

Healing Through the Chakras

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Only 15, James Bollton felt depressed enough to kill himself. His parents were divorced, he never saw his father, and his mother worked fulltime to support the family. He was introverted, withdrawn, socially isolated, and cynical; he had few male friends, no male role models, nor had his voice dropped yet. He was bright but uninspired to excel in school and was contemplating quitting; for recreation, he dabbled in psychedelic drugs. One day he drew a picture of a black heart pierced by a sword, dripping blood, against a background of a skull and crossbones, and he wanted to tattoo this on his arm. But when he tried to buy a gun to shoot himself, his mother called a psychotherapist, who then called Patricia Kaminski, co-director of the California Flower Essence Society of Nevada City, California, to consult on the case. You wouldn't think that a flower essence, such an ethereal distillation of plant blossoms, could stave off a potential suicide, but it did; in fact, it changed James' life completely.

"Our basic diagnosis was that James' heart forces—his heart chakra—were severely closed down, that he was a boy with a lot of pain in his heart," says Kaminski. "So our primary strategy was to help him open and balance his heart center energy. We find that the heart chakra is critical in flower essence therapy, the balance point between the three upper, more spiritual chakras, and the three lower, more physical energy centers. The heart is the container for human feeling and emotion and in this way it is the key to the human soul, and the energy centers of the soul which are known as chakras."

Kaminski has been using flower essences therapeutically with clients for psychological and spiritual problems since 1978, knowing that the energies of flowers (as potentized extracts) can heal the psyche by accessing its subtle energy and consciousness centers called chakras. Her strategy for James Bollton, which would involve eleven different flower essences over a 3 month period taken daily as liquid drops, was to first restore his reason for living, then to help him take hold of his deep masculine and lower self and to uncover and transmute its shadow issues and repressed emotions, and, finally, to catalyze the creative, higher forces of his upper chakras. She gave James a triad of heart remedies: California Wild Rose, to ameliorate his apathy, to address his innate capacity to love, and to lead his heart to the will; Bleeding Heart, to impart a sense of wholeness and stability to the heart, and to nourish him from within; and Pink Monkeyflower, to overcome shame and extreme introversion, to enable him to open up, be vulnerable, even exposed.

"This first set of remedies helped reorient James between the forces of gravity, or death, and the light, or living," explains Kaminski. The polarity is subtle, Kaminski emphasizes. The lower chakras can lead to death and destruction but they're also the key to embodiment and activation. The upper chakras give light and inspiration, but can also lead to excess and an inability to cope with the challenges of physical life. Both tendencies were evident in James. He began to cry frequently, which was highly untypical of him, and to express his feelings, principally grief at the sundering of his family. Next came anger; James started having angry outbursts at friends and family, mainly to do with his father, who had abandoned the family. This was a good and healthy sign, Kaminski knew, indicating James was contacting his shadow side or lower self, confronting the contents of the primary chakras. "It showed he was going forward in his metamorphosis."

Kaminski moved into the second round of prescribing, giving James a new triad of flower essences. This time he took Scarlet Monkeyflower to contact the deep, “red” life energy, the positive, vital aspect of the anger; Black-Eyed Susan, to gain a willingness to look at the dark, repressed material in his psyche, and to give it expression; and Sunflower, to move energy from his solar plexus to the heart in the context of the primal emotional force of his will and the radiance of individuality. In practical terms, Kaminski wanted to coax James into contacting and integrating his dormant masculinity. The fact that his voice hadn’t dropped into the lower register told Kaminski that James wasn’t able to anchor his identity in the lower chakras. Five weeks later, she added Mountain Pride to the mix, for masculine strength, taking a stand, expressivity. The combination worked well, but precipitated another crisis: now James, no longer depressed or hermitic, became rebellious—more like a typical teenager—and sought to assert his will in all circumstances.

This was a clue to Kaminski to work on accessing James’ latent artistic creativity through his upper chakras, notably his throat or expressive center, which had been congested and inactive. Kaminski introduced another triad of flower essences, including Larch, specifically for unlocking throat chakra constrictions and hesitations in self-expression, either verbal or artistic; California Poppy, whose deep orange energies would realign the core energy of his lower chakras with the creativity of his throat center; and Fairy Lantern, to guide his childlike self into adult expression. After this triad of remedies, James went through a remarkable physical transformation, including a rapid growth spurt, a deepening in his voice, and he was much more physically present in his body. Once James contacted his core authentic masculine self, “it unleashed all the latent physical forces in him, giving him a positive direction to his creative aspirations.”

For good measure, Kaminski added Iris to activate the forces of his soul. For Kaminski, the soul is the intermediary between the physical body and spiritual self, active principally in the world of feelings and emotions, sometimes called the astral body, and whose centers of expression in human life are the chakras. In short, the flower essences helped to heal his soul. Now in his 20s, James Bollton is relatively happy, adjusted to adult life, a college graduate, creative, employed, working with print graphics and wood sculpture. Thanks to flower essences, he made it through his painful metamorphosis from suicidal adolescent to expressive adult; and along the way he accessed the life-supporting, life-*enriching*, energies of his subtle energy centers, or chakras.

The concept of chakras comes to us primarily through Eastern wisdom and spiritual traditions and refers to an array of intangible centers of heightened energy and consciousness arranged in a vertical column in proximity to the physical spine. The seven major chakras—clairvoyants report they resemble either flowers (or lotuses), with petals and a stem rooted in an etheric spine, or pulsating, rotating wheels with hub and spokes—are situated from the perineum to the top of the head, and include locations with reference to the root (groin), reproductive area, solar plexus, heart, throat, brow, and crown of the head. In addition, Eastern spiritual sources and Western occult traditions attest to numerous lesser chakras throughout the body. Subtle energy enlivens the chakras when it flows through a triad of channels (called Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna) in the vicinity of the physical spinal column.

The experts inform us that while they are not identical with them, the chakras have direct, functional correspondences with the seven endocrine glands (like the adrenals, thymus, thyroid, pineal), the seven major nerve ganglia (like the cervical ganglia medulla, solar plexus, cerebral cortex), and the physiological systems (digestive, circulatory, respiratory). In addition, each chakra has an operational correlation with one of the five senses; for example, the heart influences the sense of touch through the skin; the root chakra is associated with the sense of smell. Traditional Tantric iconography depicts the individual chakras as having a varying number of petals, from 4 (root chakra) to 1000 (crown chakra), a presiding animal and spiritual deity, a specific geometric form (called a Yantra) and color, and a series of bija or seed syllables in

Sanskrit capable of activating each center through sound. As such, it's a complex symbolic image of higher spiritual energies at work in the human organism.

