

SEVEN CHAKRAS AND SEVEN LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS— THE VIEW FROM THE GOSPELS

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The word “chakra” does not appear in the New Testament, yet the underlying, transformational message of the Gospels is built on a model of human consciousness in which it is a key component.

According to Eastern philosophy, the human body is host to a network of subtle energy channels, together with sites of energy interchange which function like energy distribution nodes. There are seven main distribution sites (there are smaller, less crucial ones) which are located along the axis of the spine, from the tailbone to the top of the head. It is these areas of energy interchange that bear the name of “chakra,” a Sanskrit word which means, “wheel” or “disk.” The function of this subtle energy system, of which the chakras are a part, is to keep us integrated into a larger, Cosmic or spiritual reality.

Transforming Consciousness

Although we’re not usually aware of this system in our ordinary consciousness, it is our nexus, or connection between Matter and Spirit, helping us transition in our experience of life between two extremes—a predominantly selfish and physical existence at one end, and one that is purely selfless and spiritual at the other. In reality, however, human life is basically expressed as a continuum between the two extremes, though most of us cluster towards the lower end, where our preoccupation with our survival needs dominate our energy and attention, and spur fierce interpersonal competition.

The goal of all spiritual disciplines is to assist us in moving toward the higher end, where we can experience a deeper sense of personal validation, and with it, a greater sense of joy in life, enabling us to express more empathy and cooperation amongst ourselves. It is this challenge of moving our consciousness to higher chakras, or up the “ladder of being,” to use a related concept, that is generally referred to as the transformation of consciousness.

It can be shown that the teachings of Jesus, particularly those contained in the Sermon on the Mount, and the parables dealing with the Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew, are organized around this idea of the seven-level structure to our being. It can also be demonstrated that the Sermon on the Mount contains meticulous instructions on how we can move our consciousness upwards, from lower to higher chakras on the “ladder of being.”

However, before we go on to look at Matthew’s treatment of the chakras, we’ll spend some time discussing some of their more practical aspects.

Chakras: A Reality of the Subtle Body

Although chakras do not show up when we submit to a medical exam, their existence is widely acknowledged among Western practitioners of various disciplines, such as the martial arts, alternative medicine, and Yoga. There's also a vast literature, both ancient and modern, on the chakras and how we can utilize our knowledge of them for emotional and physical healing, meditation, and overall spiritual well-being.

Usually, discussions of the functioning of chakras vary, depending on whether a writer approaches the subject from a spiritual or therapeutic viewpoint. Hence, someone approaching the chakras from a wellness perspective might look at them in terms of creating "balance" in their energy fields which they are known to emit. Individuals who are gifted with clairvoyance can oftentimes sense the energy level of our various chakras and correlate that with the status of our health.¹

For the most part, the functioning of chakras is not fully understood. For example, someone else can interact with the energy fields given off by our chakras to generate a feeling of short-term wellbeing. Personally, although I had done a lot of reading on chakras, and was accustomed to experiencing subtle energy states through meditation, I was quite surprised to experience a deep state of tranquility, relaxation and peace from having other people use their hands to interact with the energy fields of my various chakras during an energy-sharing ritual². However, most of our therapeutic interventions with chakras can be considered as "energetic perturbations"³ only, in the sense that such actions create only a temporary change in our states of being.

The Chakras as Different "Qualities of Engagement" in Life

Chakras however carry a much larger importance for spiritual transformation than simply having an impact on how we feel, or for giving indications of the status of our physical or emotional health. We can also look at them from a perspective we might call structural, or foundational, namely, from the viewpoint of how our consciousness—our habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving—is a reflection of the chakra, or chakra constellations, in which that consciousness is anchored. Said another way, each of the seven chakras defines our perspective on, and how we engage with the world. As such, they give rise to different "qualities of engagement" in life.

In practical terms, our "quality of engagement" is expressed by what we spend our psychic energy on. This term, psychic energy, simply means the full spectrum of our conscious and unconscious self-expression, which includes our aspiration, thoughts, emotions, and intents. Overall, our "quality of engagement" is simply a record of such psychic energy expenditure, and is observable through our life choices, and therefore through the character that has been formed as a result of those life choices.

An unbalanced, or un-moderated flow of our life energy through the various chakras leads to various forms of maladaptation in life. The following table shows a summary of how the generic life impulse is represented at each chakra and the various forms of

distorted expressions that can result in our consciousness.

