the self - not the ego but the self. And it is this second centre, the second lowest, that is called *swadhisthâna*. *Adhisthâna* means to be stable, established. *Swadhisthâna*, you are established in your own self. You have found your self, and you are firmly in your self. A very beautiful concept.

The third *chakra* is *manipura chakra*. *Mani* means the gems. *Pura* means a city, a town, a huge place like Berlin, Berlin-*Pura*. In many ancient Indian names you find that –*pura* or in Tamil –*puram*. In *manipura* it refers to amazing brightness, light, as if you have a city full of gems, jewels, that are lighting the whole city. As if you were looking at a big city at

night from an airplane. This is the concept here. Such an amazing light as if it is dazzling you. This is the centre where the universal energy comes into us and then it flows into all the centres of the body. Actually, in many of the higher practices of yoga this centre is utilized in order to understand the concepts.

The next *chakra* is *anâhata*. This refers to the concept of *a-hata* and *ana-hata*. *A-hata* refers to the sound that can be made, for example when I clap my hands it makes a sound, a sound which has a cause, a reason, a sound which results of something being done. And *ana-hata* is the negation. So, it means a sound, which doesn't have a cause, which doesn't have a point of origin. And so it is eternal. It refers to the sound, the universal vibration, that has always existed and will always exist for it never had a point of origin. It is the universal sound that we can feel when we open ourselves up to the universe. This is a centre relating to our ability to expand our consciousness from individuality out into the universe becoming aware of this sound, this vibration that manifest through us.

The next one is *vishuddha Chakra*. *Shuddha* refers to purity, cleanliness. The *vishuddha* is the centre of great purity. *Vi-* is a superlative, which means great, extreme or absolute. We are talking about purity of the highest nature, it is not just about having a good bath but about purity on every level of your existence, multi-layered purity.

The next *chakra* is the *âjnâ*. "*Jnâ*" is a sound of a nasal nature. *A* is the negation. *Jnâ* refers to that knowledge that we gain in our day to day life. *A-jnâ* as the negation refers to that other wisdom which we gain from insight. You can call it intuition. It is about a knowledge, a wisdom that comes from within us, not something we learn from outside. Swamiji often said, "every knowledge, everything in the universe is already within you." Every bit of knowledge is there, but what you have to do is learn the keyword, the password for it.

We think that we go to school and learn this, we go to university and learn this, we go to a class and learn that. But actually what we do is that we open up thing that we already know. By going to school or going to a class we just give a chance for that which we already know to express itself. The root of the word education is to educe, to bring out, to lead out. The whole aim of education is that we should bring out. Nowadays, it seems more like an induction, it seems like we should bring a lot of stuff into people, not letting that out which is in them. When we talk about the *âjnâ chakra* we talk about a centre that enables us to know from within. This centre powers that aspect of our being.

So, you have, the root centre which gives you the root support, you have the centre that enables you to be sort of comfortable with yourself, you have the *manipura*, which gives you that great energy, you have the *anâhata*, which enables you to be in tune with the universal vibration, the *vishuddhi*, which creates a purity within thought, word, deed, all aspects of our personality, and then the *âjnâ*, which enables you to access the wisdom that lies within yourself. These are the energies of the six lower *chakras*, which are linked to our individuality. We can see that each one of these has a different aspect to offer to us. It is a different of what we call our personality, a different aspect of our life. In our life we need stability - that is the *mûlâdhâra*. We need firm foundation, *terra firma*. It helps you to be cohesive, integrated, solid, firm. It helps you to stand on your feet.

The *swadhsthâna* is the *chakra* that enables us to be comfortable, be at peace with ourself, be happy within ourself.

The *manipura chakra* is the energy that enables us to have brightness in our life. It gives us the energy for all the activities in our life. That is why all the martial arts give great importance to the sound of “ha!”. This area is related to this sound, it is the sun area, the solar plexus. This centre gives you the energy to go out and fight the battle. We have to fight.

The *anâhata chakra* is the energy that enables you to be in tune with the universal vibration, to dance to the universal music. It is the energy that leads you from being just the individual to being part of a group, being part of society, being part of the world, being part of the universe.

The *vishuddha chakra* is the centre that creates the purity in everything you do, everything you say, everything you think.

Finally, the *âjnâ chakra* enables you to access the wisdom within yourself.

