

Sahaja Yoga

Sahaja Yoga is a method of meditation, founded by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, that draws links with a multitude of religious traditions asserting the idea that the religious practices that have developed out of different cultures, and periods, are all based upon a common, deeper truth or reality (Prakash, 1997). In what follows I shall endeavour to present those concepts necessary to the meditative practice upon which Sahaja Yoga is based in the form of a few simple propositions. Outside of this particular practice of meditation Sahaja Yoga can be seen to be broadly in agreement with Eastern philosophy in general.

It should be noted that, as already mentioned, Sahaja Yoga 'theory' sees a unity in all religious philosophy.

The Subtle Body

The first of these propositions is that within us there exists a 'subtle body' of 'Chakras' (centres of awareness), 'Nadis' (channels), and the 'Kundalini' (a Divine feminine power) (see figure 1 below). This is a system which is most obviously derived from the Hindu and Buddhist cultures, and dates back many thousands of years. However descriptions of it would appear to exist within other traditions, for example Zechariah, chapter 4, v2-3: Old Testament; Surah Nub (Noah), v15-16: Koran; Surah Ar-Ra'd (The Thunder), v 2: The Koran; Arabi (1982), 'Sabiquun'.

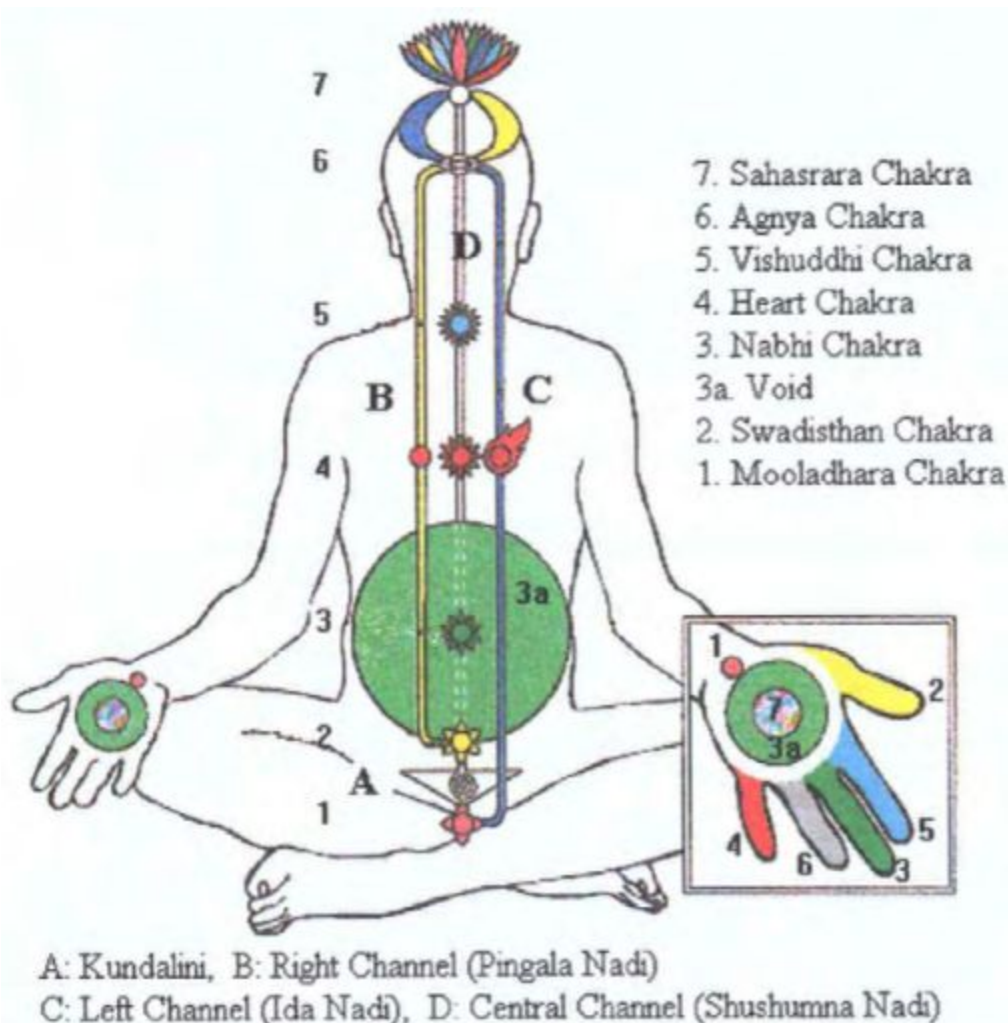


Figure 1. The subtle system.

