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XII. Psychology

1. Defense Mechanisms as Transformative Mechanisms

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) thought of the unconscious mind as a collection of unwanted repressed ideas and feelings, combined with the phylogenetic heritage that includes instincts. On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda indicated, “Deep down in our subconscious [unconscious] mind are stored up all the thoughts and acts of the past, not only of this life, but of all other lives we have lived.”¹ The unconscious mind is a repository of virtuous, neutral, and deficient traits. Most of its contents were forgotten (passive) not repressed (active). Samskaras (mental impressions and forces) of love for other people, altruism, hard work, and determination, courage, etc. are as much a part of the unconscious mind as the negative things Freud wrote about.

Kanada (c. 6th-2nd century B.C.) the founder of the Vaishesika philosophy in India and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) in Greece discovered the universal categories or forms of rational thought, such as Aristotle’s: substance, quantity, quality, and relation, etc. For example, relation would include cause-effect, whole-part, substance-attributes, etc. Reason includes the principles of logical consistency, coherence, correspondence, etc. Kanada unlike Aristotle created subgroups of the original categories into two levels. Two millennia later Sigmund Freud and his followers came up with the universal categories or forms of psychological (rather than rational) thought. He referred to the universal psychological functions, categories, and mechanisms of the human mind, as ego defense mechanisms, since the ego is operative in this process of

thinking and feeling. For Freud they are repression, regression, reaction formation, isolation, undoing, projection, introjection, turning against one's own person, reversal into the opposite, and sublimation or displacement.² They are necessary to maintain the equilibrium and balance of the psyche. The defense mechanisms promote a universal view of humanity. That they are common to all groups of people of the world though their expression differs from one society to the next.

While Kanada and Aristotle emphasize the positive aspects of the intellectual categories, Freud stresses the negative expressions of the psychological categories. He believed they are used by people to protect themselves from anxiety, guilt, and loss of self-esteem, in the face of ego threatening experiences. Since they are primarily unconscious, most people are not aware of them. They are common to all people of all societies though there are bound to be some national-ethnic cultural variations concerning the application of these principles. Freud and his followers made great discoveries in this area, but unfortunately his interpretation of these psychological mechanisms of the mind is far too negative and limited emphasizing only their neurotic manifestations. These psychological processes are necessary patterns of human thought that can be expressed positively, neutrally, or negatively as Freud emphasized. To admire and idealize a great person or to project love and compassion is good. To idealize a vicious person or to project negative traits is bad.

Properly employed these psychological mechanisms can be effective in producing a well-integrated personality. Redefining them as constructive, developmental, transformative, mechanisms, it is evident how Ramakrishna teaches the proper techniques for spiritual advancement.

2. General Psychological Factors

There are differences between the spiritual psychology of Sri Ramakrishna and the secular psychology of Sigmund Freud. Ramakrishna often mentions the ego, particularly its unripe and ripe manifestations. Under the heading of “Ego Defense Mechanisms,” Sigmund Freud and his followers have done an excellent job in explaining how the unripe ego functions and have given some suggestions for the manifestation of the ripe ego. Knowing this prepares us to be on guard against their more malicious manifestations.

a) Sublimation of Lower into Higher

Displacement: “Transferring emotional reactions from one object to another.” Ramakrishna advocates, “Anger and lust cannot be destroyed. Turn them toward God. If you must feel desire and temptation, then desire to realize God, feel tempted by Him. Discriminate and turn the passions away from worldly objects.” “Direct the six passions to God. The impulse of lust should be turned into the desire to have intercourse with Atman. Feel angry at those who stand in your way to God. Feel greedy for Him. If you must have the feeling of I and mine, then associate it with God.” “One cannot completely get rid of the six passions: lust, anger, greed, and the like. Therefore one should direct them to God. If you must have desire and greed, then you should desire love of God and be greedy to attain Him. If you must be conceited and egotistic, then feel conceited and egotistic thinking that you are the servant of God, the child of God.”³

Sublimation: Transforming negative actions, behaviours, or emotions into their opposite. Desires are directed into higher channels. Ramakrishna provides these examples, “Love God even as the mother loves her child, the chaste wife her husband, and the worldly man his wealth. Add together these three forces of love, these three powers of attraction, and give it all to God. Then you will certainly see Him.” “One day Swami Turiyananda asked the Master,