So each one of these six *chakras* gives us an important aspect of our personality: being stable, being comfortable with yourself, having the energy, being in tune with others, having purity and having that inner access to wisdom. These are all aspects of our own personality, these are all aspects of who we are.

To the important questions “who am I?” “why am I here?”, we get the answers through these energies. When all of them are working the answers become easier.

Nowadays, for most people these centres are like batteries that have stopped working. And then those people don't have the stability in their lives or they are not able to be comfortable with themselves, they don't have the energy, they are not able to understand others. If you don't understand others you will feel misunderstood yourself. The moment we start to understand others we find that people understand us, and the world becomes understanding.

There are days where you are down in the dumps, life is so bad and everything looks bad and everybody looks unhappy and seems to be doing the wrong thing and everybody seems to be irritating you. And another day you are really on the top and everybody looks happy and seems to be doing everything correctly.

What was the difference? It is not outside. One of the most important aspects of Yoga is our attitude and the change in attitude, and that is why the *âsana*, the *prânâyâma*, the *kriyâ*...everything works towards the right attitude. And suddenly life changes.

On Chakras Part 2

These six lower chakras occur in our individual existence as a result of the six higher chakras, which are at the next level of being when we move from individuality to universality. We find the six higher chakras represented by their names. They don't really have an order except for the fact that at the seventh level you have the chakra named Sahasrara, sometimes also called Sahastrara, which means the thousand-petalled lotus. Sahasra means thousand. This concept of thousand is a concept of poetry. It does not mean exactly one thousand. It is a poetic expression for the concept of an infinite number of petals.

There is a beautiful poem called "daffodils" about going out in the meadow and seeing all those daffodils... "Ten thousand I saw at a glance". This doesn't mean that you count all the flowers. Many of the Indian scriptures, especially the Yogic scriptures, contain a great amount of poetry, and if you are not careful you don't understand what they are implying. It is hidden in this poetry, which is a good idea, hiding the important information. It is not like today where everybody puts a big board, an advertisement. You have the Berlin Yoga festival and the Milan Yoga festival, and everybody jumps up and down with a "look at me"- attitude, "I am the best yogi..." There was none of this in those old days. The teachings have been safely guarded. They were transmitted in short form, in hidden form. You had a teacher who knew how to safely guide you and then used the teachings in this hidden form. Like this you would learn. And otherwise you would miss the bus. This is how those teachings have been passed on.

The modern democratic way is that everybody should be given the teachings whether he deserves it or not. But the ancients proclaimed that a person had to be worthy of the teachings in order to be given them. This has been very much part of the ancient traditions, to prepare yourself for the teachings, becoming ready for them. Swamiji used to say something in this context on the chosen few. He said, "It is not the chosen few but the few who chose." The few who are ready for it, the few who make the effort. That is what the path of yoga is. It is for the few who chose, not for the chosen few. It is not an elite club where you get an admission through membership, but it is one where you choose to grow. You choose to make the most effort required for growth to occur.

For the Sahasrara thousand stands for an infinite number, that is so great that we just say thousand. One of our scriptures describes the divine as having thousands of heads, thousands of arms, thousands of eyes, thousands of feet. If you imagine a grotesque creature made by our computer graphics with those thousands of body parts it would look like that. That is not what God is. It means that every one of our heads is a head of the Divine. The Divine thinks through us. Our eyes are eyes of the Divine, the Divine sees through us. Our hands are hands of the Divine, the Divine works through us. Our feet are the feet of the Divine, the Divine moves through us. This is what it means. But if you just read and you think that the Divine should have a thousand heads, eyes, arms and feet, you have completely missed the point.

There is a beautiful concept in Hatha Yoga, which is a practice called *viparita karani* or *viparita karana*, a topsy-turvy posture, in which you lie in the shoulder stand but with the weight more on the elbows and the feet above your head so that your legs form an

angle with the torso. You can do this angle or like Swamiji taught in the *kriya* you can also stretch your legs the other way and form another angle. It is an excellent practice for the pancreas and the control of diabetes. The name of this practise just means “an inverted posture”; “*viparita*” is “the opposite”, “inverted” and “*karani*” means “to do”. But then just standing on your head would also be *viparita karani*, anything which is the opposite from what you normally do would be *viparita karani*. But the tradition tells us, “in *viparita karani* the sun goes up and the moon goes down”. And if you just read this you will be likely to think, “what stupid verse is this?” Only if you understand it properly you realize that the sun centre is this Manipura area, the solar plexus, the moon centre is the brain and the hard palate – that is why the brain is lunar. Madness is called lunatic, and this is why at new moon and full moon people go a bit mad. It is said in the scriptures that the mind comes from the moon, “*chandraha manasur jadhaha chaksu suryo*”. And the eyes come from the sun.

