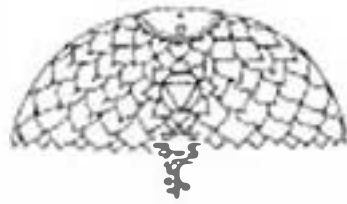


—AWAKENING THE— **CHAKRAS**

The Seven Energy Centers in Your Daily Life



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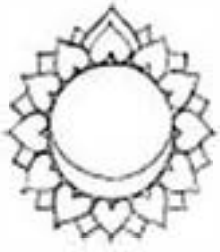
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AN INWARD EYE

Meditation on the flame of a lamp produces a state of mind called witness consciousness. This witness of the self is ageless and timeless, that essence which survives all transformations of personality, all emotional storms, all changes of thought, all experience. . . . The witness is centered in the region of the third eye.

HARISH JOHARI, DHANWANTARI

SANTOSH PURI'S ISLAND AND NARMADA PURI

The ancient Indian city of Haridwar is called the gateway to the gods. Not far from it the Ganges River, Mother Ganga, splits into seven fingers that spread over a vast flat expanse of the North Indian plain. A few miles north of the city, not far from Seven Rishis Road, heavily populated with meandering orange-garbed sadhus, you can stand beneath a strip of trees on the west side of the river and look northward at the front range of the majestic Himalayas in the distance. When you look east, you see the nearest channel of the river and then an island, a vast expanse of rock, gravel, and driftwood that has floated downriver and found a calm resting place. When you sit by the bank to take in the spectacle of that vast landscape,

from time to time someone might walk past you along the dirt footpath that runs alongside the river.

Just downstream, the nearest channel flows wide and shallow and you can cross through it onto the island. Until some years ago a slender sadhu named Santosh Puri lived on the island. Naked except for a covering of ash on his body, he was a *naga baba*, an ascetic renunciate who milked his cows for food, and depended on "what the Ganga brings" for his firewood and other necessities of life. *The Ganga* was an expansive term that meant not only the river but also anything brought to him by divine fortune. A naga baba makes the ultimate non-materialistic statement. He possesses nothing but a container that can serve to carry water, milk, or food or be used as a begging bowl; a loincloth to tie around his waist when he goes into town; and perhaps a blanket to protect against cold or rain. In the naga baba's view, all material desires are futile distractions that come between himself and God.

On the island near Seven Rishis Road, a small collection of naga babas lived for short or longer periods. In 1969, a twenty-four-year old German woman went to India on a spiritual quest and ultimately found her way to that island. She instantly perceived Santosh Puri to be her guru, and devoted herself to following his path of austerity. For an entire year there was no conversation, no discussion, no eating together. Her only words in his presence were the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*. They communicated nonverbally, slept next to the river, and cared for Santosh Puri's holy cows. Often he sat up meditating in the middle of the night. At 2:00 a.m. every day he rose in the darkness and carried out religious observances. Again and again he tried to send his self-declared disciple away, for a woman was not part of his plan for a life of celibacy and austerity. Although she experienced many daunting challenges and nearly died several times, the woman's spiritual energy did not waver. Eventually Santosh Puri stopped objecting to her presence, acknowledged his love for her, and gave up his vow of celibacy. They married and had three children. As the years went by she became the venerated Manaji mentioned in the preface and the introduction. Her book *Tears of Bliss: A Guru-Disciple Mystery* is a heart-moving testimony describing the dedication and austerities of a spiritual renunciant.¹

Many of Manaji's struggles during her early years on the island were at the first chakra level: sheer physical survival, life or death. She seems to have willingly accepted her hardships such as living on her own in caves and going without food

for long periods. Perhaps in a sense, Mataji's choices were soulfully linked with her guru's name, Santosh, which means "contentment; self-sufficiency." Usually (but not always) he modeled contentment with a shield of wisdom for almost every circumstance. In his complete surrender to God's will, a humble and ego-freeing pathway was etched into the depths of his character. We can only surmise that he was awake in higher-chakra consciousness, as he possessed a remarkable acceptance of difficult circumstances that could not be changed, and an overall spirit of peace or contentment even in the face of great hardships.