You don't need to be clairvoyant to work with the chakras, explains Kaminski, who has used flower essences and her own innate sensitivity to work with clients on "soul-spiritual" issues for 15 years. "You only need to be sensitive to the emotional language of the soul and its physical gestures through the body. Then you are working with the energies, with the chakras, which are a fundamental language of the emotions. By addressing and transforming archetypal emotional patterns within the human soul, we access the energy centers known as chakras." For Kaminski, chakras are literally the astral currents of the human being, the expression of our desires and emotions and often called the astral body. "One has to think of the chakras fluidly, as interpenetrating, as aspects of the pulsating reality of life; if you work on one, you will affect them all." Real psychological development through the chakras, as evidenced by the case of James Bollton, is "a fundamental change in one's inner self," and this inner moulting requires work, pain, sometimes suffering, and always, moral development.

"For me, chakra work is the most real work; we are always doing it as human beings whenever we contact our feelings or pain and begin to transform them," Kaminski comments. "Then we are realigning, purifying, and redirecting the energies called chakras." Flower essences are effective in healing through the chakras because when a plant blossoms and unfolds its whorl of colored petals, it briefly unites its pure etheric essence with the astral dimension, which is a realm of pure feeling, says Kaminski. "The flower blossom then becomes the healer to the human astral body because of this purity." Flowers are the soul body of Nature; they build a bridge for the psyche between physical embodiment and spiritual consciousness. "A flower essence captures some of that pristine astral energy as an archetype to heal the imbalances in the human emotional body which is much more subject to individuation and therefore to astral pollution." There is an elegant symmetry at play here: the flowers of Nature help to heal the human through the flowers of the soul—or the chakras.

At the physiological and psychological levels, then, the chakras represent the interface between health and illness, comfort and disease, happiness and suffering, enlightenment and somnolence. As Patricia Kaminski tells us, they are the missing link in the healing of the psyche. We can heal ourselves *through* the chakras because they are the formative source of our thoughts, emotions, sensations, and well-being in an elemental psychophysical language. Chakras are the organs of consciousness, the links between physical and spiritual life. The places where we hurt are really the chakras; as such, they are not only gateways to effective healing and psychological integration, but stepping-stones to spiritual unfoldment and deliberate, conscious evolution, for a profound inner metamorphosis. As we will explore in this article, healing through the chakras is effective at two complementary levels: first, as psychological therapy for the healing of discomfort; and second, as spiritual sadhana, for the healing of ignorance. It's not only flower essences that can spark healing through the chakras, but movement, hatha yoga, breathing, meditation, visualization, sound, mantra, color, gemstones, even thought. They're all tools in a journey into consciousness that acquaintance with the chakras offers us.

Tying Knots in a Handkerchief

Throughout the ages the secrets of the chakra system have been pictured in Eastern images and veiled in Western metaphors. In the Indian Tantra, the cosmos is an interwoven vibratory web of sound created by the tinkling anklets of a dancing Shakti, the divine Feminine and mother of Kundalini. Her rhythms spin the fabric of the universe into seven primary layers or force centers, which become the human chakras. Gautama Buddha, addressing his students, tied a silk handkerchief into six knots to indicate how the human ego binds up the essential unity of Mind through the knots of the chakras. The interior channels for subtle energy in the human body are named after India's three great rivers—Ganges, Yamuna, Sarasvati—that flow upwards (in the spine) to Mount Meru, the sacred mountain in the Himalayas (head). In Tibet, the five levels

of the sacred temple called *chorten* (or Hindu *stupa*) represent five of the subtle energy centers, or chakras, and their affiliations with the elements and primordial Buddhas. In the West, esoteric Christianity called the chakras the seven Churches in Asia or the seven Seals of the Apocalypse. The medieval alchemists knew them as the seven Interior Stars, the secret vessels of the art of transmutation, the “many fine instruments made in the house,” the islands in the Sea of the inner life, the seven planets, the seven metals, or the seven burning lamps. The Rosicrucians saw them as the seven roses. For the 20th century Bulgarian teacher Omraam Mikāel Aïvanhov, the chakras are the fruits of the Tree (spine) of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But in recent decades those fruits have been openly acknowledged and described in Western texts. Chakras are the psychic, generic matrix from which the unique form of the human bodymind is created. They are superphysical centers, rapidly spinning vortices, flower wheels or color whirlpools through which energies pulsate rhythmically “in constant harmonic motion,” says medical clairvoyant Dora Kunz. The chakras, or *padmas*, are differing centers of consciousness, vitality, and “subtle centers of operation” for Tattvik energy, meaning, the energetic quality of one of the four elements (Tattwas, or earth, water, fire, air), said the great Tantric scholar Arthur Avalon. For anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, the lotus blossoms are the sense-organs of the soul, the eyes of the astral body. Chakras, for scientist-yogi Christopher Hills, are “vortices of psychic electricity” and “psychic electricity stations,” biological prisms through which kundalini is differentiated into the human organism. For Theosophist C.W. Leadbeater, chakras are saucer-like depressions or small circles in the surface of the etheric body that glow dully in the ordinary human but “when awakened and vivified they are seen as blazing, coruscating whirlpools, resembling miniature suns.” For Tibetan scholar Lama Anagarika Govinda, chakras represent the elementary structure, form-potentialities, and dimensionality of the universe, “from the organs of dark, subconscious, but cosmically powerful primordial forces to those of a radiant, enlightened consciousness.”

The anatomical models of the chakra system vary somewhat among the traditional Tantric, Tibetan, and Western sources. Whether it is the ancient Hindu rishis or 20th century clairvoyants, perception of the chakras has always been a matter of heightened awareness. The classic Tantric texts describe six principal centers as belonging to Shakti, and a seventh, the crown chakra, as the seat of Shiva. In Tibetan teachings, there are five centers, but it’s understood that two chakras are complexes—the first and second, the brow and crown centers—thus making seven. Some Hindu savants say each of the seven major chakras has seven microchakras, making an additional 49 minor centers. Western sources have always presented seven lotuses—and numerous lesser centers. Hiroshi Motoyama, in *Theories of the Chakras*, says there are seven exalted chakras above the crown, corresponding to the evolution of divine beings, and seven chakras below the root, between the coccyx and heels, corresponding to atavistic animal instincts.

In *Esoteric Healing*, Alice Bailey accounts for 21 minor etheric centers (in places like the palms, the soles of the feet, behind the knees and eyes) and 49 smaller etheric centers. It’s believed that as the etheric body is a complexly woven fabric of crisscrossing energy lines, places of significant intersection of multiple strands in the web comprise the major and minor chakras. The energy lines or subtle nerve channels, called *nadis*, which are the conduits for vital energy (prana), are copious; although Tantra describes fourteen, the ancient texts claim there are between 72,000-350,000 nadis in the etheric body. Malvin Artley, a researcher in the Alice Bailey tradition, suggests that the principal nadis are equivalent to the 14 meridians of acupuncture, which are “vessels for consciousness;” their intersections form an estimated 176 pairs of lesser chakras, or 352 individual points, as the meridians are bilateral in the body.

