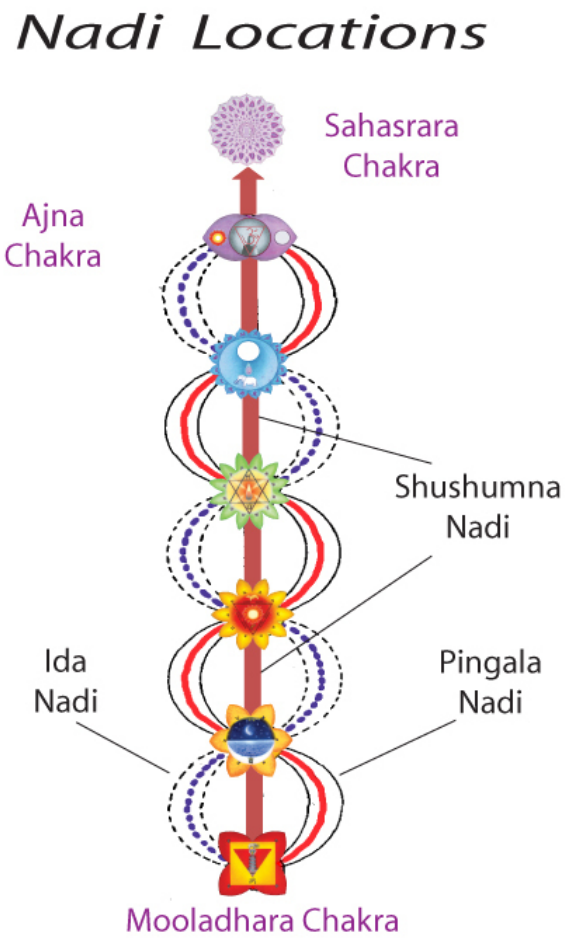
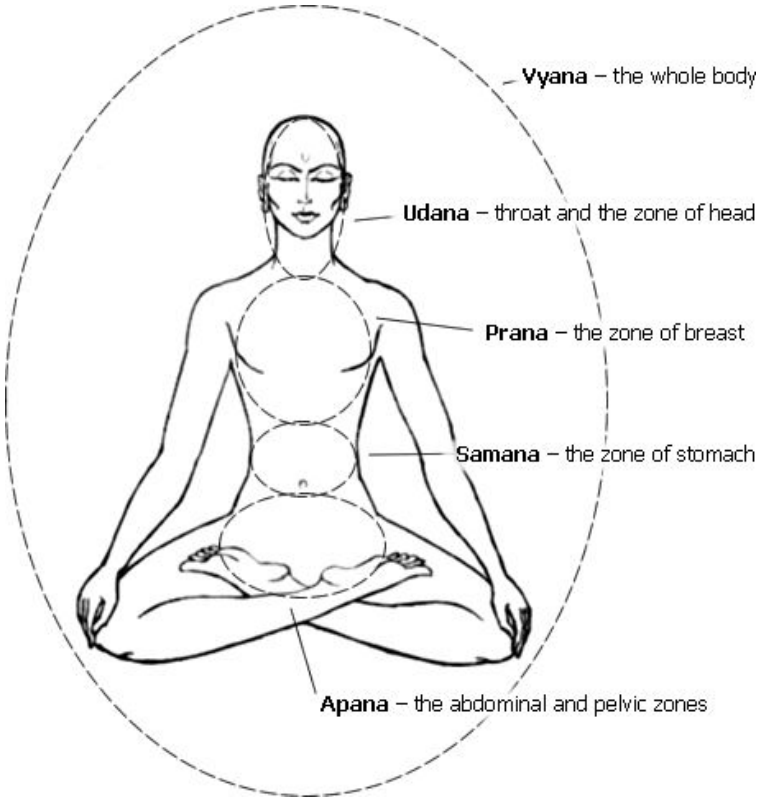
The Pranic Sheath

- Vayus
- Nadis
- Chakras



Vayus

- These are the 5 major functions of prana
- They include:
  - Apana Vayu
  - Vyana Vayu
  - Samana Vayu
  - Prana Vayu
  - Udana Vayu



Vayus

- A decrease in the vitality of any vayu causes a contraction of the pranic body
- An increase in the vitality of any vayu causes an expansion of the pranic body
- The pranic body is greatly influenced by our state of mind
- Negative thoughts lower prana
- Positive thoughts enhance prana and mindset

Vayus

The mind affects prana and prana affects the mind. Control one and the other is controlled.

“When prana moves, chitta (the mental force) moves. When prana is without movement, chitta is without movement. By this (steadiness of prana) the yogi attains steadiness and should thus restrain the vayu (air).”

Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Swami Satyananada Saraswati

Vayus

- Yogis noted that prana circulated through the body riding on the breath
- It modified and adapted to each region
- These modifications led to naming the five pranas, or vayus

“The chief prana allots functions to the lower pranas in the same way as the emperor posts his officials in different parts of his domain.”

Prasnopanishad

The Vayus

- Each presides over a certain part of the body
- Each is responsible for certain bodily functions
- Each has mental/emotional correlates

Apana Vayu

- Region: pelvis to feet
- Downward moving energy
- Controls elimination, expulsion, and reproduction
- Governs the functioning of the kidneys, colon, bladder, genitals
- When vitalized, it can remove negative thoughts and emotions

Apana Vayu

"When it is 'mingled' with the *prana* and the 'fire' at the navel, it is instrumental in arousing the 'serpent power' (*Kundalini-shakti).*"

The Shambala Encyclopedia of Yoga, Georg Feuerstein

Vyana Vayu

- Pervades the whole body
- Harmonizes or disturbs all other vayus
- Expands outward
- Is diffuse and systemic
- Coordinates and regulates muscular and joint movements
- When imbalanced, mind becomes restless
- When disturbed, can affect heart / nervous system

Samana Vayu

- Rules the region between the heart and navel
- Controls digestion and appetite
- Located in the region of Manipura, the third chakra
- Assimilates nutrients and information in the mind
- When digestion is disturbed, mind is disturbed
- Disturbances can lead to anorexia or binge eating
- Spiritually, it is key in equalizing prana and apana
- “In the process of breathing, samana is the time gap between inhalation and exhalation.”

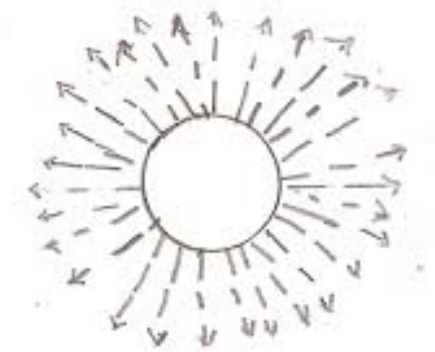
Swara Yoga, Swami Muktibodhananda

Prana Vayu

- Controls respiration, circulation, and vocal apparatus
- Located between larynx and base of heart
- Dispersing energy; ascending breath
- At mental level: responsible for intake of impressions and ideas, aspects of feeling/thinking
- Depleted with broken heart or suppressed emotions
- When disturbed, can lead to heart, breast, or lung problems
- Proper breathing, good food, and rest help fill the system with prana vayu

Prana Vayu

- Commonly refers to the vital force carried on the breath
- At the esoteric level, refers to the universal life force that underlies all manifestation



Prana and Apana

- “The *Dhyana Bindu Upanishad* says that because of prana and apana, the *jiva* or individual soul oscillates up and down, caught in the snare of two opposite moving forces and bound by duality. The jiva is compared to a bird which, tied to its perch, flies away but is pulled back again. “

  Swara Yoga, Swami Muktibodhananda

Prana, Apana, Samana Vayus

- Yoga is accomplished when apana moves upward and prana moves downward, and they unite with samana at the navel center.
- This pushes prana through the sushumna nadi, raising consciousness.

"So, in samana we have the tantric principle of two opposite forces, one negative, the other positive, being brought together in order to explode the creative potential of the nucleus."

Swara Yoga, Swami Muktibodhananda

Udana Vayu

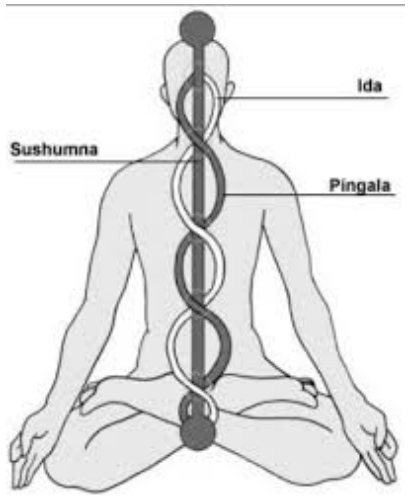
- Controls speech and intellect
- Seated in the region of the throat and head
- Upward moving energy; used consciously by yogis to leave the body through the crown
- Vitalizes brain function
- Governs the use of our senses
- When disturbed, can lead to mental and emotional disorders
- Maintains the pranic link between the heart and brain (connects thinking and feeling)

The Nadis

- Nadis are non-physical channels through which prana flows
- Comes from Sanskrit word *nada,* which means flow
- Yoga texts say there are between 72,000 and 325,000 nadis
- The three major nadis are ida, pingala, sushumna

The Nadis

- Ida is negative; Pingala is positive
- They are opposite aspects of one prana
- Sushumna is neutral
- Sushumna is the channel for raising spiritual energy