Another female guru, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, claims that "It's when you are free from selfishness . . . when you are not thinking about yourself in a selfish way, that you experience the tender bloom of contentment growing inside your heart."² Her understanding is like a magnifying glass that enables us to contemplate Santosh Puri's brave choices and our own selfish or selfless, worldly or spiritual nature.

THE SEVEN CHAKRAS ON THE ISLAND

"When you go to India to discover more about chakras, be sure to talk with Mataji." Pieter told Kooch and Victor in late 2013 before they boarded an airplane for Delhi. Following his advice, they went to her ashram just north of the ancient holy city of Haridwar, and conversed with her in its flower-laden outdoor pagoda built on top of Sri Santosh Puri's last resting place, where he was buried sitting upright in a full lotus position.

Mataji taught that chakras are the five elements in action, teachings that are beautifully represented in plate I: Seven Cosmic Energy Centers. Muladhara, the first chakra, is connected to earth, the sense of smell, and the importance of security (food, shelter, and work). Svadhisthana, the second chakra, is connected to the water element, the life-giving forces, and the sense of taste. Meditating on the second chakra teaches us about the importance of family and the emotional web of our own life. Manipura, the third chakra, relates to the fire element and sense of sight. It is the seat of ego. Name, recognition, and honor are important here. Anahata is the fourth chakra and it is linked to the element of air and the sense of touch. It is located in the heart region, where we can feel unselfish love and compassion.

Vishuddha, or the fifth chakra, is connected with the *akasha* (or space)

element and the sense of sound. Higher teachings such as discipline and self-control are linked with this center. In the Ajna, or sixth, chakra, one goes beyond ordinary thinking, and can enter into deep states of meditation. When someone (mostly yogis or people on an spiritual path) opens the Sahasrara, or seventh, chakra, self-realization and communion with the divine spirit is said to be attained.

When we go back in time and look closely at life on Santosh Puri's island, we can envision the higher workings of the chakras. Santosh Puri disdained the glamour- and celebrity-consciousness of the second chakra. He seldom left the island; indeed, one year when the Ganges flooded, everyone else evacuated the island but he found a perch high in a tree and watched the flood waters sweep past him below. He never allowed any honor or reverence to be shown to him. His vow of celibacy was a second-chakra event, and so too was giving up the vow, marrying Narmada, and raising a family. As for the third and sixth chakras, he expressed a gentle yet fierce strength by living a life of radical renunciation with his third eye wide open to see beyond worldly understanding.

The fourth chakra is visible in his and Narmada's selfless care for each other, their family, and their cows. But it went further: They cultivated a loving attitude toward everyone. Despite possessing almost nothing, their ideal was to eat only after they had fed the cows and at least ten other people. They did not congratulate themselves on being spiritually minded—it was their humble life.

"Everyone was welcome at Babaji's duni," says ashtanga yoga teacher Narayan Puri. (*Babaji* is a term of respect used for those whom others consider great gurus. A *duni* is a sacred firepit in which the flame is never allowed to go completely out.) Narayan Puri continues:

People of all religions, races, castes and creeds came to be in his presence: Sadhus from different . . . orders, high-ranked Pandits sitting next to low or out-caste workers, criminals beside policemen and merchants . . . Muslims, Hindus and Christians, as well as the dogs and the cows. All enjoyed being near Babaji. . . . One time a Brahmin priest asked Babaji, "Why do you let all these strange people stay at your duni? You are a Hindu, a Sannyasin." Babaji just smiled and said, "I am no Hindu, no Muslim, no Christian. I am a fakir, a yogi. I have no temple; the Ganga is my temple." . . . He lived in Atman consciousness. All is ONE.³



3

THE POLARITY PRINCIPLE

Qualities such as fear, passion, anger, greed, malice, jealousy, envy, selfishness, and sloth constantly spoil body chemistry. When . . . these negative qualities begin to influence the cells of the body, the spine becomes tense and the body's natural radiance is lost.

HARISH JOHARI,
AYURVEDIC MASSAGE

Not many people can be buried underground or in an airtight compartment underwater for two weeks and live to tell the tale. Fewer yet have done so while being hooked up to a battery of medical biofeedback instruments that show heart rate, breathing, and other vital signs.