Then there is the matter of location. In which body, exactly, do the chakras reside? Most simply put, the chakras exist in a subtle, normally invisible, and practically intangible aspect of our total human being. According to all the experts, this prephysical level is the paramount formative source of energy, consciousness, and life for our physical life; it precedes, creates, and nourishes the material body. The Tibetan Buddhist system describes five interpenetrating sheaths,

or *kosha*, of human consciousness, which crystallize in ever-increasing density outwards from the spiritual core of our being. The densest is the physical body, built up through nutrition, then the *prana-mayakosha*, the pranic or etheric sheath; the next sheath is our thought body; then there are two final sheaths of potential consciousness and knowledge and of bliss and enlightenment.

The ancient Upanishads beheld the human as threefold: the gross body of physical elements; the astral body of subtle elements (home of the chakras); and the causal body of the root causes of all that comprises a human individual. According to the Tibetan model, the psychic centers are found in the *prana-mayakosha*, or pranic sheath. Theosophy and Alice Bailey tell us there are seven planes of consciousness in the human constitution (physical, emotional, mental, Buddhist, Atmic, Monadic, Adi), and that the chakras have expressions on all of them. Other systems describe a fourfold constitution (physical, etheric, astral, and spiritual bodies) in which the chakras exist at the interface between etheric and astral bodies. Consistent throughout these varying models of the chakras is the understanding that they mediate, transform, and transmit higher, subtler, spiritual energies into the denser, more materialized dimensions of our life, right into the cellular level of physiology. And when we mention energy, we open to the door to that vast subject called kundalini.

The source of all energy, whether gross or subtle, is Shakti the Divine Mother, say the Hindu scriptures. Shakti as cosmic energy is the primal force of life underlying all creation from electricity and magnetism to supreme consciousness and pure bliss. As the rishis teach us, the whole world—matter, life, the mind—is Shakti’s body, the manifest expression of energy and the force of change and evolution. Shakti’s consort and polar opposite is Shiva, pure consciousness without form or movement, absolute blissful contemplation; ultimately, their relationship is one of union and the human theater for this cosmic union is the chakra system. Within the human constitution, kundalini and prana are aspects of cosmic Shakti. Kundalini is fiery, creative energy coiled in a state of resting potential and dormancy in the human root chakra; prana is Shakti as active, subtle, life-supporting energy constantly in circulation through the nadis. Starting from the root, kundalini has the potential to ascend through the Sushumna, the central of three etheric energy channels including the lunar Ida and solar Pingala, whose vertical weaving crisscrosses at each chakra. “When kundalini sleeps man is awake to the world and has objective consciousness,” explained Swami Sivananda Sarasvati. Even in its low-key, unactivated expression, kundalini thoroughly permeates our life, enabling us to sense and cognize the world. But when kundalini awakens and ascends through the our chakras, one “sleeps, and loses all consciousness of the world and becomes one with the Lord.” Kundalini is revealed as light and consciousness, and thus Shakti reunites with Shiva in a process universally called enlightenment.

Energy and consciousness are stepped-down in progressive stages in the human subtle organism. Shakti energy has three basic qualities, called *gunas* : *tamas* (inertia, torpor), *rajas* (expansion, activity), *sattva* (serene), and these are reflected in the six principal chakras grouped in pairs starting with the root/sacral (*tamas*). Another way of putting this is to say that the chakras represent the archetypal formative forces of the five elements underlying matter, namely, earth (solidity), water (fluidity), fire, air, and ether (*akasha* or space). These primordial forces—manifestations of Shakti that the Tantric texts call *Tattwas* —are the subtle basis for our thoughts, feelings, desires, sensations, perceptions, personal identity, and life as embodied human individuals. They represent the etheric energies that create the primary elements of the human body and our wakeful awareness as personalities. The chakra model is implicitly and consistently holistic, positing a seamless interpenetration of body, mind, soul, and spirit; we may not see the lotus flowers, but we unarguably experience their effects, whether it’s at the level of emotions or physiology.

Chakras have several key correspondences with the physical body including the autonomic nerve plexuses, the endocrine glands, the major physiological systems, and the five senses. As such, the chakras are an expression of what Richard Gerber, M.D., author of *Vibrational Medicine*, calls our “human multidimensional anatomy.” As energy transformers,

chakras translate the nutritive force of Shakti into the physiology of the body, influencing glandular, hormonal and cellular processes and nerve transmission, all of which are “necessary for optimal human functioning,” says Gerber. “There are many interlocking homeostatic systems with the physical and subtle bodies which cooperate in maintaining the health of the individual.” In this way, disease, whether psychological or pathological, is seen, diagnostically, as a manifestation of chakra dysfunction and prana imbalance, adds Gerber. In *The Chakras and the Human Energy Fields*, clairvoyant Dora Kunz and medical doctor Shafica Karagulla documented over 200 cases in which the correlation between chakra and disease through the endocrine system was apparent. In a case of schizophrenia, Kunz perceived a deformed crown chakra in the patient: the petals were toothed like a saw, the texture of the center was coarse, loose, and inelastic, its core was obscured with gray clouds, and a split dramatically cleaved the chakra from front to back. The patient’s brow chakra, Kunz reported, was also split, ragged on the periphery, gray in the center, and marked by “a peculiar banding.” The most striking feature in this case, she added, was a split observed in all of the chakras.

Along the same lines, according to Choa Kok Sui, president of the World Pranic Healing Foundation in Manila, the Philippines, and author of *Pranic Psychotherapy*, each chakra of a healthy, balanced individual has a protective etheric web that filters out negative external influences. But in cases of stress, shock, negative inner attitudes, feelings, accident, or illness, the web of a particular chakra gets clogged, punctured, even ruptured by what Sui calls “traumatic thought entities.” These are psychic energies of a negative, unwholesome nature. To the clairvoyant, the etheric web of a dysfunctional chakra has cracks and holes, may be pockmarked with dark-colored splotches or clouds, and harbors negative psychic energy and “etheric parasites” that manifest in the personality as phobia, depression, obsession, fear, compulsion, and other emotional states. The healer, states Sui, projects his own pranic energy into the etheric web to remove the thought entities and seal the cracks.

Sui cites the case study of a 15 year old woman, who was overly introspective, hermitic, deeply depressed, and generally unkempt. She had quit high school, felt unloved, and was angry that her parents were constantly quarrelling. A clairvoyant scan of her chakras—Sui works with 11 basic centers—revealed congestion and overactivation in the navel and forehead centers and depletion in the root center. After several weeks of Sui’s techniques of pranic psychotherapy, she “exhibited enthusiasm to return to school, became communicative and cooperative to the therapists, her hygiene improved, and she was able to be more expressive of her feelings.”