Normally, when you are standing or walking or sitting, the sun is below and the moon is above. But when you do the *viparita karani* and you lift your legs up and the head is below, the sun is above and the moon is below. This is expressed in a way where you have to know this concept to understand what those words mean.

When we talk about Sahasrara, it does not just mean a beautiful lotus with a thousand petals, which is artistically very nice. It means the infinite capacities of your brain. You know which is the most important purpose of the brain? For most people today, actually the brain’s main function is just to keep the ears apart. When Albert Einstein’s brain was examined after his death, they found that he had been using less than 6-8 percent of his brain’s capacity. Swamiji would say, “How much do you think you are using?” And then he added, “Don’t start to do the counting on your fingers. I’ll tell you the answer: none!” This was forty years ago, and I grew up thinking: “Swamiji is just telling this.” But today I think this is actually true. Because in fact for eating, running around, going to the toilet, having children, breathing, having a heart that beats, a stomach that digests, you really don’t need a brain at all! All you need is a spinal cord and a brain stem. This is all you need at the most practical level. Your spinal cord and the brain stem virtually do all of this. Then why do we have the other huge part of the brain?

Many people say, “I am thinking.” When you ask them, “What are you thinking?” They’ll answer something like, “I am thinking I am hungry.” But that is not thinking. That is just your expression of saying that you are thinking. There is no thought in it. You are hungry, that’s all. But because we say that we think, we think that we think. Thinking occurs when we start to ask, “who am I?” Finally that’s a thought! “How can I improve the world?” – another thought, the brain is waking up! It is interesting to observe our thoughts for a day. Observing our thoughts is a very good tool of *Swadhyaya*, self-study.

When we speak about Sahasrara we refer to this brain at the physical level, but Sahasrara is at a much more subtle layer. We talk of infinite connections. The numbers are so huge that this is infinite. All your neurons are connected to each other – millions and billions and trillions, amazing numbers. All those connections that are going from one cell to another and from this cell to that cell, everything is amazingly connected. But we don’t use it! This is what Sahasrara is about, it is about those infinite connections that exist at the subtle layer, which manifest in our *annamaya kosha*, the gross layer, the physical body, as a brain with all these connections. I believe that if studies were done

on some of the yogis they would be using a much bigger part than Albert Einstein did. What happens with the Yoga is that you are starting to think beyond your usual patterns, using new pathways, whereas Albert Einstein was using the same pattern. He was using it well, but it was the still same pattern. Something simple in Yoga that we do is this: Your right hand is governed by your left-brain and your left hand by your right brain. In your brain you have a part called the sensory motor cortex where the sensations from the right hands come to the left-brain and the ones from the left hand come to the right-brain. It is a criss-cross connection. Right side: sensation and motor function action is governed by the left-brain, left side by the right-brain. Regarding the hands, if you just interlock your fingers of both hands, this is a very simple *mudra*. *Mudra* means a gesture, a seal. This interlocking of the fingers of both hands is called *yoga mudra*, the gesture, the seal of integration. What you have integrated is your right-side energies and left-side energies. That is at the energy level. If we just look at the physical level, what we have done is this: by interlinking your fingers you have also created a link between the outer-most corner of the left side of the brain, the area that is connected to the right hand, and the outer-most corner of the right side of the brain, the area that is connected to the left hand. Just by interlocking your fingers you have linked up those two areas of the brain. It is so simple, and suddenly those two different corners of your brain have met.