‘How can I get rid of lust?’ The Master replied: ‘Why should it be gotten rid of? Turn it in another direction.’ He said the same thing about anger, greed, infatuation, and other passions.” Vivekananda indicated, “In Bhakti-Yoga the central secret is, therefore, to know that the various passions and feelings and emotions in the human heart are not wrong in themselves; only they have to be carefully controlled and given a higher and higher direction, until they attain the very highest condition of excellence. The highest direction is that which takes us to God; every other direction is lower.”⁴

“Girindra Ghosh of Pathuriaghata once remarked, 'Since you cannot get rid of your passions—your lust, your anger, and so on—give them a new direction. Instead of desiring worldly pleasures, desire God.... If you cannot get rid of anger, then change its direction. Assume the tamasic attitude of bhakti, and say: 'What? I have repeated the hallowed name of Durga, and shall I not be liberated? How can I be a sinner any more? How can I be bound any more?' If you cannot get rid of temptation, direct it toward God. Be infatuated with God's beauty. If you cannot get rid of pride, then be proud to say that you are the servant of God, you are the child of God. Thus turn the six passions toward God.'”⁵ “Renounce the ‘unripe I’ and keep the ‘ripe I’, which will make you feel that you are the servant of God, His devotee, and that God is the Doer and you are His instrument.” “But the ego that feels it is the servant of God does no harm to anybody.”⁶

Substitution: Replacing one form of behavior, emotion, drive, attitude, and need for another. Ramakrishna tells us, “How can one attain yoga? By completely renouncing attachment to worldly things.” “How can one expect to attain God without renunciation? Suppose one thing is placed upon another; how can you get the second without removing the first?” “There certainly are people who have given up everything for God.” “But who can have this spiritual awakening? Only he who has renounced his attachment to worldly things.”⁷

b) Suppression

Suppression: Consciously excluding unacceptable thoughts, feelings, impulses, and memories from consciousness. If done unconsciously it is called Repression. Denial: Refusing to perceive or consciously acknowledge unpleasant aspects of oneself. Resistance: Opposition to bringing unwanted, unconscious, repressed samskaras (mental impressions and forces) to conscious awareness. In relation to prior sins committed, Ramakrishna recommends, "If a man repeats the name of God, his body, mind, and everything become pure. Why should one talk only about sin ... Say but once, 'O Lord, I have undoubtedly done wicked things, but I won't repeat them.' And have faith in His name." "Why did you harp so much on sin? By repeating a hundred times, 'I am a sinner,' one verily becomes a sinner. One should have such faith as to be able to say, 'What? I have taken the name of God; how can I be a sinner?' God is our Father and Mother. Tell Him, O Lord, I have committed sins, but I won't repeat them." Vivekananda mentioned that one samskara can overpower another. "The Samskara which will be raised by this sort of concentration will be so powerful that it will hinder the action of the others, and hold them in check."⁸

A person may have a "mental block" that last for years, which prevents them from doing something's they want to do. But in many cases, this may be a good thing, in not allowing them to do the wrong thing. In some way unknown to us, the unconscious mind is doing this for our benefit.

c) Internalization

Identification: Adopting or incorporating the character, attitude, and behavior of a role model. Ramakrishna advised, "By constantly living in the company of holy men, the soul becomes restless for God." "A man can change his nature by imitating another's character." "If you direct the mind to the contemplation of

God, you will be coloured by God Consciousness. Again if you direct the mind to worldly duties ... it will be coloured by worldliness.” “The companionship of a holy man is greatly needed now and then. It enables one to discriminate between Real and the unreal.” “This power of assimilation comes from associating with holy men.” “The companionship of the holy and the wise is one of the main elements of spiritual progress.”⁹ See: *Swami Vivekananda on Religious, Ethical, and Psychological Practices*, Ch. I. Yogic Practices, Meditation, and Prayer, Section 9. Be Instructed by a Teacher (Guru).