Admittedly, as the general idea of chakras becomes something of a new age household word, we must be alert for misconceptions and inflated, even irresponsible, claims, both of which are rife. Take the matter of unblocking, opening, or activating the chakras, which is a prospect many chakra popularizers bandy about. Everybody has chakras of course and in everyone chakras have some degree of native, untended, basic activity that maintains psychological and physiological stasis. But without our deliberate effort, kundalini is unlikely to be roused and the deeper, evolutionary potential of each chakra will remain dormant. Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner noted that in undeveloped people the lotus flowers are “dark in color, motionless, and inert,” but when a student begins spiritual exercises, the chakras become more luminous and begin revolving. According to Theosophist clairvoyant C.W. Leadbeater in his classic *The Chakras*, the chakra wheels are perpetually rotating in everyone, receiving the flow of forces from the higher world through their hub. In the ordinary person, they are usually in “comparatively sluggish motion,” whereas in the “more evolved” individual, the chakras may be “glowing and pulsating with living light, so that an enormously greater amount of energy passes through them.” Shalila Sharamon and Bodo Baginski inform us (in *The Chakra Handbook*) that the chakra wheels rotate in opposite directions, depending on one’s gender and that in a man or woman individual chakras alternate their rotational direction, such that the male-root rotates clockwise, then the male/sacral rotates counterclockwise whereas the female/root goes counterclockwise and the female/sacral goes clockwise.

The amount of rotation depends on how much inner work we've done. According to Omraam Mikael Aïvanhov, in "the vast majority of humans" the subtle centers are relatively inactive until stirred by kundalini, which literally sets the wheels in motion. "It is only then, when the chakra begins to spin, that its latent powers and faculties can begin to manifest themselves," he notes in *Man's Subtle Bodies and Centres*. Traditionally, these latent powers, when fully cultivated—meaning, beyond the requirements of psychological integration and spiritual awakening—are called siddhis, and include, as Patanjali described in his *Yoga Sutras*, a stunning array of magical, metaphysical abilities such as clairvoyance, telepathy, teleportation, and invisibility. Of more practical concern to us is the perennially repeated caveat to not seek to awaken the liquid fire of kundalini without the guidance of a teacher as quite debilitating, painful, even disastrous, effects might result from a premature activation, as Pandit Gopi Krishna so vividly recounted years ago in his *Kundalini—Evolutionary Energy in Man*.

Most teachers who work with chakras and kundalini stress that one must not be cavalier and casual in one's approach to the human subtle energy centers because we are confronting a larger, more powerful, more dynamically transformative aspect of ourselves than we are accustomed to. Literally, we are playing with fire, by degree, in stages, in the form of the chakra flowers of progressive consciousness. In Western terms, we are undertaking the Great Work, the alchemical transformation of the self, which is a profound metamorphosis. That's why parapsychologist Hiroshi Motoyama recommends students begin their work with the brow chakra to develop a point of insight and control beyond the thrall of the elements and personality in the first five centers. Each chakra possesses its own latent karma—"potentially dangerous karmic forces"—which are brought to the surface and activated to some extent through ascetic practices, he notes. The root chakra, especially, is regarded as the storehouse of karma and the repository of atavistic animal instincts from an earlier stage of evolution. Or as Tantric scholar Charles Breux notes in his *Journey into Consciousness*, "Each chakra contains any number of seed patterns from past experiences—related to archetypal motifs—which define the unconscious parameters of the ego-self." These seed patterns (called *samskaras*, or obscurations) "eclipse the wisdom-energy acting through any particular chakra and are major obstacles to the realization of our Buddha nature."

The Psychology of the Chakras

For the last six years Anodea Judith and Selene Vega have "focused and fused, muscled and mused our way up and down the chakra ladder" with the goal of integration, "of the body and mind, spiritual and practical, inner and outer." Judith and Vega, who are co-authors of *The Sevenfold Journey*, facilitate this chakra fusion through their 9 month Chakra Intensive, an eclectic workshop they hold in Sebastopol, California. Here about 30 students work on themselves through the energies, archetypes, and experiences of the chakras. Judith, who wrote an earlier book on chakras (*Wheels of Life*), has used the chakra system as a tool for self-growth for the last 15 years, emphasizing the chakra correlations with the primary psychological dimensions of our lives, expressed as survival, sex, power, love, communication, imagination, and spirituality. She often presents her multifaceted approach, which includes hatha yoga, bioenergetics, movement, journal-keeping, affirmations, meditation, and ritual, at the popular new age study centers. Judith sees teach chakra as a "psychic floppy disk that contains programming about how to handle various aspects of our life. We work with the chakras to get the bugs out of the programs and get the whole system up and running smoothly."

For Judith, the concept of chakras is a brilliant psychological metaphor for the different planes of existence and key issues operating in our life. While she personally affirms the existence of these subtle "wheels of life," she finds that their metaphysical truth doesn't concern her students, but rather the ways in which the complex body of information contained in each chakra image can illuminate life issues and propel men and women to greater wholeness. Central to her method is the idea of chakra blockages, an energetic model which she frames in terms of

excessive or deficient. “When a chakra is deficient, you might say that the programming is locked in a restrictive pattern, habitually blocking out incoming stimulation.” An excessive chakra is also dysfunctional, but on account of being overly cluttered, restricting internal energy from being expressed, explains Judith. Generally, the negative impact of childhood experiences and cultural conditioning create blockages in the chakra system, compromise the natural flow of energy and consciousness, and impede our psychological development. Life experiences infringe on the natural “rights” embodied in each chakra, says Judith; the throat chakra represents the “right to speak and hear truth,” while the heart chakra is about “the right to love and be loved.” Ultimately, the goal is to reclaim mind, body, and spirit. “All of the chakras need to be open and functioning in balance with the others for one to be a fully thriving human being.”

Judith, who holds an M.A. in clinical psychology, relies on the strategies of hatha yoga positions, core bioenergetics exercises, and improvisational dance to move energy through the restricted areas of the body in correlation with the issues represented by the chakras. “You have to carry the body along with you in this work.” The combination of body configurations—she calls it chakra movement work—“helps to move out the blocks and knots” and to develop energy in those particular body areas. “As mind and body are intricately interconnected, and the chakras are points where the two connect, movement becomes an invaluable technique for successfully changing our energy patterns and our basic experience.” For example, in her recommendations for root chakra work, Judith teaches pelvic breathing, the bridge and locust asanas, leg folding, rolling, spinal roll, bioenergetic movements called the elephant and legs-against-the-wall, and partner work, such as earth skiing, pushing, using resistance, and slapping hands. Students are assigned daily living exercises and subjects for reflection pertinent to each chakra and are encouraged to record their experiences and feelings about the issues and energies accessed. “People have remarkable experiences,” Judith relates; her students describe the chakra work as “a life-altering experience,” and “a truly transformational journey,” or “an all-encompassing journey.” Judith acknowledges that while many Americans want “fast results and a quick way,” this work is not all easy and instant, but cumulative, producing substantial results over time.

