

Sheaths of Consciousness

In practical spiritualism ('tantras'), the entire central channel is regarded as 'Jivatma' and the 6 centers ('chakras') stand for different states of the soul's existence. At the first three lower centers, the 'Jivatma' remains dormant according to the 'tantra' theory. Where the 'Jivatma' remains dormant, we are identified with physical and mental experiences, but the moment it awakens and becomes self-aware, only then consciousness is raised to the level of the fourth center, which is the center located at the bosom, represented as a blue lotus with twelve petals. In some well-known scriptures, it is also pictured as an eight-petaled red lotus, just below the heart center where the mental worship of one's chosen deity is to be performed. The lotus symbolizes the mystic symbol, which represents certain supersensuous experiences. The heart center is the point of convergence for several powers. According to the prevalent 'tantric' critics, the three lower chakras stand for the levels of unconsciousness, whereas the three higher centers stand for levels of superconscious. According to the 'tantric' school of spiritualism, the heart is regarded as the actual shrine of true consciousness, which is the source of self-awareness. The heart is the sheath of intelligence or self-awareness of dynamic faith according to the 'tantric' system. Each of these layers of consciousness is an extremely vital power center through which we receive guidance to discover directions from a cosmic nature. Consciousness, limited by the five sheaths, appears as five different selves, with five different identities that discover directions. Individual willpower is a static aspect of the 'Jivatma'. In ordinary life, willpower is regulated by lower instincts and directed outward towards sense objects. When the same will force is freed and directed inward, it becomes a spiritual force or dynamic faith. True faith is the motive force leading a person's spiritual progression, considered the head of the sheath of intelligence or the heart center. Individual consciousness ('Satyam') being a part of cosmic truth ('Ritam'), is always trying to align with cosmic truth. This is what devotion is all about.