

Planets and Chakras

by Dane Rudhyar

Most readers of books or magazines on occultism, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy and astrology associate with Yoga the idea that there exist in the human organism mysterious centers or vortices of energy named **chakras** (i.e. wheels), and that these chakras are places in which an equally mysterious power, called **Kundalini**, operates or can be made to operate. Kundalini is said to be able to "rise", as a "serpentine force", from the base of the spine to the head, following a path on which the several chakras are stations on the way. The technique for arousing this Kundalini power from its latent or sleep condition in the Root-center in the region of the coccyx, and the way to lead it upward seems, to many people, the main secret of Yoga.

Psychologists interested in Eastern myths, symbols and techniques — particularly Carl Jung — have also given a great deal of attention to the subject. Jung taught a private seminar for his students, some years ago, on Kundalini and the chakras, the transcript of which unfortunately has not been made public. He seems to have considered the chakras as symbolic representations of **levels of operation** of the psychic force, and to have studied them, mostly if not exclusively, as having a psychological reality and meaning.

The occultist, on the other hand, believing as he does in an "astral body" pervading and surrounding the physical organism and acting as an "electro-magnetic field," usually sees in the chakras actual — though essentially not physical whirls of electro-magnetic or vital energy. Each whirl can be related to one of the basic functions of the total organism, to a primary organ or group of organs, and can be seen to serve as the dynamic foundation for psychic activities.

Of late numerous occult students seeking to bridge the gap between ancient Hindu and modern Western thought have claimed that the series of chakras was simply the Hindu equivalent of the chain of nerve ganglions in the Sympathetic System, just as what the Hindus called **nadis** were nothing but our Western "nerves." This "nothing but" attitude, however valid the correlations which it assumes, has the great danger of ignoring the basic difference in philosophy and cosmology between ancient India and modern scientific thought. It equates the end-results of two types of analysis, while dismissing as of no importance the fact that the two kinds of premises leading to these end-results are utterly distinct, and often opposite. Chakras and Sympathetic nerve ganglions may have something in common; but they surely mean totally different things **in a "human" sense**, and they must be approached and used in an altogether different way. To play with chakras in the way in which modern doctors play with glands is to court disaster — something which some "scientific" experimenters who seek to do this very thing today should guard against.

The exact and literal correlating of planets with the seven chakras spoken of and pictured in books on "Kundalini Yoga" (for instance in Arthur Avalon's *The Serpent Power*, etc.) is likewise, in my opinion, a not too rewarding, and perhaps at times a rather dangerous, procedure. It has led to a serious difference of opinion among astrologers and so-called occultists as to which planet corresponds to what chakras; and it can produce wholesome, or at least significant, results only if a number of usually ignored factors of basic importance are taken into consideration at the very start.

Three Sets of "Chakras"

The first of these basic points to consider is the fact that it has been made clear by some of the most reliable "Teachers" (H. P. Blavatsky, first of all) that there is not only one series of chakras or center, but **three**. Each series refers apparently to one of the three basic "levels of integration" at which human consciousness can operate, and at which the ego can express its power of "I-am-ness"; which means, **can relate itself significantly to the universe and to other individuals**.

This significant relationship of the ego (or "I am" consciousness) to the universe requires energy and directed activity, that is, power with purpose. Each, level of relatedness demands, however, a basically different type of energy and quality of power. These three basic types can be summarily described as: **life, conscious will** (which includes faith), and **spirit**.

This threefold division deals with controlling factors in the total human being ; that is, in anatomical terms, with the nervous systems. We are not dealing with the endocrine glands and the chemistry of the blood stream, which belong to the material part of the organism, though in its most vital and dynamic aspect; we are considering the **currents of forces** operating through the electric wires and master-switches of the body —and their psychic-mental coordinates.

Now, therefore, our lowest level is that of the Great Sympathetic nervous system, with its ganglions which act somewhat as power-stations, transformers and distributors. Our intermediary level is the spinal system stretched between the base of the brain and the tail-like, fine filaments which reach down to the coccyx. The highest system is that constituted by certain cranial centers to which H. P. Blavatsky refers enigmatically as the "master chakras." (cf. the co-called "Third Volume" of *The Secret Doctrine* [now published in the Tenth Volume of the *Collected Work of H. P. Blavatsky*].

Each level, in other words, has its series of chakras. Each series can be said to be the foundation for integrational processes; but integration means something different at each level.

At the first and "ancient" level, to which the usually mentioned Hindu chakras seemingly belong, integration means the gathering of all the energies of "life" into a focal point of individualized selfhood; and this is what is now called by modern psychologists "individualization" — though the scope of this individualization may greatly differ. The

individual is born out of the Mother: that is, the individual self emerges from the tides of "life."

At the second level, it is this individualized human self, with its separative tendencies and its ego-will, that must be integrated with the universe of cosmic forces and "Souls." Psychologically speaking, this refers to the process of "individuation" and to the metamorphosis or transfiguration of the ego and of the mind.