Incorporation: Becoming one with another person in terms of similar values, preferences, attitudes, and expectations. There were times when Ramakrishna so identified with a deity that he became that deity. For example, Mathur Babu (1817-71) managed the temple at Dakshineswar. One day he “hurriedly ran out of his bungalow, threw himself down at Sri Ramakrishna’s feet and began to cry profusely. He explained, Father I was watching you just now as you walked back and forth. I saw it distinctly: As you walked towards me, you were no longer yourself. You were the Divine Mother Kali from the temple! Then, as you turned around and walked in the opposite direction, you became Lord Shiva. At first I thought it was some kind of optical illusion. I rubbed my eyes and looked again, but I saw the same thing. As often as I looked I saw it!”¹⁰ Interestingly, Mathur referred to Ramakrishna as father though he was nineteen years his junior.

d) Idealization, Seeing the Good in Others and Ones Self

Idealization: Tending to overestimate the character or qualities of another person. Ramakrishna taught, “It is Satchidananda that comes to us in the form of the guru. If a man is initiated by a human guru, he will not achieve anything if he regards his guru as a mere man. The guru should be regarded as the direct manifestation of God. Only then can the disciple have faith in the mantra given by the

guru. Once a man has faith he achieves all.” “Listen not to any one censuring your Guru. He is greater than your father or mother.”¹¹

Projection: Attributing one's own thoughts and emotions on to another. One should project love and devotion toward Brahman-God, the guru, and fellow human beings. Ramakrishna disclosed, “One cannot assimilate spiritual instruction unless one has already developed love of God.” “One achieves everything when one loves God.” “You must develop love for God and be passionately attached to him.” “Direct your mind to God with whole-souled devotion. Enjoy the Bliss of God.”¹² “One must have faith in the guru’s words. He succeeds in spiritual life by looking on his guru as God Himself.” “Compassion is the love one feels for all beings of the world. It is an attitude of equality.” “I saw an English boy leaning against a tree. As he stood there his body was bent in three places. The vision of Krishna came about me in a flash. I went into samadhi.” “One must love all. No one is a stranger. It is Hari [God] alone who dwells in all beings.”¹³

Superiority Complex: A person feels superior, above the ordinary, and special. Due to their high self-esteem they are not much concerned about the opinion of others. Though Ramakrishna did not go this far he did teach, “A true man is only he who is one endowed with a sense of self-respect. Others are men only in name.” “No pride is pride that expresses the glory of the soul. No humility is humility that humiliates the self.”¹⁴

Transference: Projection or displacement upon the analyst of unconscious thoughts, feelings, and wishes originally directed toward important individuals. Ramakrishna stated, “It is Satchidananda [Brahman] that comes to us in the form of the guru. If a man is initiated by a human guru, he will not achieve anything if he regards his guru as a mere man. The guru should be regarded as the direct manifestation of God. Only then can the disciple have faith in the mantra given by the guru. Once a man has faith he achieves all.”¹⁵

e) Karma Yoga the Path of Action

Acting Out: Expressing oneself through bodily actions and movement rather than by reason or emotion. For many years beginning in 1855, Sri Ramakrishna practiced religious ritual as the Temple Priest at the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. Swami Vivekananda's insights on the subject include, "Ritual gives to that philosophy a still more concrete form, so that every one may grasp it--ritual is in fact concretized philosophy." "It is also a significant fact that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism."¹⁶

Flight into Reality: Becoming over involved in activities. Ramakrishna explained, "You are distributing food and learning. That is good to. If these activities are done in a selfless spirit they lead to God." This world is our field of activity. We are born to perform certain duties.... It is necessary to do a certain amount of work. This is a kind of discipline."¹⁷

Reaction Formation: Converting unwanted thoughts, feelings, or impulses into their opposites. Counter karma and counter samskaras create the opposite mental vibrations and subtle forces. Vivekananda mentioned the value of counter-samskaras and karmas, "The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously; that is the only way to suppress base impressions.... For instance, when a big wave of anger has come into the mind, how are we to control that? Just by raising an opposing wave. Think of love."¹⁸ See: Ch. X, Religious Practices, Section VIII. Counter-Karma and Samskaras for more on this subject.