You can imagine what happens when we start with more complex asanas – this hand to this leg, the other to this leg, both legs together, the head to the knees... You are creating all those new connections that have not been there before. And if *asanas* can do that, think of what the *pranayama* does, what the *mudras* do, the *bhandas*! And you end up with this infinite capacity suddenly being used. Very sincerely, I believe that the brains of the yogis would be using a lot more of its capacities. At the same time, I must warn you, our brain capacity is so infinite that any number next to infinity is equal to zero. It doesn't matter if the number is infinity minus one. It is still zero compared to infinite. Pure mathematics. You have such an infinite capacity that however much you use your brain, it will still be negligible. This is why when we say that nobody uses the brain, it is true in a way. If you really look at the small proportion being used it will be negligible.

This might make us think, "But if this is so, why should I even try if anyway it will be zero?" The joy is in the trying. Like the life is in the living. The goal of life is not just to die, but it is the whole life where you prepare for it – and then you are ready for it. Many people are so focused on the goal that they forget the whole process. In learning to utilize our capacities, along that way the growth can happen. Though at the end it might still be zero when compared to infinity, you will still have achieved something. And that makes the difference.

Sahasrara refers to those infinite petals. This is often depicted with the petals of the lotus coming down over the head. Swamiji said it looks like a dunce's cap. It is a sign of no energy. If you see a flower with its petals down, is it a living flower or a dead flower? A living flower is blooming up. This is a lotus, but a lively lotus grows upwards. If this thousand petalled lotus is depicted with the petals down then it is a representation of the Sahasrara that is not active. An inactive, undeveloped Sahasrara looks like that. It feels like that also. But once the energy gets going, imagine those thousand petals going up!

One of the most beautiful sights can be when you are out in the countryside with fields of sunflowers. You should go early in the morning before the sun rises. All the sunflowers are like the lotus with the petals down. Then the sun starts to appear and this whole valley of sunflowers starts to open up in full bloom. Magnificent! Just imagine this when the energy flows in the Sahasrara chakra.

The Sahasrara may be considered as the seventh of these chakras. At the same time, many of the authorities look at these seven andha-chakras as one group of universal energies and Sahasrara representing that energy group. So, Sahasrara can be on its own as number seven of twelve or it can be the seventh one that is representing the upper six. Both views are correct. Sahasrara as the seventh chakra or Sahasrara not being a chakra but a representation of all the higher energies and only six lower chakras as the limited energies. The six lower chakras are much more limited compared to the unlimited higher six ones. So, Sahasrara becomes number seven.

About the other six higher chakras you usually don't hear much. The first of them, which is called Narajanana, the eighth chakra of twelve, is related to the energy of preservation, conservation. The next one, number nine, is the Brahmananda. This is related to the higher energy of creation, the creative principle of the universe. Then, we have the Trikuti, number ten, which represents the next dimension, another dimension beyond the usual dimensions in which we are. Trikuti is the ability to go beyond the third, into a new dimension of the universe.

The eleventh chakra is the Swaminana. This is an understanding of the "swa", the self, at a higher level. It is about being able to give up the individual self and giving over to a universal higher self. That is the "swami", somebody who can give up the individual self for the sake of universality. A *swami* is not just somebody running around with orange clothes. Nowadays it is pathetic to look out in the world and see the number of *swamis* who are not *swamis*, in fact. It is just a big costume party with orange clothes and big *rudrakshas*. But when you say *swami* it means you have given up your individuality for universality, it is a final renunciation. Nowadays you even find people who are *ex-swamis*! I don't know how you can be that, because how you can give up *swamihood*? You cannot. *Swamihood* is the final renunciation, and what do you give up after that?

Swaminana is at that level where the person is ready to renounce everything for the highest. At that point the highest centre can open. That is the Mukhtana. The Mukhtana centre is related to the concept of *mukhti* and to the concept of *moksha*, liberation, enlightenment, the concept of *kaivalya* that Patanjali talks about, the final freedom from every sort of bondage. That is what Mukhtana is.

When we look at all this we see that the lower six chakras are more related to our individuality, to the different qualities that we have, whereas from Sahasrara onwards we find qualities of the universal nature. At the level of Sahasrara you are opening up to the infinite capacities of the universe, but you are still linked to the lower levels with our brain and the lower system's capacities.

Then, we come to the Narayana, the energy of conservation, a very high energy. It is an environmental friendly energy, one that understands that we are part of the universe.

When this energy starts to work in our systems we start to realize that we need to conserve and we have to take care, maintain, take good care of what we have.