As to the third level, only hypotheses are possible. Nevertheless everything points to the possibility of a spiritual process at the end of which the individual who has passed through the stage of Transfiguration, then of Crucifixion, conquers death itself and becomes altogether free from the tides of "life." He then emerges in a new condition, in a "resurrected Body," as an immortal Soul-personality as a "master" of life, so-called "astral forces" and of mind and appearances.

The Sympathetic Centers

To understand clearly the meaning of the Hindu doctrine concerning Kundalini and the Chakras it seems best to consider the spiritual needs of the ancient Hindu society which achieved a profound degree of integration under the Brahmins and according to the Laws of Manu. in the millennia preceding Gautama the Buddha (6th century B.C.). This Brahminical Society was a remarkably "planned" society: yet like any planned society it had become very rigid in its patterns and every activity of life had become a set ritual.

It planned not only for life, but also for death and re-birth. After a certain age, the elderly man was supposed to retire from all social pursuits and live as a hermit in woods nearby, preparing himself so to meet the crisis of death, that he would make of death the seed of a higher form of future re-birth. In these last years of meditation men, who became known as Forest-Philosophers, not only prepared themselves to relinquish freely and understandingly all that bound them to life and sentient existence, but eventually developed a new philosophy, a transcendental philosophy. They taught it to disciples, who came to them from the villages, in discourses recorded much later as Upanishads.

These philosophers realized that the freedom from life and desire which comes naturally through death, could also come through deliberate and conscious renunciation, through "liberation." The man willing to experience a process similar to death, but able to emerge from it still conscious and living in a body of earth, would indeed have reached a new condition of being. He would "die" and be reborn, knowing his essential identity with the universal Self, **Atman**, with which he had become identified. After which he would be able to say "I am" in a new way, the way of the Spirit. Thus, while the men of the Brahminical society were only "living cells" of a social-tribal organism, those who had returned from this conscious and deliberate death-experience became truly "individuals."

To experience death without having experienced life to the full can only mean a puny kind of "liberation" and individual selfhood. The Yogi who wanted to overcome life and its pull had first to be totally conscious of all the energies of life which his organism contained,

even if only in a latent condition. He had to be aware, to re-direct his life-energies and to gather them at the point of the fullest consciousness. This point was the **Ajna Chakra**, said to be located between the eyebrows. There, all the energies of life had to become concentrated, for this was the supreme abode of the Great Mother — a place which we have associated physically with the bony seat of the pituitary gland.

The raising of Kundalini meant, in one sense at least, that the vital powers had to be drawn out from every organ and cell of the body and gathered alongside of the spine, forming thus a column of "living Fire," and all these vital powers had then to be concentrated at the **Ajna** center. There the Mother, having regathered her powers to herself, was ready to unite with the spiritual Light and Essence of the Father. Life being illumined by Spirit, by the universal "I am," the new birth occurred : the Yogi experienced rebirth as an individual Self, as a "free Individual."

To the modern psychologist this would mean "liberation" from the racial and generic unconscious, from all forms of bondage to the Mother-image. He who is thus free becomes in turn a Father, a conscious creator able to use the energies of life, because he has overcome their compulsive pull upon his consciousness and his emotions. But no doubt it meant more to the old Yogi, because in his day this process carried the meaning of supreme attainment, human evolution being focused **then** at that level. The experience of "life," through a series of at-one-ments with its basic energies centered at the chakras, was one filled with tremendous consequence and power. It may not be so now, at least not in the same manner, for Western man today, because the evolutionary level has changed.

Ordinarily seven chakras are listed, but the first and the last (the "sacral" or Root-chakra and the "Thousand-petalled" chakra) in a sense the brain cortex — have a special meaning which makes them belong more precisely to the second level series of spinal centers. The five others are located in the regions of the sex-organs (especially the prostate in males and the uterus in females), of the pit of the stomach (solar plexus), of the heart, of the neck and throat (organs of speech), of the pituitary gland.

These chakras constitute an ascending series, and much of their meaning resides in their sequence. For this reason, if for no other, it seems fairly obvious that when astrological planets are to be connected with these chakras, the planetary sequence established by this system of correspondences should be the factual one. Planets, I can never state emphatically enough, are what they are in astrological symbolism **first of all** because of their places in the solar system, either heliocentrically or geocentrically considered.

The rise of the Kundalini tide represents a **return to source**. The life-energy which had become differentiated and imprisoned, as it were, within the depths of organic form, now leaves these "depths" and its farthest out-posts; it gathers itself into one ascending stream along the spinal path, and reaches the "throne" of the Great Mother, the Sphenoid bone, with the pituitary at its center. Astrologically, this is the "path of return" of the solar force, from Saturn to the Sun.

At this level of integration, Saturn symbolizes the "place of the seed," for the material seed of the life-organism establishes there the point of farthest incorporation or descent of the spirit. The great plexus of Sympathetic ganglions at the pit of the stomach is the throne of Jupiter; for it is also the point of entrance, into the subconscious, of the great religious images and symbols (i.e. the "gods") whose power stems from the realm of "life." As a result, we have the archaic way of concentrating upon the solar plexus, or navel, in order to reach an equally archaic type of "illumination."