Ida Nadi

- The lunar nadi
- The female principle
- Associated with the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)
- Ida is cooling, relaxing, introverting
- Starts in Muladhara, ends in left nostril, which joins Ajna chakra
- Connected to right brain hemisphere

Pingala Nadi

- The solar nadi; the male principle
- Activates the physical body and externalizes awareness
- Associated with the sympathetic nervous system (SNS)
- Connected to left brain hemisphere
- Starts in Muladhara, ends in right nostril

Sushumna

- Sushumna starts at the base of the spine and unites with ida and pingala at Ajna chakra
- It corresponds with the central nervous system (CNS)
- It must be opened before kundalini shakti can rise upwards
- When active, the breath flows through both nostrils equally
- Practicum: nadi shodhanam without fingers

Sushumna

“After practicing pranayama or when the mind becomes one-pointed, or when one is about to commit some criminal act, sushumna also flows. Therefore, in swara yoga there is a strick warning about it. When sushumna nadi flows, spiritual as well as criminal tendencies can arise.”

Swara Yoga, Swami Muktibodhananda

Sushumna

- There are 3 nadis within sushumna
- Vajra nadi
- Chitrini nadi is within vajra nadi
- Brahma nadi is within chitrini nadi
  - When Kundalini Shakti passes through this nadi, transcendental experiences start to take place

Ida, Pingala, Sushumna

From Swara Yoga, Swami Muktibodhananda

Ida	**Pingala**	**Sushumna**
chitta	prana	kundalini
mental	vital	supramental
negative	positive	neutral
feminine	masculine	androgynous
yin	yang	tao
moon	sun	light
cold	hot	temperate
intuition	logic	wisdom
desire	action	knowledge

Ida, Pingala, Sushumna

Ida	Pingala	Sushumna
internal	external	centered
night	day	sunset/dawn
passive	dynamic	balanced
subjectivity	objectivity	awareness
parasympathetic	sympathetic	cerebrospinal
Yamuna	Ganga	Saraswati
blue	red	yellow
Brahma	Vishnu	Rudra
subconscious mind	conscious mind	unconscious (in dormancy)
sattwa	rajas	tamas
A	U	M

The Chakras

- There are 7 major chakras
- Chakra means wheel
- They affect the functioning of the physical body, energy body, and mind
- They correspond to the nerve plexuses of the physical body
- Each chakra is connected to a certain state of mind and certain life challenges

The Seven Major Chakras

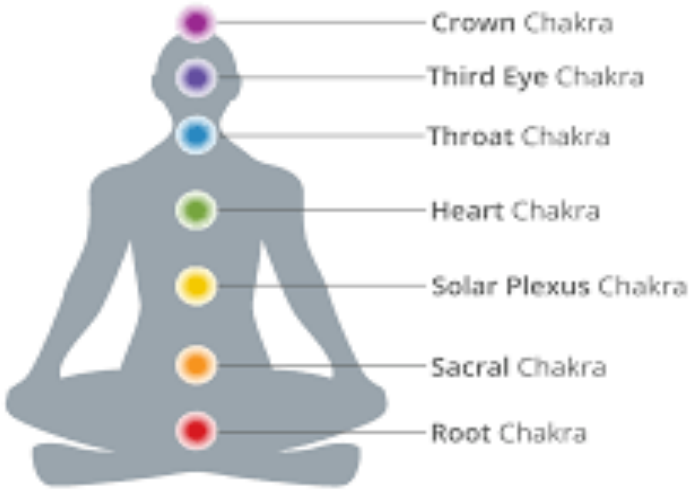
- Muladhara
- Svadhisthana
- Manipura
- Anahata
- Vishuddha
- Ajna
- Sahasrara

The Chakras

- Chakra means wheel
- They are centers of consciousness in the subtle body corresponding to the major nerve plexuses of the physical body
- They correspond to: elements, geometric patterns, organs and nerve plexuses, states of mind, bija mantras

The Chakras

- Chakras need to be purified before kundalini can rise up without causing harm
- Our chakras are often blocked or operating at low frequency



Chakras and Nadis

“When all the nadis and chakras which are full of impurities are purified, then the yogi is able to retain prana.” Ch. 2, Verse 5

“Therefore pranayama should be done daily with a sattvic state of mind so that the impurities are driven out of sushumna nadi and purification occurs.”

Ch. 2, Verse 6

Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Resources

1. *Swara Yoga*, Swami Muktibodhananda
2. *Stories of Spiritual Transformation*, Joan Shivarpita Harrigan
3. *Lectures on Yoga,* Swami Rama
4. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika,* Swami Satyananda Saraswati
5. *Yoga and Psychotherapy,* Swami Rama et al
6. *Healing the Whole Person,* Swami Ajaya