Undoing: Counteracting guilty impulses or behavior by acts of atonement. Restitution: Relieving the mind of a sense of guilt by making up or making reparations for guilty behavior. Ramakrishna affirmed, "No doubt a man experiences a little of the [karmic] effect; but much of it is cancelled by the power of God's name."¹⁹

According to Swami Vivekananda, “The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously; that is the only way to suppress base impressions. Never say any man is hopeless, because he only represents a character, a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits and repeated habits alone can reform character.”²⁰

f) Negativity and Withdrawal

Devaluation: Attributing negative qualities to the world. Ramakrishna recommends, “After enjoying different things, you should give them up one by one.” “If you want to realize God, then you must cultivate intense dispassion. You must renounce immediately what you feel to be standing in your way. You should not put it off to the future.” “He is a true man who is dead even in this life--that is, whose passions and propensities have been curbed to extinction as in a dead body.”²¹

While Ramakrishna certainly does not recommend having an Inferiority Complex, he does greatly encourage humility. “It is only the humble man who attains Knowledge. In a low place rainwater collects. It runs down from a mound.” “To become great one must become humble. High ground is not for cultivation; low ground is necessary, so that water may stand on it.” “The tree laden with fruits always bends low. If you wish to be great, be lowly and meek.”²²

Isolation: Cutting one’s self off from painful feelings through objectification and emotional detachment. By separating feelings from ideas and events the person is not disturbed.

Emotional Insulation: is a “mechanism of indifference and detachment.” Ramakrishna advises, “The scriptures ask you to work in a detached spirit, that is to say, not to crave the work's results. For example, you may perform devotions and worship, and practice

austerities, but your aim is not to earn people's recognition or to increase your merit.... Complete detachment from the results of action is possible only for one who has seen God.” “If a householder performs his duties in the world in a spirit of detachment, surrendering the results to God and with devotion to God in his heart, he may be said to practice karma yoga.” “Karma becomes a cause of bondage unless it is performed in a spirit of detachment.” “A man must practice some spiritual discipline in order to be able to lead a detached life in the world.” “One truly realizes God if one performs one’s worldly duties in a detached spirit.”²³ A person lacks freedom, if they are overly disturbed by other people’s criticisms of them. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (c. 55-135) recommended that peace of mind (Apatheia) involves accepting things that cannot be changed, resigning oneself to their existence and enduring it in a rational fashion.²⁴

Regression: Reverting to an earlier stage of development. Ramakrishna explained some of the advantages of thinking like a guileless child. “He who has attained God keeps only an appearance of ego; there remains in him only a semblance of anger and lust. He becomes like a child. A child has no attachment to the three gunas sattva, rajas, and tamas. He becomes as quickly detached from a thing as he becomes attached to it. You can cajole him out of a cloth worth five rupees with a doll worth an anna, though at first he may say with great determination: 'No, I won't give it to you. My daddy bought it for me.' Again, all persons are the same to a child. He has no feeling of high and low in regard to persons.... The child doesn't know hate, or what is holy or unholy.” “Some times he behaves like a child, a child five years old—guileless, generous, without vanity, unattached to anything, not under the control of any of the gunas, always blissful.” “One must have childlike faith--and the intense yearning [for Brahman-God] that a child feels to see its mother.” “Great sages have childlike natures. Before God they are always like children. They have no pride. Their strength is the

strength of God, the strength of their Father. They have nothing to call their own. They are firmly convinced of that.”²⁵

Turn Against Self: Redirect critical thoughts and emotions that were originally directed toward others onto one’s self. Vivekananda taught, “Blame neither man, nor God, nor anyone in the world. When you find yourselves suffering, blame yourselves, and try to do better.... This attempt to throw the blame upon others only weakens them the more. Therefore, blame none for your own faults, stand upon your own feet, and take the whole responsibility upon yourselves. Say, ‘This misery that I am suffering is of my own doing, and that very thing proves that it will have to be undone by me alone.’ That which I created, I can demolish; that which is created by some one else I shall never be able to destroy. Therefore, stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny.”²⁶