Then we have Brahmananda, the energy of creativity, which is a universal creativity. Opening up to that energy leads to the Trikuti, which is opening up to new dimensions of the universe, of which we are normally not aware. Actually, those are not really new dimensions, but for you they are new, because you were not aware of them before.

Then there is Swaminana, being able to go beyond the self in that ultimate renunciation. There the person is ready for that highest, the state of liberation, freedom, coming out of the whole cycle where they are caught in. That is the Mukhtana. And when the Mukhtana opens up – which means that already all the others are open, at that point the person attains what we can call *mukhti*, *moksha*, *kaivalya*, *nirvana* – all those terms come in here, all those concepts.

Please remember, it is because these six higher chakras exist that we have these lower ones. And if you look at how we land on this planet Earth, our journey started up in Mukhtana chakra. And then it comes down through the six higher chakras, from twelve to one, and we have landed on planet Earth, and now we are here. So, if you look at the causes and of how we have come here, the last chakra is Muladhara. When we have to retrace our path to go back to our source, back home (home sweet om) we stand here on this plane. And so Muladhara becomes the first one, the first step. It is the last on our journey here to this Earth plane, but it becomes the first one on our journey back.

Through the work on the lower six chakras we start to influence the higher six chakras. Through the work with the body you can influence your breath, through the work with the body and breath, you influence the mind. We are working through the body on the mind. This is what we are doing: working on the lower chakras in order to influence the higher ones, activating them to work to their best capacity.

Question: With the lower chakras, the *pinda* chakras, I can relate to a psychic experience. But the six higher chakras are they more connected to consciousness?

Answer: They are linked to consciousness, elevated consciousness. With the six lower chakras we are linked to our individuality, and with the six higher ones we elevate ourselves to what you could call the group of the universal consciousness. They are more a group, whereas the lower six are more of the individual nature.

Question: Is it also possible when you work through the *samadhi* stages that it is the *samapathi* stage that you have to work through?

Answer: Yes, you can also see it this way. If we look at the different stages that we have to go through – *vitarka*, *vichara*, *sananda*, *sasmita*, through all these *sabija* stages, with the seed, and then the *nirbija* stages without the seed, *savitarka*, *savichara* etc., then *dharmamega* and finally *kaivalya* it can also be correlated with something like this. When you go through those, which also come as two of a kind as *sabija* and *nirbija*, with the seed and without the seed, you are making a similar journey. These are parallel journeys. The ultimate goal of Patanjali is *kaivalya*. That is again *mukhta*. Sometimes it is

difficult to find the exact correlation but you can always find some, like you could also correlate it to some extent with the *koshas*.

Each of these lower chakras, which are limited to our *pinda*, our individuality, can be correlated to different aspects, for example to the five elements. Muladhara is connected to earth, the solid state. It is the grossest level of existence. Swadisthana is connected to water, the liquid state. That is the state in which solid does not exist. If you take solid out of the equation, you have liquid. That is one of those correlations. In Muladhara you have earth in which you actually have all the five elements. If you take the solid stage out of the equation, then you have water, which is Swadisthana. You take water out of the equation and you have fire, which is basically the thermal state. The thermal state is of fire, the Manipura. Then you come to the gaseous state, which is air with Anahata, and then you come to the ether with Vishuddha, the subtlest of the five elements.

If you look at this movement from Muladhara up to Vishuddha, from earth to ether, you will find that it moves from the grossest, the most solid and the densest element with the slowest speed of vibration to the free-est element with the lowest density and highest speed of vibration. Those are the two opposites, and in between you can immediately see the spectrum: at one end of the spectrum is the earth as the densest with the lowest degree of freedom, because the particles cannot move, because they are so tightly bound together. And at the other end of the spectrum you have ether with the highest degree of freedom. Because its density is very low, the particles can move totally freely.

We are moving from earth to water, from water to fire, from fire to air, from air to ether in relation with these five chakras. Those are at the spinal level whereas the sixth centre, Ajna, is at the middle of your eyebrows. It is inside the head about two to two and half inches, where the pituitary gland is located and the hypothalamus, physically. But remember that the chakras are subtle; they are energy.