The three channels and seven Chakras are understood to be both a physical reality (i.e. they correspond to a physical structure) and a non-physical reality (i.e. a 'type of awareness' or 'mode of being'), whilst the Kundalini describes a purely non-physical reality.

The three channels

In their non-physical form the three channels can be thought of as representing three 'modes of being', with these modes representing certain attributes. These attributes are as follows: The left channel corresponds to the level of desire, emotion, lethargy and the past; the right channel to that of action (both physical and mental) and the future; and the central channel to that of happiness, moderation, detachment and the present moment (Descieux, 1998; Rai, 19933). Both the left and right channels are also said to be governed by one particular Chakra, the left by the Heart Chakra and the right by the Swadisthan Chakra. The two side channels are also seen as fundamentally different from the central channel in that they can be 'overused' resulting in negative states of being, whilst the attributes of the central channel (by definition) are seen to result in spiritual growth and ultimately the state of Yoga (Union).

As a result it is the objective of Sahaja Yoga meditation to rest the attention within the central channel and not the two side channels. This means in practice both to rest the attention within the present moment, without thought⁴ , and also to literally keep the focus of attention centrally within the body. Once the attention rests here it can be drawn up from the bottom Chakra to the top Chakra⁵ (above the head) where the state of thoughtless awareness and Yoga are said to reside. The three channels, or 'modes of being', therefore, form a simple and important framework within the practice of Sahaja Yoga

More detail of their nature can be found in their description, within Eastern tradition, as the three worldly 'Gunas' (see Neki, 1975 for an overview). Thus the left channel corresponds to the 'Tamo Guna', as in the following quote;

"Tamas (Tamo Guna), which is born of ignorance, darkens the soul of all men. It binds them to sleepy dullness, and then they do not watch and they do not work Darkness, inertia, negligence, delusion- these appear when Tamas prfrVai/s" (Bhagavad Gita Ch.14, v. 8&13).

In accordance with this, the 'theory' of Sahaja Yoga states that 'overuse' of the left channel results in lethargy, depression, and emotional distress.

Due to the intimate link between the left side and the Heart Chakra any overuse of the , left side would be expected to cause a disturbance in this Chakra (and vice versa). The quality of the Heart Chakra is said to be security, or freedom from fear, thus a disturbance in this Chakra would manifest as anxiety. Therefore Sahaja Yoga would expect problems of anxiety (Heart Chakra) and depression (left side) to frequently occur.

It is, therefore, noteworthy that such a eo-morbidity is, in fact, common (see Brown, 1995). Indeed Brown (ibid.) points out that " recent theories have conceptualised anxiety and depression to be constructs sharing a common vulnerability" (ibid., p. 41). The 'theory' of Sahaja Yoga would also posit a common factor between anxiety and depression, i.e. the link between the left channel and the Heart Chakra.

The right channel is understood to be synonymous with 'Raja Guna', as described below,

"Rajas (Raja Guna) is the nature of passion, the source of thirst and attachment. It binds the soul of man to action Greed, busy activity, many undertakings, unrest -these arise when Rajas increases .. " (Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 14, v. 7&12).

Thus the attributes of over activity, excessive striving and unrest, somewhat akin to the 'Type A' personality trait (see Friedman, 1969; Rosenman et. al., 1975), or its' more robust element 'hostility' (see Smith, 1992; Suls and Sanders, 1989), are seen to result from 'overuse' of the right channel.

Finally the central channel is seen to be synonymous with 'Sattva Guna', again as described below;

" ... Sattva because it is pure, and it gives light and is the health of life, binds man to earthly happiness and to lower knowledge... .. When the light of wisdom shines from the portals of the body's dwelling, then we know that Sattva is in power." (Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 14, v 6 & 11).

As we can see from this quote Sattva Guna, or the central channel, is of a different nature to the other two Gunas, bestowing a balanced, happy and fruitful state of being.

The Chakras

In their non-physical form the Chakras can be thought of as types of awareness, or perception, that correspond to related clusters of qualities. They can also be metaphorically seen as flowers, that can open, or blossom, within an individual, so that as the flower blossoms its qualities become manifest within the person. Briefly, starting at 17 the bottom Chakra and moving upwards, the qualities are~ innocence, pure knowledge, satisfaction (or freedom from desire), security (or freedom from fear), compassion, forgiveness and joy (or freedom from suffering).

SOURCE:

<https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10026.1/1969/ADAM%20MORGAN.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>