Pilot Baba is one of those few. When voluntarily buried, he goes into *nirvikalpa samadhi* (a state of dissolution of the self-conscious self) and the medical instruments flatline as if he were dead. When he comes out of that state, the instruments return to normal, and he continues to walk among the living.

One of Pilot Baba's insights echoes that of the Western psychoanalyst and sociologist Erich Fromm. Both noted that many aspects of who we are can take either positive or negative forms. We may choose to live in ways that are either

caring or careless. We may act in ways that encourage our growth and development, or ways that are harmful to our self, others, or our communities. Since we can't do much about our genetic makeup, it's vital to treat both ourselves and those around us in ways that encourage our—and their—positive potentials. Which potentials we develop affect the directions in which our lives unfold.

Tantra yoga and the study of chakras encourages us to look deeply at both the positive and negative aspects of ourselves. When we label some thoughts, attitudes, and actions negative because they bring some kind of harm to us or others, that's basic ethics. But most of us also think of many qualities as negative that harm no one—except for the harm we do to ourselves by thinking of them that way. Sometimes they are a source of useful energy. In *Awakening Shakti*, author Sally Kempton explains:

The word *tantra* [has] two roots. *Tan* means "to expand or develop." *Tra* means . . . "to save, liberate, or redeem." . . . Tantra is a series of practices and teachings that help us realize that the world is filled with divine energy. . . . It is also a series of tools . . . that we can use both to liberate ourselves from illusion and to make our worldly lives more beautiful, abundant, and skillful.¹

Tantra is a spiritual path that embodies the principles of the chakras that will unfold in these pages. It teaches the discrimination and discipline required to comprehend and maintain the delicate balance between the poles of positive and negative energy needed to harness the will to awaken in higher awareness. Johari gave this advice to help us understand how to take the better road: "When you are judging an action yourself, you have to ask yourself if the action is good for you, good for the people around you, good for humanity in general, and good for planet Earth. If it is, then go ahead; otherwise refrain from the action."² Of course, you can only really know whether something is good for you, others, or the Earth if you are a keen observer of your own motives and inclinations. In Johari's words,

To live in constant awareness means that one should know what is happening inside, because the world outside is viewed by an individual according to

his or her state of mind. When one is sad, the world outside appears to be quite different than when one is happy. Every individual is restricted by many individual strings, which comprise one's frame of reference. One's state of body chemistry provides the mood, feeling-tones, or emotional nuances with which to view the world outside.³

Swami Mukundananda adds, "Simply witness the different thoughts as they arise and subside . . . no matter how many worlds of desires, wishes, and positive and negative thoughts your mind creates, you should realize that they are all a play of consciousness. . . . Your goal is not to battle with the mind, but to witness the mind."⁴

BEYOND THE WORLD OF BLACK AND WHITE

Simple cause-and-effect thinking—*THIS* action *HERE* causes *THAT* effect *THERE*—usually leaves many things out. Often the omissions are far more important than we realize. Swami Prajnapad claims, "In nature, action and reaction are continuous. Everything is connected to everything else. No one part, nothing, is isolated. Everything is linked, and interdependent."⁵

Undulating waves of causes and effects influence each other and react back on us. Everything from a single action to an entire life, in both its essence and details, is a complex fabric for which Viennese psychologist Max Wertheimer used the term *gestalt*, described in English as meaning a "pattern, whole, or configuration."⁶

So-called knowledge comes in at least four forms: accurate, inaccurate, confused, and irrelevant. In practical terms, knowledge is *accurate* (true) to the degree that action based on it has the results that we think it will. It is *inaccurate* (false) to the degree that such action has results different from those that we expect. In that case we think we know what's going on but our thoughts are wrong. Knowledge is *confused* to the degree that it is a more or less tangled mixture of the accurate, inaccurate, and irrelevant. Big problems result from the fact that most people think their knowledge is true when much of it is actually confused, false, irrelevant, or all of the above.

When we act in a way that helps or harms someone or something, our mind stores memory traces or impressions of that event as a collection of neural