The so-called "heart center" is the seat of the primordial Eros — the Desire-to-be — not to be confused with what later became known as sexual desire and eroticism. This primordial spiritual Desire is Mars in its original form, the **Kama Deva** of ancient Hinduism. As for Venus, it finds its throne in the organs of speech, the source of the Logos, of the Word. Finally the sphenoid center or Buddha center (**Ajna**) is keyed up to the Mercury vibration of wisdom, synthesis, mind.

The Moon is the very substance or flow of the tide of integration, which mounts up from the Saturn-seed to the illumined Mercury-mind in five ritualistic-steps (symbolized by the five Buddhas and other five-sequences). This Moon-substance is drawn from all the cells of the organism, and finally concentrated at the fifth (Ajna-pituitary) level.

This being accomplished, the integrated life-flow calls upon, summons forth, prays for, the descent of the "I am" power. The mystic union of **Shiva** and **Shakti** takes place, and a mysterious fluid (life-ambrosia) is said to be released which re-energizes the body and feeds the growth of the **higher system of integration**: the cerebro-spinal system.

The Spinal Centers

The **horizontal** animal spine denotes a condition of generic unconsciousness, which operates as the instincts. The **vertical** human spine is the column which supports the mind-consciousness of the awakened Self, the individualized spirit which can claim: I am.

When the spinal level of integration truly operates man has become a conscious ego aware of both depths and heights. The great dramas of such an ego-consciousness are all expressions of an incessant conflict between life-in-form (Saturn) and life-as-spirit (Sun). This conflict becomes a black-and-white struggle, and Saturn becomes the Devil, the inverted God. The esoteric SANAT — the five-fold power of "I am" selfhood — is polarized by SATAN, the active manifestation of egocentric greed, lust and fear, condensed into an absolute hatred of Light.

This negative, lower Saturn has its darkened throne at the lowest point of the spine, in the symbol of the tail (coccyx). Here vertebrae are fused into a solid mass; inertia and the power of Karma triumphs. In polar opposition to these "lower depths" of being stands the brain-cortex, the "new brain" with its eagerness for change, progress, and ceaseless transformation — the material nerve-aspect of the spirit-center, the **Sahasrara chakra**.

At this second (or ego) level of integration the basic process is the freeing of the ego from the dark Saturn-power (which perverts and abuses the also Saturnian energy of the

first-level life-seed). It is the liberation of the "I" from bondage to a particularistic, limiting, rigid and oppressive form of selfhood — from pride and fear born of insecurity and spiritual loneliness or sense of guilt. What is to be "raised from the dead" is the character of that ego-consciousness and of the ego-will, the quality of the individual's faith in spirit and in God. In this process one can distinguish steps, which are represented by nerve centers along the spine; and **it is these centers which are of primary importance for modern man**, rather than the Sympathetic chakras of which ancient Hindu Yoga speaks. Moreover, what is at stake is probably not simply a gradual ascent, but rather a combined descent of spirit and ascent of the ego.

The knowledge of where the spinal centers are located may not be of too much practical value for the average individual; nevertheless such a knowledge will probably be given out authoritatively before long. Beside the sacral-coccygeal center (Saturn, as ego-bondage) there is, no doubt, a center around the place of the sciatic nerve bulge which should be related to Jupiter. A most important center is the "Rose-Cross" center where the line of the extended arms meets the spine. It may be that the cervical plexus and the "medulla oblongata" are correlated with other centers; (hat the brain-cortex (with its myriad of convolutions) symbolizes, in its total harmonic developments, the mind that is wide open to the universe (higher Mercury), the growing Self — whose ego-will has become illumined by because attuned to, the universal Will.

The Head Centers

It would be presumption to speak at length of those centers which have been mentioned as "master chakras." But it is interesting to note that a new development in osteopathy is now focusing the attention of a group of highly trained osteopaths upon the new technique "cranio-therapy," whose founder, Dr. Sutherland, is undoubtedly a great man and a true "mystic." Craniotherapy claims that a most careful and gentle handling of the cranium and of its many bones, of the power and tides of the cerebrospinal fluid, etc., can produce the most profound effects upon the entire organism, for the head contains as it were the "master switch" to all nerves and (through the pituitary) to all endocrine glands. Demonstrations have been forthcoming for many years; but the more official medical profession still clings to what seems to be many antiquated beliefs regarding much that refers to the physiology of the human head.

It seems clear, however, that the head is indeed like a seed which, having grown out of the watery and lunar realm of "life" and at the apex of a long and flexible ego-stem, becomes in turn the "holy place" whence can be born the spiritual-mental organism of an immortal selfhood. All occult traditions point dimly and symbolically to such a possibility. However, in my opinion, the ancient approach to its realization has been superseded (at least insofar as modern Western man is concerned) by a new approach which requires a differentiation between the "centers" of the Sympathetic nerve system and those of the spine, and an attempt at grasping the meaning of even more important concentrations of

spiritual power within the cranium — perhaps, particularly, in the "empty" spaces of the several ventricles of the brain, and also at the basepoint where the "pyramid tracts" of the spine cross.

Integration, indeed, is an unending process. To begin to grasp its many implications seems to require a clear realization of the three basic levels of life, ego-will, and spirit. The perfect man operates at all three.