

# Understanding your chakras (energy centres)

Sahasrara



Ajna



Vishuddha



Anahata



Manipura



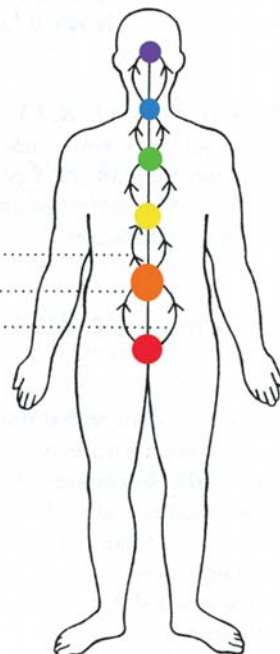
Svadhithana



Muladhara



ida  
shushumna  
pingala



## The seven principal chakras

The chakras are arranged vertically along the sushumna, the main energy channel, and roughly correspond with nerve centres in the physical body such as in the solar plexus. Richly symbolic and colourful, the chakras are depicted as lotuses, each with a different number of petals determined by the number and position of the nadis around it. Each chakra has a different vibration and is associated with different mantras, elements and functions. Each also has its own deities, representing different manifestations of God. From the base up, the chakras can be summarized as follows:

**Muladhara** The 'root' chakra is situated at the perineum, just in front of the anus, and symbolized as a lotus with four petals. This is the seat of the dormant kundalini, depicted as a (female) serpent coiled three and a half times around a lingam or phallus, her mouth closing the entrance to the sushumna. The chakra is associated with the earth element, the elephant (symbolizing strength) and the mantra *lam*. The presiding deities are Brahma (the Creator) and the goddess Dakini. Meditation on the kundalini shining within this lotus is said to bring mastery of speech, the acquisition of all kinds of learning, freedom from disease and great happiness.

**Svadhithana** Located at the genitals, this chakra is symbolized as a lotus with six petals. The chakra is associated with the element of water, a white alligator (symbolizing fertility) and the mantra *vam*. The presiding deities are Vishnu and

Rakini. Meditation on this lotus is said to destroy the six enemies – lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy, to free one from ignorance and to bring knowledge.

**Manipura** Located at the navel, this chakra is symbolized as a lotus with ten petals, and is so-named because it is lustrous as a jewel. The chakra is associated with the fire element, the ram (symbolizing passion or fiery energy) and the mantra *ram*. The presiding deities are Rudra and Lakini. Meditation on this lotus is said to bring about the power to destroy and create, and all the wealth of knowledge is acquired.

**Anahata** Located at the heart, this chakra is symbolized as a lotus with twelve petals and is named after the ‘unstruck’ or transcendental sound, which is said to be heard in the heart. The chakra is associated with the air element, a black antelope (symbolizing speed) and the mantra *yam*. The presiding deities are Isha and Kakini. This lotus is likened to a wish-fulfilling tree and meditation on it is said to bring great benefits including the power to create, protect and destroy, steadiness of mind and great powers of concentration, complete control of all the senses, prosperity and great good fortune.

**Vishuddha** Located at the base of the throat, this chakra is symbolized as a lotus with sixteen petals and is called ‘pure’ because meditation on this chakra brings freedom from impurity. The chakra is associated with the element ether,

a snow-white elephant (symbolizing purity and strength) and the mantra *ham*. The presiding deities are Sadashiva and Shakini. The vishuddha chakra is the gateway to liberation for those who have purified and gained control over their senses and meditation on this lotus is said to bring eloquence, wisdom, peace of mind, knowledge of past, present and future, freedom from all vices and from disease and sorrow.

**Ajna** The ‘third eye’, located between the eyebrows, is symbolized as a lotus with two petals. It is the ‘command’ chakra, through which the yogi receives the command of the guru or teacher, communicated telepathically. The chakra is associated with the mantra *om*, the presiding deities are Shiva and Hakini, and it is the location of the subtle mind. Through meditation on this lotus the yogi is said to realize his or her unity with the Absolute and enjoy uninterrupted bliss. Paranormal powers such as omniscience are acquired.

**Sahasrara** This chakra is known as the ‘thousand-petalled’ lotus, and is situated at the crown of the head. This resplendent centre represents the flowering of all spiritual practices: the seat of full enlightenment and absolute bliss. The yogi who has knowledge of the sahasrara is liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth and achieves complete freedom.