For chakra therapist Nancy Rosanoff, who practices spiritual counselling in New York City, chakras are a valuable psychological tool enabling us to contact deeper parts of ourselves. Through chakra work, we explore the unfamiliar, unconscious shadow contents of the psyche, gain more self-awareness, and work for wholeness of mind, body, and spirit. Ever since she was spontaneously introduced to the reality of the chakras through a healing crisis 14 years ago, Rosanoff has shared her discoveries in public classes and private consultations. Her approach is eclectic and freewheeling, drawing inspiration and techniques from Eastern, Western, and shamanic traditions; she uses images, sounds, colors, shamanic techniques, breathing, writing, always seeking to enhance self-understanding, changed unwanted behavior patterns, unblock creative energy, and “balance daily life within the context of a greater spiritual reality.” In Rosanoff’s view, chakras “compact and transform” energy from a nonmaterial state as it moves through the levels of reality into the material state—namely, human life in the body.

Using a kind of Jungian-flavored symbolic inner visualization technique, Rosanoff encourages students to meditate on each chakra to discover an animal spirit guide metaphorically, or experientially, related to that center. Such a guide, or animal impression, can impart useful information about the general energetic nature of that chakra and one’s specific developmental obstacles and challenges in that context. A woman saw fleas in her brow chakra which meant, to her, that they were itching for her to pay attention, to see more; another woman saw an iguana in her sacral chakra, suggesting she needed to protect her vulnerability in the reproductive center, to enscale it. It’s a defensible approach; after all, Tantra places an animal in most of the icons of the chakras, and for the sacral chakra, Tantra sees a crocodile. If not animals, sometimes spirit guides or Jungian archetypal figures like the wise old man or crone/magus appear, bearing messages from deep within the psyche. “When we work with the chakras this way, we go quickly to a deep and vulnerable state where symbols and images come to us from our unconscious. My main

message to people is to learn to trust yourself and use the chakras as a tool for a deeper sense of who you are.”

For chakra theorist Charles Breaux, an effective way to gain that deeper sense of self-identity Rosanoff calls for is by blending the insights of Jungian psychology and Buddhist Tantra spirituality, which is the subject of his *Journey into Consciousness*. In fact, the more he studied these two apparently divergent models, the more he found similarities and complementary explanations. “Jung and Tantra have much the same vocabulary and viewpoints of the psyche, and both are systems that lead us on a path to wholeness,” says Breaux. Where Tantra calls for enlightenment, Jung extolls individuation.

Consider the matter of archetypes, central to Jungian thought. Each chakra represents a generic, specific, archetypal, and collective pattern or issue, such as survival, relationship, communication, or insight. As such, the chakra contents are archetypal configurations true for all humans, just like the elements of physical anatomy. “Each chakra can be visualized as a lens in a slide projector in which certain generic functions of the psyche are brought to light,” Breaux says. Into this collective context enters the impact of our individual life experiences, or traumas, that “color, alter, or articulate” that chakra archetype. What happens in our modern culture, however, is that our chakra slide collections are “gorged with erroneous effigies” and the self becomes “drastically alienated” from the authentic sources of spiritual nourishment within the psyche. “With the chakras, we have the primordial seed patterns within to guide us in our development, but our personalized experiences of these energies, in which we have blocked or altered this natural process, stand in our way as obstacles.”

Working with the chakras to undo the psychological blocks, in a process Breaux calls “psychological excavation,” is nothing less than undertaking, in stages, “the alchemical transmutation of human consciousness.” This is a metamorphosis in a system of chakras that open as “we awaken progressively to the various dimensions of the psyche.” Chakra work, as Breaux outlines it, starts with “befriending” then resolving irrelevant, erroneous, or self-inhibiting contents of the personal unconscious, which is to say, the “personalized archetypal images” accreted in each chakra. Deprogramming the chakras means we must re-experience their “crystallized, emotional and conceptual formations” most typically expressed in emotionally dynamic images and symbols. Drawing on the psychological precision of Jung and the skillful means of Tantra, Breaux outlines a series of meditations and inner work, enriched by frank excerpts from his meditation diary in working with the chakras, to show us how to make the chakral journey to the Self.

As any sage will tell you there are a myriad of ways to get there, but Malvin Artley, a scientist, researcher, and esoteric consultant working in Gibsonville, North Carolina, and author of *Bodies of Fire—A Thousand Points of Light*, has found 176 precise doorways within the human body to make that journey more efficient. Working with two clairvoyants and hundreds of clients, Artley documents 176 pairs of lesser chakras formed by the intersections of two or more of the 14 acupuncture meridians as they symmetrically traverse both sides of the body. Each meridian is the “conductor or pathway for a particular stream of consciousness.” Each of these lesser chakra points represents—and offers the clinician access to—a specific type of consciousness and emotional component in a hierarchy of consciousness. Artley’s lesser chakras are like dozens of psychological variations on the basic themes of the seven major chakras. Such a model indicates the “great complexity and marvellous order and design” of the human subtle energy system. In fact, when we add the 352 lesser chakra points to the acupoints described in Chinese Medicine, we get a fiery body composed of approximately 1000 points of light—“enough for a small galaxy, a microcosm,” says Artley.

“It’s the specificity of the lesser points that enables us to access and release the content, which tends to be emotional, of the major centers,” Artley explains. Artley has found that clients can contact emotional modalities related to the major chakras very quickly and thoroughly by working with the lesser chakra points, either through applying pressure on the point with fingers

or a crystal. Often, while a major chakra will not release its fixations, Artley can facilitate this by stimulating the lesser affiliate points which allow one to “zero in on complexes.” Take the Voice of Creation Center, located at the chin where the dimple forms; this lesser chakra is formed by the intersection of the Stomach, Liver, and Conception Vessel meridians. According to the psychoenergetic dynamics of acupuncture, which Artley capably explains, stimulating this point, which is a subsidiary of the throat chakra, can release the joy and exuberance of the inner child, enabling one to speak one’s heart with authority. The Breath of Life Center, in the center of each clavicle where the Kidney, Stomach, and Triple Warmer meridians intersect, is another throat center affiliate, pertaining to breathing, the absorption of vitality (prana), and the sense of feeling present in space. This center reveals physical vitality relative to emotional stability and security.

The Sense of Justice Centers (under the nail of the large toe next to the second toe), formed by the intersections of the Liver and Gall Bladder meridians, is related to the solar plexus center. In a psychological sense, both the liver and gall bladder are “absolutist” organs, dealing with the feelings of justice and fair play (liver) with logic and thought constructs (gall bladder). Both meridians terminate here in the big toe affording us maximum access to their emotional potential, explains Artley. While he provides a detailed psychoenergetic map of the inner chakral domain of emotions, Artley urges clients to be prudent and to have a competent counsellor at arm’s reach. “Many of these little centers contain psychological issues that can be very painful to a person when confronted by them.”

