

# Awakening the *chakras*

WHEN YOU  
FOCUS ON  
KEEPING YOUR  
NADIS FREE  
FLOWING, THE  
CHAKRAS FALL  
IN LINE ON  
THEIR OWN  
ACCORD

by Shameem Akthar



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The information overload on yoga means everybody knows all about yogic chakras. Those into the mystical and psychical aspect of yoga also have a one-point agenda: to wake up the kundalini. Or, even worse, to open up this or that chakra that they fear is blocked. Workshops purportedly offering to do so also flush practitioners with a sense of empowerment. While all this is very engaging, there are several aspects to yogic chakra awakening that are submerged under this flush of information.

It is simply this: you don't have to struggle to open up this or that blocked chakra. Your focus, as a sadhaka, must only be towards keeping your nadis or energy channels free flowing. Everything else is not just cosmetic or futile, but may even be dangerous. Trying to open a chakra when your nadis are blocked is, to mix metaphors, like trying to light an atom bomb with a matchstick. A futile exercise at best. And at worst, it can be very dangerous and foolhardy. How else can you explain an experiment to make a million-watt power pass through a weak, faulty wire? A blowout would be inevitable.

If you see the popularly available ancient diagrams of nadis you will find that these are depicted as swiftly dancing veins of energy, moving on their designated path in and around your body. If you want to be scientific you can compare these to several things: the flow of neuro-chemicals, the quantum dance of particle energy or the collective bio-plasmic energy. Yoga gurus, who do not concern themselves too much with trying to explain in scientific lingo what they intuitively know, just point out that these streams of energy channels converge at certain points in our body. Here they form a swift vortex of pure energy, creating a chakra. The chakra is not a static hole, as most people imagine, through which the kundalini is passing. It is a vortex of energy created by your nadis. If you understand this you will appreciate why clearing your nadis is so much more important than trying to open up your chakras! Some sadhakas who understand this, however, still believe that these vortices are independent spots. They are not. They are linked intimately to the 72,000 nadis (this is the common figure, though there are several other figures quoted in ancient treatises) which must be pure for the vortices to be free-flowing

pathways for the kundalini shakti.

If you wish to climb Mount Everest, you must first identify your weak points physically. Just setting off, without sufficient preparation, would be outright foolish. The same also applies to your attempt towards chakra awakening. In Hatha Yoga Pradipika (a classic yoga treatise), illnesses, lethargy, a restless mind, lack of discipline, over-eating, over-exertion (by which I believe is meant wrong exertion), talkativeness and rigidity towards rules are all blocks in the path of kundalini. Instead of worrying about the chakras, it would be sensible to clear this clutter from the path of your inner growth. But of course, most of us don't like to do sensible things. We like to do dramatic things. Therein lies the danger.

## Simple nadi cleansing

This is the simplest version of the popular nadi shodhana technique. If you are an advanced practitioner you learn to return to the simple practices of yoga with renewed interest: this practice is one such that you may continue for very long with satisfying results.

Sit in a meditative pose, either cross-legged or in the thunderbolt/vajrasana pose. Place the left hand in the gyan mudra, tips of index finger and thumb touching. Use the right hand index finger and thumb to open and shut your nostrils. Inhale and exhale a few times. Press down right thumb on right nostril. Inhale for four counts (one Om-two Om-three Om-four Om) from left nostril. Exhale to count of six from the same nostril in like fashion. This is one round. Do up to 15 rounds. Relax your hand. Then shutting the left nostril with right index finger inhale and exhale to four and six counts respectively, doing 15 rounds.

## Benefits

This is a deceptively powerful and simple breath control practice. As the name implies it clears your nadis, thus powering your health and enhancing mind-control. It balances both hemispheres of the brain, creating inner harmony. It is recommended for all ailments as the least contraindicated pranayama practice. ☺

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