The Experience of Life Energy at the Various Chakras		
Chakra	Generic Impulse	Distorted Expression
First	Physical Survival	Competition, antisocial behavior
Second	Emotional sustenance	Sexual preoccupation, vanity
Third	Personal power	Social position and status
Fourth	Belonging and inclusion	Cliquishness and exclusion
Fifth	Higher Knowledge	Slavish Legalism
Sixth	Love as Objective Principle	Self Love
Seventh	Wisdom-Love-Service	Self-Appointed Prophet

Although our model deals with seven major chakras, most human types represent a blend of chakra characteristics, and therefore “mixed qualities of engagement,” especially for the first three. These three chakras, as described in the table above, respectively, deal with physical survival, emotional gratification, (especially as this is expressed through sexuality), and social position and status. In contemporary society, the influences of these chakras dominate as preoccupations with **money**, **sex**, and **power**, popularly represented by the acronym, MSP.

Chakra Insights From Jesus’s Temptations Episode

When our consciousness is dominated by preoccupations with money, sex and power, or MSP, we are interacting with life through our “lower self.” It is this lower self that is referred to as the “Tempter,” or the “devil,” in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s temptations.⁴

The three temptations which Jesus underwent (Matthew 4: 3-11) symbolize the challenges we each have to overcome to raise our consciousness from first, second, and third chakra preoccupations.

The first temptation: *“If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread”* (Matthew 4:3 ESV), represents the use a spiritual power to service the physical appetites. This temptation can be interpreted as the danger we each face from allowing the survival preoccupation of the first chakra to coax us into using our psychic energy, meant for our spiritual advancement, in the service of the physical appetites. A modern version of this temptation might be the thought, or the counsel of a well-meaning associate, such as, “If you’re doing what God wants you to do, you would be making money doing it!” Or it can take the form of a gibe from a skeptic, such as, “If you’re so spiritually connected, why aren’t you rich?”

This temptation of expecting the spiritual to be subservient to the material is contrary to the transformational quest, which requires us to use the physical assets and resources at our disposal in the service of something greater.

The second temptation: *“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone”* (Matthew 4:6 ESV), is giving voice to the second chakra impulse to display our vanity by demonstrating how special we are. This is also the same impulse that is used in the service of sexual attraction and expression. A modern version of this temptation would be someone who might entertain the distorted idea that being “spiritual” gives them some special license for engaging in questionable behavior without being scathed, whether through personal or psychological injury (e.g. addiction). The only lasting defense against this kind of pride-induced temptation is to acknowledge that we are each subject to what occurs in the body of humanity, of which we are a part.

The third and final temptation: *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me”* (Matthew 4: 8–9 ESV), depicts the third chakra and the allure of power. To determine how we can interpret this temptation in a contemporary context, we need to understand, first, what it means to “worship” anything. To engage in an act of worship means that we choose to place something—a person, an object, or a concept—ahead of everything else in our estimation, or on our list of priorities⁵. In other words, we worship whatever it is that we consecrate our lives to. Whether this consecration is conscious or unconscious does not really matter as it boils down to the same thing—the object of worship becomes something that we cannot see beyond. If we cannot see beyond the pursuit of money, sex, and power then we’re limiting our reason for being to the region of the “lower self,” defined by the first three chakras.

Once Jesus rebuffed the devil, *“angels came and ministered to him”* (Matthew 4:11 ESV). The underlying message here is that once our consciousness advances beyond the third chakra, we’re in the sphere of the Higher Self where we are spiritually fed, through the internal mechanism of higher consciousness. For example, when we do good deeds from the consciousness anchored in the fourth chakra and above, (i.e. out of the sense of unity we share with others when we’re at this level), we feel an immediate compensation for our actions by the sense of camaraderie and validation that are generated within.

Gospel Strategies for Advancing our Consciousness

In addition to using the temptations episode to demonstrate how we can overcome the gravitational pull of the first three chakras to advance our consciousness to the fourth and above, Matthew also offers two sets of exercises to facilitate our transformation. The first set deals with inappropriate attitudes and behaviors we need to change, thereby removing blockages to the flow of primordial life energy through the various chakras. The second set represents positive actions we can take to facilitate the flow of energy following the unblocking exercises.