What emerges from the kind of work exemplified by Judith, Rosanoff, Breaux, and Artley is the foundations for a yoga psychology. “Knowledgeable Eastern gurus insist that anyone doing spiritual work must first lay a strong foundation by bringing the personality into balance,” explains Swami Padmananda, a senior disciple of Swami Sivananda Radha, founder of the Yasodhara Ashram in Kootenay Bay, British Columbia, and author of one of the classic texts on chakras, *Kundalini—Yoga for the West*. “The kundalini system provides symbols of the structure of human life,” says Swami Padmananda, who published a review of the system in the Ashram’s journal *Ascent* last year; but to make this well-tested system work, you must recognize the kundalini symbolism within yourself. “All our senses and inner forces are working and interacting continuously, and we are always working on issues from all the different chakras at any one time.”

The goal of yoga psychology is to bring ourselves into a state of inner balance so that union with cosmic consciousness, or Shiva, becomes possible. Recognizing that many Westerners want to remain in the world but with a life imbued with spirituality and sacredness, Swami Radha (with Swami Padmananda acting as editor) developed the book as a bridge and guide to the middle path, presenting numerous exercises for “character-building” in the context of daily life and for examining the quality of mind active in each chakra. This is crucial because as a primordial life force and source of our daily human thought and action, kundalini is neutral; like water, it flows into and magnifies whatever personality aspects are prevalent in our character, like anger, resentment, or jealousy. “When we awaken this energy in any way, we must insure it it will go into the best in us; otherwise we can become imbalanced.” The image of chakra as a wheel or flower is symbolically apt, adds Padmananda. A wheel signifies going around and around, which means “repeating patterns, getting stuck when we are indiscriminately driven by the forces within a chakra.” On the other hand, the chakra as a lotus is an elegant symbol for the “flowering of consciousness that can only arise out of the mud of daily existence.”

The Spirituality of the Chakras

Swami Padmananda’s comments about yoga psychology as a foundation for spiritual unfoldment are taken up by David Frawley, director of the American Institute of Vedic Studies in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the author of numerous books on Ayurvedic philosophy, including his most recent, *Tantric Yoga and the Wisdom Goddesses*. According to Frawley, in some

respects the prevalent new age thinking about the chakras as the roots of disease and the seat for externally-applied therapies is based on a misconception of yoga practice.

In the original context of the Vedic sages, the chakras were not tools for psychological integration, but the doorways into the transcendence of psychology and personality itself. Tantric students “worked” on opening their chakras as part of a process leading to Self-knowledge and awakening, which, by definition, meant the surpassing of mortality, the life of desire, and confusion—the realm of psychology—into the light of our immortal essence, Frawley explains. Yogis were concerned with the superordinary functioning of the chakras as elements of their spiritual *sadhana*, or regime of devotional or knowledge-oriented practices which included meditation, pranayama, mantra, and samadhi. For them, the chakras revealed “the *cosmic* nature of the elements as opposed to their *personal* functions;” as such, the yogis approached these potent centers only from the basis of “unity consciousness, appreciating the universalism of their function.”

Chakras, says Frawley, represent the keys to a hidden evolutionary potential for humans. The result of closed or dormant chakras, which is the state for most of us, is not so much disease but ignorance, “regarding the external world as the true reality and living without awareness of one’s true self, which is neither body nor mind but thought-free awareness.” For Frawley, yoga as therapy is a preliminary to what must be yoga as *sadhana*—the way the yogis have always done it—but they must not be given equal weight. That’s because chakra therapy tends to aim at healing mind and body but the Vedic yoga teachings are about transcending, even negating, mind and body in the realization of cosmic consciousness. The purpose of yoga—and by this Frawley includes work with the chakras—is to “bring about a totally new human being, a different, higher type of person from out of Nature’s secret evolutionary force.”

One of the traditional Vedic ways to bring about this new human is through sound, and that means the sacred sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet, explains Vyaas Houston, director of the American Sanskrit Institute in Warwick, New York. Houston has been working with the Sanskrit sounds and alphabet for two decades, ever since he learned it, through chanting, from his spiritual teacher, Sri Brahmananda Saraswati. “When he chanted, it was as though every molecule of his body was vibrating. It was as though his spiritual power was transmitted through chanting Sanskrit.” What Houston next discovered is that the 50 letters/sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet essentially create, form, and activate the 50 petals of the first six chakras, from root to brow. That’s why, as a kind of open secret, the vowels and consonants of Sanskrit are displayed on the individual petals of the six chakras in the Tantric icons. In the vibratory alphabet that is Sanskrit, their sounds *are* the petals and chakras themselves.

So it makes sense, for somebody wishing to stimulate the chakras, to chant their sounds as given by Sanskrit, says Houston. “The Sanskrit alphabet is a coherent selection of the most pure, distinct and focussed sounds that can be made by the human vocal instrument.” The remarkable thing is that as a body of coherent sounds it “reconverts the mind into pure energy,” which makes Sanskrit “the ultimate tool for approaching the study of the Self.” Consider the Visuddha, or throat chakra: its 16 petals *are* the 14 vowel sounds and 2 variations of Sanskrit—simple, basic sounds like *um, am, om, aim, em, rm*. This means the alphabet, as a spoken energy body, begins at the throat; by extension, it implies that cosmic creation was spoken forth from the larynx as well—Shiva’s, presumably. The 50 individual sounds—of the petals, of Sanskrit—represent pure energy, bijas, or seed sounds, that then expand into the language. All the mantras of the Vedas and Tantra are implicit in the language because “sound is the primary vehicle in the yogic tradition to expand individual consciousness into cosmic awareness.” Sanskrit is sometimes called the “garland of letters,” notes Houston, but this garland is a mala of sound beads around the neck of Shiva whose speech is called *Devavani*, the speech of the Gods.

For Houston, studying and speaking Sanskrit itself is a vital element in any spiritual practice, partly because of the arresting insights it affords. It will also bring you into direct, living contact with the reality, as sound, of the chakras. Coming into manifestation and incarnation,

moving from the crown to the root, the 50 petal sounds create the five elements and the stages (chakras) of consciousness (as thoughts, feelings, and sensations) they represent in human experience. But the primary bija mantras, which are single syllables assigned to the core of each of the first 5 chakras—*Lam, Vam, Ram, Yam, Ham*—represent stages through which kundalini converts matter (expressed as the particular formative force of the element in each chakra) to energy through sound. At the throat, chanting the primary bija *Ham* brings you into ether or *Akasha*, where you feel the expansion beyond the matter of the body into space, says Houston. Here you have the direct experience that you are not your body. “Then you can look at the body as a creation of energy.” At the Ajna, or brow chakra, the primary bija is *AUM*, which represents all the sounds (and chakras) in one—“the whole alphabet in one single sound.” As far as Houston is concerned, rather than working with specific psychological problems and therapies focussed on the chakras. “the most powerful therapy is to practice Sanskrit and watch it clear away everything else.” Even though for maximum effect the Sanskrit sounds must be pronounced exactly, because of the basic structure of sound, even an approximation of the bijas still has the effect of “opening up energy.”