You have those five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether, and then, with Ajna chakra you come upon an element, which can be said to be the super-element, and that is mind, *manas*. Mind is an element. It becomes the sixth element because it moves even more subtly than ether. It is not the lower thinking of "oh, I am hungry", but this is the higher thinking, the higher level of consciousness, which is rather on the level of the *manomaya kosha*. It becomes something more than a sense, because all the senses get the energy only through the mind. That is why the mind becomes the super sense. That is also the reason for the mind being considered either the eleventh or the first sense. Swamiji talked about a total of eighteen senses, in fact.

All the senses, be it smell, taste, hearing, sight or touch, only operate when the mind is working. If the mind is shut off, the sensory apparatus falls flat. It is like having the best computer and pulling the plug. That is why in *pratyahara* all the sensory inputs that come through the mind are being blocked because you withdraw the mind. The senses cannot function anymore. If you look at it from this angle, the mind becomes either the first or the last, the eleventh sense.

Question: How do you define ether?

Answer: Ether is that which exists when air has been taken away. But it is not just vacuum. You take earth out of the elements, you take water out, fire and air, and you still have something left. That is ether. In India, usually we translate the word for ether, which is “*akash*” as “sky” or we say it is “space”. The problem when you say sky or space is that you think of it as “some place there”. But if you are up there, if you are on the moon, this is space for you. And the problem with space is that people immediately think of outer space, they do not see that space is also here and also within them. It is that subtle element that is beyond air, that which holds everything together. But subtler than that is the mind. Mind is even subtler than ether.

Similarly to that connection with the elements we can also have a connection with our sensory apparatus. Our sensory apparatus works on smell, which is related to Muladhara chakra. If you are out in the countryside and there has been a nice rain, the earth has a beautiful smell. In Tamil we call that “*manvaasanai*”. It is a beautiful smell of the earth. The sense of smell is one of the most primitive senses. The more primitive the organism is, the better is its sense of smell. As human beings we have evolved, hence our sense of smell is not very good.

Water is related to the sensation of taste, and if you have a bad fever and your mouth is all dry, even your most favourite food does not taste good – when there is no saliva, no liquid, there is no taste. Taste is very much related to the water element, hence to the Swadhistana chakra.

The next one, fire, naturally is sight - no light, no sight. You need fire in order to have light; you need light in order to see. The fire is related to the Manipura chakra. At the Anahata we have the sensation of touch. At the level of ether, which is at Vishuddha chakra, the ability to hear comes in, and the ability to think as a super sense, the process of thinking through the mind, is at Ajna chakra.

Let us take a closer look at these connections, for instance with Muladhara. Muladhara is related to several aspects. We have related it first to the element earth. Then we have related it to the concept of smell. As a principle of Yoga in all the six views, the *shat darshana*, smell is on the one hand a process of the sensory apparatus, which is linked to the nose, where the nose itself is looked at as a *jnana endriya*. *Endriya* means an organ, *jnana* means wisdom, giving information. Our sensory apparatus, which gives us information, is called *jnana endriya*. When these words join together to the word *janendriya* the a and the e merge together to form the sound of a long “a”. This is part of the Sanskrit grammar.

So, the nose is considered as the sensory apparatus, but then what is perceived, smell, is seen as a subtle element. This is part of the concept of *tanmatra*. “*Tan*” means energy as in *tantra*, *matra* means “that which can be identified”. *Tanmatra* is the “identification of energy”, that what you perceive through your sensory apparatus. The nose is the *janendriya*; smell is the *tanmatra*. The nose as a sensual organ is called *grana*, and the smell is called *gandha*.

And at the same time, all the senses like the *bhutas*, the elements, are connected. Like the element earth contains every other element, the sense of smell contains all the other

senses: you can remove smell and you still have taste; you can remove taste and you still have sight and so on, they are all within smell.

Sometimes there is the experience where the stimulus of one sense triggers another sense. When you smell the jasmine flower, for example, you think, "India!", because the Indian ladies walk around with jasmine flowers in their hair. You hear a song, and you think of a certain person. But those associations derive from neurological connections. In that way, the senses are not straight-line connected, they are more connected in the way the elements are connected, one fits into the other like the Russian dolls.

Question: What do all those different names for mind mean, like *manas* and *buddhi* etc.?