The notion of an energy blockage at a chakra simply means that when we misinterpret the impulses that arise within us as incitements to act without thought or reflection, the energy is diverted from its highest expression. For example, the need for self-preservation that originates from the first chakra does not have to be translated as a call to competition and violence, as our objectives could more easily be achieved through cooperation. Likewise, the impulse to union that arises from the second chakra does not have to be accepted as a license for lust, but can be interpreted as a call to form close emotional partnerships. The same principle applies to all the other chakras, even the higher ones.

We help to facilitate the flow of energy at the chakras when we raise the quality of motivation behind our thoughts and action. And since every action is preceded by a thought, and our thoughts by our emotions, facilitating the flow of energy can be as simple as changing our attitudes and emotions. This is why meditation is an essential part of a spiritual practice.

The following table summarizes the negative behaviors we should be curtailing to unblock energy flow at the various chakras and the corrective ones we need to practice in order to move our consciousness to higher levels.

Transformational Program in Matthew for Raising Consciousness Through the Chakras		
Chakra	Negative Behavior to Correct	Spiritual Exercises to Practice
First	Anger, Malice Matt. 5: 21-26	Giving to Charity Matt. 6: 1-4
Second	Lust Matt. 5: 27-30	Becoming aware of our Oneness Matt. 6:5-15
Third	Exploitation of Others Matt. 5:31-32	Fasting—to develop patience Matt. 6: 6-18
Fourth	Insecurity Matt. 5: 33-37	Cultivation of Trust Matt. 6:19-24
Fifth	Vengeance Matt 5: 38-42	Cultivation of Humility Matt. 7: 1-6
Sixth	Narcissism Matt. 5: 43-47	Unconditional Love Matt. 7:7-12
Seventh	None, seek Perfection Matt. 5: 48	Discernment Matt. 7:13-20

The parables of the Kingdom, in Matthew 13, offer further instructions by offering us a series of dynamic images to represent the underlying principle we need to employ to successfully elevate our consciousness to the higher chakras. We thus have images of a sower scattering seeds (to represent the first chakra), a field of wheat being invaded by weeds, (the second chakra), a mustard seed overcoming the odds (third chakra), the action of leaven in dough (the fourth chakra), a man finding a hidden treasure (the fifth chakra), a

merchant in search of fine pearls (sixth chakra) and finally, a net with a full catch of fish (seventh chakra).

Conclusion

Although the information on chakras presented here is rather cursory, it should nevertheless help us deepen our appreciation of the teachings in the Gospels as a psychology of transformation. As such, we're able to relate to them as practical insights on raising our consciousness to higher levels. Not only that, but with the new perspective the chakra model offers us on these teachings, we're able to discover a new diligence in the conduct of our individual spiritual practice.

NOTES

¹ Dr. Caroline Myss, in her remarkable book, *Anatomy of the Spirit*, offers a detailed analysis of the relationship between chakra energies and disease processes. Her insights are primarily based on her extensive experience as a medical intuitive. Dr. Myss's book is an excellent guide for anyone interested in spirituality as an everyday discipline.

² This is the "Sacred Meditation" technique of Dr. Richard Moss, discussed in his book, *The Black Butterfly*, (pp. 194-210).

³ I credit Dr. Richard Moss for this term, which appears in *The Black Butterfly*.

⁴ Even when I was a member of a fundamentalist Christian church, the idea that Jesus would allow himself to be carried anywhere by the devil (e.g. "and the devil took him..") didn't make any sense to me. This teaching story has a number of triggers in it to alert us that it is only to be taken allegorically.

⁵ The corollary to this definition of worship is that most of our self-declared acts of worship fall short of true worship. Hence, going to church to "worship God" cannot rise to the level of true worship unless our hearts are in it and we use the occasion to elevate our consciousness, even if temporarily, as we contemplate the principles we're seeking to renew our devotion to. As a matter of fact, we can only worship something if we feel energized as we pay homage to it.

Recommended Further Reading:

Caroline Myss, Ph.D., *Anatomy the Spirit—The Seven Stages of Power and Healing*; Three Rivers Press, New York, New York, 1996.

Richard Moss, MD, *The Black Butterfly—An Invitation To Radical Aliveness*, Celestial Arts, Berkeley, California, 1986

F. Aster Barnwell, *Hidden Treasure—Jesus's Message of Transformation*, iUniverse, Bloomington, Illinois, 2011.

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