In fact, for someone who knows how to listen diagnostically, the way we make the sounds, the way we speak words and sentences, is an indication of the status of our various chakras. According to Sri Shyam Bhatnagar, director of SRI Center International in Somerset, New Jersey, and a Hindu scientist who has studied and taught mantric sound for 25 years, the sound frequencies in the spoken human voice reveal the energetic totality (or imbalances) of our chakras. Consider a man with a high, whiny, nasal voice. This man’s voice tells Bhatnagar that he has a disorder in the relationship between the root and throat chakras, that his earth element is not solid enough in the throat center; he is easily excitable, probably anxious, possibly addicted to sweets and simple carbohydrates. Or how about a man with a deep, gargly voice. This person typically has “difficulty in letting the energy rise up into the higher chakras” past a certain gateway above the solar plexus; the first three chakras are “so pressured that all the energy is pulled down again by gravity.”

Bhatnagar calls his therapeutic strategy Inner Tuning: as spiritual medicine, he prescribes specific mantras to correct the imbalances. His approach allows for a great deal of tonal specificity as he contends each chakra has seven microchakras, making a 49-aspected chakra system. “I ask people to chant the mantra for no more than 3 minutes at a certain time every day, when the energy is right. The most important part of this work is recognizing where the energy is at any given time of the day.” According to Bhatnagar, subtle energy courses sequentially through the chakras twice daily, remaining in each center for approximately 95 minutes. To elucidate this insight, Bhatnagar has published a Chakra Energy Chart and Prana Calendar for 18 years for his students around the world. The cycle begins about 2 hours before sunrise. For the first two weeks of March, for example, prana enters the root chakra at 4:12 a.m. (EST), moves to the sacral chakra at 6:01, to the navel center at 7:21, and to the crown at 2:05 p.m., after which it drops again into the root center completing its second cycle in the crown at 4:12 a.m. This means if Bhatnagar prescribes a mantra for balancing the Manipura, or navel chakra, the best time for practicing it, in the first fortnight of March, is between 7:37-9:14 a.m. Bhatnagar has his clients and students practice the prescribed mantra for a period of 40 days, after which he diagnoses the voice and checks the microchakras again (usually by palpating the spine) and generally prescribes a new sound. Probably understating the kinds of transformations Inner Tuning can precipitate, Bhatnagar notes: “A lot of things begin to happen during the 40 days.”

Perhaps as fundamental to the energetic nature of the chakras as sound is color. After all, Tantra iconography assigns a color to each of the major chakras, and, as Bhatnagar tells us, the chakras are basically sound and light. On the subtle level, we are as much a rainbow as a symphony. We instinctively crave the therapeutic benefits of light because we have a color understanding in the depths of our being, explains Trish Hunter, president of Aura Soma USA, a unique color therapy system developed in England in 1983 with an American office in Fallbrook,

California. “Color is before anatomy and consciousness,” says Hunter. “It is the first visual essence of life; color and sound, for me, are one.” Aura Soma is a color healing system that involves 90 different bottles of liquid color in various hues, called Balance bottles, made from the essences and extracts of herbs, flowers, and gemstones; the color is applied topically on the body with reference to the chakras in broad rings around the appropriate body sections. If it’s the solar plexus, for example, and some variation of yellow is selected, the Balance is daubed in a band completely encircling the midriff, front, sides, and back. Although all 90 Balance bottles pertain to the color energetics of the chakras, within the Aura Soma system, 8 bottles specifically focus on the chakras as broad, generic energy fields requiring harmonization.

A woman consulted Hunter for a color healing. In the course of their conversation, it became evident to Hunter that this woman had endured a great shock and trauma, that she had been raped, and had not emotionally resolved the abusive experience. A spiritual teacher had advised her to get in contact with her lower chakras because she was imbalanced, disconnected, and ungrounded. The Aura Soma approach requires that the client actually self-selects the color remedies out of the chromatic field of 90 bottles; this woman’s initial selection was a two-toned bottle of orange over orange, the Balance bottle specifically for the sacral or reproductive chakra. The orange/orange Balance bottle is about centering, the hara, bringing the auric field into alignment, says Hunter. She advised her client to apply the color starting at the left earlobe, going down the left shoulder and arm, the left side of the body to the waist, and around the navel chakra. The impact of the trauma had rent a significant tear in the fabric of her aura, especially on the left side, leaving an etheric gap, which the orange/orange would reknit.

“This is a very intense, single focus bottle,” explains Hunter. “She went through the bottle almost at once, in only two weeks. It was such a deep need within her it was as if her body drank it up. Afterwards she told me she now felt more centered and focussed than she had in years.” Color healing is about finding harmony, well-being, and balance; as a therapy, Aura Soma reconnects one with the light within. “When you feed the chakras what they are hungry for—the right colors—then you’re flowing again; then, whatever blockage or confusion of energies you have, you find ease again, and you’re restored to balance, empowered to take the next step in actualizing your dreams.”

Awakening the Petals

How actively we should pursue this self-actualization by seeking healing through the chakras and their activation is a subject that concerns spiritual teachers like Swami Chetanananda, director of the Nityananda Institute of Portland, Oregon, and author of *Dynamic Stillness*. To think we have a problem in a particular chakra that can be “fixed” by “working” on the chakra may be evidence of misguided thinking and confusion, warns Chetanananda, who teaches Trika Yoga, a Tantric discipline within Kashmir Shaivism that emphasizes chakras and kundalini.

It’s true that each chakra has a relationship to a particular aspect of our physical, intellectual, and emotional lives; and it’s true that “certain aspects of our understanding are direct articulations of the vibration of a particular chakra.” But to think in terms of fixing problems through the chakras means we are buying into the erroneous idea that we, as unlimited spiritual beings, have real, limiting problems in the first place, says Chetanananda. “We are also falling into the trap of spiritual materialism—that is, of trying to *use* God instead of trying to *know* God. At that point, we have ceased altogether to engage in authentic spiritual work.” Better to let the chakras “simply flower” within us; better to allow them to open naturally, like flowers in the sunlight, advises Chetanananda. This business of the chakras is like gardening, he says. We create the proper inner environment in which awakening, or flowering, is possible. Then, imitating the sun, we shine our spiritual attention on the lotus flowers, and they will unfold at their own moment of natural ripeness. “The chakras will awaken themselves, and we are not going to have anything to say about how or when it happens.”