Answer: The process of our mind is an internal process. These internal processes are called *antar karana*. *Antar* means "inner" as in *antara yoga* or *antara pranayama*. *Karana* means "to do", hence the "internally occurring processes". There are said to be four internal processes. The first one is called the *chitta*, which is at the lowest level. *Chitta* refers to the subconscious, the unconscious mind. It is this lowest level of the mind, which is the memory storehouse where all the memories, all the experiences that you have ever had since the moment of conception are stored. The *chitta* also is related to your spinal cord, to the brain stem, which makes sure that you can eat, sleep, walk around, jump up and down, have sex – and all those basic, autonomic, unconscious activities that you need to survive but that you can do without a brain. That is what *chitta vritti* is all about, about dealing with that stuff of those whirlpools that are pulling you down. This is the first level, the *chitta*.

At the next level, you have the *manas*, the conscious mind, which starts to deal with other aspects than just surviving. You could say that the conscious mind is like the upper layer of the water in a river, and the *chitta* is the deepest layer at the bottom of the river. Sometimes, things from the bottom come up to the surface and then sink back to the bottom. Whenever something comes to the top, it comes through your conscious level, and then your *manas* deals with it. And then, it sinks back to the bottom for another twenty years when it occasionally comes up again. There is this constant interplay of the subconscious coming up to the conscious and going back down.

Manas is that which makes us a human. You can hear it even in the word hu-man, man, wo-man. In Sanskrit the human being is called *manushya*, the one who has *manas*, because it is believed that animals have the *chit* but only humans have this conscious mind.

So, you have the *chitta*, the *manas*, and then you have something called the *buddhi*. The neocortex is part of that. This is the intellect, the part of the internal process, which has the ability to distinguish between good and bad, between the things to be done and the things not to be done. It is the power of discernment. This is the energy of *viveka*. Because of the *viveka* the *buddhi* has three powers, three energies: one energy is called *iccha shakti*, the power of will. Most of the time when we say that somebody has a lot of willpower, it is actually wantpower. "I want this, I want that". Very few people have actually willpower. Willpower is to move forward. Wantpower is just stagnation.

The second power is called *kriya shakti*. *Kriya* is an action, a movement. It is the power of movement. And the third energy is called *jnana shakti*, the power of wisdom.

You have these three powers in your intellect: the power of will, the power to do and the power to know whether something should be done or not. All those three are there in your intellectual existence, in the *buddhi*. There are many people in the world who want to do good but then just sit on their couch, and a lot of people want to do something bad and they go out and do it. Like terrorists, for instance; they don't know about good or bad, they don't know what should be done or not, they don't have the *jnana*. Only very few people have all three powers of the mind working together. They know what should be done, they want to do it and they go out and do it. That is an integrated personality in which the *buddhi* is working.

We could correlate the *chitta* with the *annamaya* and *pranamaya* level of our bodies, because those deal with the physical and physiological functions. The *manas* can be correlated with the *manomaya kosha* level and the *buddhi* with the *vijnanamaya kosha* level which is the intellectual aspect, the higher mind.

And then, you have the fourth, which is called the *ahamkara*. The *ahamkara* is the individuating principle, that which enables us to be an individual. The frontal cortex is part of this. *Ahamkara* can also refer to a negative ego, but in this context it means a positive ego of knowing "I am an individual". Remember that individual means indivisible. You cannot be divided.

These are the four aspects of the mind, the internal process according to Yoga; the lower unconscious, subconscious, the *chitta*, the conscious *manas*, the intellectual *buddhi*, and then that which knows that you are an entity on your own, which is the *ahamkara*.

This can, to some extent, also be correlated with the different levels of *samadhi* – the *vitarka* at the *chitta*, *vichara*, then you have the *sasmita*, which is with the ego, the *ahamkara* and *sananda*, which is when you go beyond it. When you put all of those four aspects together, you have *chit*. There is also the concept of *chit* as the super conscious. Consciousness becomes then *chit* like in *sat chit ananda*, the absolute truth, absolute consciousness and absolute bliss. We are all that.

This perspective on *chitta* and *manas* in this concept is the same in almost every tradition, but some traditions look at *ahamkara* first and then at *buddhi* as the higher one. These are just different views. I prefer the *buddhi* and then the *ahamkara* above it, because I find that the individual personality exists at a certain level, which is like going into the *pancha kosha* and into the *anandamaya kosha*. You have your own individual universe, and then you go out into the next level. So, I like to put the *ahamkara* out there and above the *buddhi*.