Whether it's shining our spiritual light on the lotus flowers or healing disease and ignorance through the chakras, clearly this is something we must do if we wish to get on in life, to really evolve and awaken as human beings. As Edgar Cayce, America's "sleeping prophet" clairvoyant, pointed out in his insightful commentaries on the book of *Revelation*, we must open the "seven seals" in the human body, by which he meant the seven chakras and the "spiritualized cells" bearing the divine pattern for perfect development within the endocrine system which he saw as the physical expression of the chakras. For Cayce, John's apocalyptic visions in *Revelation* are an initiate's parable for the awakening of the spiritual centers in the human being, the activation of the evolutionary potential dormant within the cells and molecules of the body. Because of the influence of these perfect, spiritualized cells, said Cayce, "the whole body, in the sum of all its cells and atoms, will be regenerated and brought into realignment with the ruling force of the developed Christ consciousness."

But to achieve that profound realignment, which is the awakening of the spiritualized cells and seven seals stamped with divine intent within the human physical and subtle body, it will require us to take certain active steps. According to Rudolf Steiner, founder of Anthroposophy and the Western discipline of spiritual science, and writing in his *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, in terms of human spiritual evolution, only one half of the petals of each chakra are developed and articulated. In other words, 8 of the throat's 16 petals were developed, collectively for humanity, in the distant past as a gift from Nature, but the other 8 can only be developed by men and women "by means of conscious exercises, and thereby the whole lotus flower becomes luminous and mobile." It's the same with the heart chakra: 6 of its 12 petals were articulated long ago, but the remaining 6 still require our active moral and cognitional development and a precise caring for the growth of the soul.

In a striking departure from other teachers, Steiner declared forthrightly that the old Vedic ways of spiritual development, such as sound, breathing, and posture, will not be enough to complete the awakening of the new petals. The Vedic ways are how the first half of each chakra's petals were developed, but the second half must be cultivated along different lines. For the throat chakra's 8 incomplete petals, Steiner said, we must cultivate 8 new functions pertaining to the way we acquire ideas and conceptions, our control of resolutions and speech, our regulation of outward actions, our management of life and endeavor, how we learn from life, and through a review of our basic attitudes. Other techniques may address the chakras, but "faulty training may easily result in the re-appearance of the earlier petals alone, while the new petals remain stunted," advised Steiner.

Fundamentally, one doesn't speak so much about the care of the chakras, as about a cognitive process, explains Paul Scharff, M.D., co-founder of the Fellowship Community, an elderly care facility based on Steiner's ideas in Spring Valley, New York. Scharff has contemplated—and struggled with—the nature of the chakras for three decades in light of Steiner's unconventional ideas. In Steiner's view, the reality of chakras is more about how we know (epistemology) than particular gestures of the soul. It comes back to Cayce's idea of the Seals. Spiritual information and cosmic memory were imprinted, or sealed, into the human etheric organism long ago in the form of the chakras. Opening the seals, or activating the chakras, is really the same as gaining conscious clairvoyance, full awareness, or cognition, of the worlds, both earthly and divine, says Scharff. The first half of the chakra petals—the "old chakras"—were built out of pure sound, as reflected in the 50 Sanskrit letters. But the second half must be created from new content; the chakras must be "unsealed" by new means, which Steiner called imagination, inspiration, and intuition, a stepwise process of inner purification. This calls for development in perception, attention, thinking, and morality, that leads to unsealing, wakeful clairvoyance, and the experience of the Holy Spirit.

Completing the unfolding of the chakra petals is nothing less than active participation in this very long project of human evolution, says Scharff. It may be aided through work in the "social process," activities central to life such as medicine, education, agriculture, and nutrition,

that link men and women in fellowship, as humans, within Nature, and with respect to the spiritual world. In this way not only are we healed individually through the chakras, but the social process, the world of interactions among men and women, is also healed.

So in seeking healing through the chakras, we may find relief from discomfort as James Bollton's experience shows us, or release from ignorance as the Swamis teach us, and a new connection with our awesome potential as human beings, as Cayce, Steiner, and Scharff advise us. Perhaps, in the end, we'll question whether the chakras are real at all, whether this hierarchy of energy and consciousness—of knots—is nothing more than a transient constriction of the unlimited and formless Self. Then we may understand the enigmatic remark by Sri Ramana Maharshi, who said: "The six subtle centers are merely mental pictures and are meant for beginners in yoga." By which he may have meant, the chakras represent, ultimately, ephemeral knots we have tied in the essential unity of consciousness, in the Mind of Shiva.

Resources

Chakra meditation tapes:

>Swami Chetanananda, *Meditation—An Invitation to Inner Growth*, \$15.95, Rudra Press, P.O. Box 13390, Portland, OR 97313. Tel: 800-876-7798.

>Shalila Sharamon and Bodo Baginski, *Chakra Meditation*, \$10.95, Lotus Light Enterprises, Lotus Drive, Box 1008, Silver Lake, WI 53170. Tel: 414-889-8501.

>Harish Johari, *Sounds of the Chakras*, \$9.95, Inner Traditions International, One Park Street, Rochester, VT 05767. Tel: 802-767-3174.

>Vyaas Houston, *Bija-Mantra Chakra Tuning*, \$10, American Sanskrit Institute, 73 Four Corners Road, Warwick, NY 10990. Tel: 914-986-8652.

>Sri Shyam Bhatnagar, *Seven Chakra Chants*, SRI Center International, P.O. Box 2927, Rockefeller Center Station, New York, NY 10185. Tel: 212-684-5404.

VHS video:

>*Awaken Your Seven Spiritual Centers*, Edgar Cayce Foundation, A.R.E. Press, P.O. Box 595, 68th & Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA 23451. Tel: 804-428-3588.

Books:

>*Theories of the Chakras: Bridge to Higher Consciousness*, Hiroshi Motoyama, Quest Books, 1981.

>Werner Bohm, *Chakras—Roots of Power*, Samuel Weiser, 1991.

>Mary Scott, *Kundalini in the Physical World*, Penguin/Arkana, 1983.

>Swami Sivananda Radha, *Kundalini—Yoga for the West*, Timeless Books, 1978.

>Anodea Judith & Selene Vega, *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body & Spirit Through the Chakras*, The Crossing Press, 1993.

>Harish Johari, *Chakras—Energy Centers of Transformation*, Destiny Books, 1987.

>Lilian Silburn, *Kundalini: Energy of the Depths*, SUNY Press, 1988.

>Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power: The Secrets of Tantric and Shaktic Yoga*, Dover Publications, 1974.

>Malvin N. Artley, Jr., *Bodies of Fire: A Thousand Points of Light*, University of Seven Rays Publishing House, 1992.

>Anodea Judith, *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System*, Llewellyn Publications, 1990.

>David V. Tansley, *Subtle Body: Essence and Shadow*, Thames and Hudson, 1977.