Withdrawal: Removing oneself from external events, stimuli, and interactions. Introversion: Turning inward toward one’s self and one’s inner subjective world of experience. Ramakrishna advised, “One must go into solitude to attain this Divine love.... By meditating on God in solitude, the mind acquires knowledge, dispassion, and devotion.” “The mind must withdraw totally from all objects of form, taste, smell, touch, and sound. Only thus does it become pure.” “It is enough for a man to pray to Him, alone in solitude, weeping, ‘O God, reveal Yourself to me as You are.’” “He should direct his mind to God alone, withdrawing it from the various objects of the world.” “Thus it would do infinite good to the world, if they would retire now and then into solitude, even for three days at a time, so that God might be realized.”²⁷

g) Jnana Yoga

Intellectualization: Concentrating on the intellectual components of a situation while avoiding the emotional aspects. Ramakrishna accepted Jnana Yoga as a path to liberation. It

encompasses the discrimination between the Real and the unreal, combined with practical spiritual knowledge. He stated, “The jnani, sticking to the path of knowledge, always reasons about the Reality, saying, 'Not this, not this.' Brahman is neither 'this' nor 'that;' It is neither the universe nor its living beings. Reasoning in this way, the mind becomes steady. Then it disappears and the aspirant goes into samadhi. This is the Knowledge of Brahman. It is the unwavering conviction of the jnani that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory.” “On the awakening of knowledge, God with form melts away into the same Infinite and Formless.” “What you say is according to the path of discrimination. It is known as Jnana Yoga. Through that path, too, one attains God. The jnani say that an aspirant must first of all purify his heart. First he needs spiritual exercises; then he will attain Knowledge.... One realizes God by following the path of discrimination and knowledge. But this is an extremely difficult path. It is easy enough to say such things as, I am not the body, mind, or intellect; I am beyond grief, disease, and sorrow; I am the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; I am beyond pain and pleasure; I am not under the control of the sense-organs, but it is very hard to assimilate these ideas and practice them.”²⁸

Splitting: Coexistence in the mind of contradictory ideas that are split-off from each other. For example, a person is looked upon as an imperfect human being and at the same time as the perfected Atman. Ramakrishna explains, “‘I and mine’—that is ignorance. By discriminating you will realize that what you call ‘I’ is really nothing but Atman. Reason it out. Are you the body or the flesh or something else? At the end you will know that you are none of these. You are free from attributes. Then you will realize that you have never been the doer of any action, that you have been free from virtue and faults alike, that you are beyond righteousness and unrighteousness.”²⁹

On some occasions the highest and lowest states of development appear to be similar. For example, a very advance yogi

absorbed in deep meditation might appear to be a catatonic. Describing this state Ramakrishna indicated, “A bird will sit on your head, thinking you are an inert thing.” “A snake may crawl over his body, but he will not know it. Neither of them will be aware of the other.”³⁰

Some great yogis have been misperceived by ordinary people as being insane. They appear to have lost contact with the outer physical reality. They see and talk to beings that other people cannot see. Ramakrishna revealed, “People notice his ways and actions and think he is insane.” “I had all the experiences that one should have, according to the scriptures, after one’s direct perception of God. I behaved like a child, like a madman, like a ghoul, and like an inert thing.” “Sometimes a perfect jnani behaves like a ghoul. He does not discriminate about food and drink, holiness and unholiness. A perfect knower of God and a perfect idiot have the same outer signs.” “Pratap [Mazumdar] said, at the sight of my ecstatic mood, ‘Good heavens! It is as if he were possessed by a ghost!’”³¹

Based primarily on the teachings of the Hungarian Margaret Mahler (1897-1985), Ken Wilber came to the conclusion that the infant during the autistic phase in its earliest stage of development cannot distinguish: their self from others and the material environment, the subject from the object, or the inside from the outside. A state of unity exists, the infant is one with the object and others. Their ‘I’ is not yet differentiated from the ‘not-I’ or the objective world from subjective awareness. There is a fusion with the mother, one of total unified all-encompassing wholeness prior to the separation of the ego. The ego is not yet developed and the infant’s attention is largely inward. During the symbiotic phase, the infant functions and behaves as though he and the mother are an omnipotent system. Freud referred to these stages “primary narcissisms.” Between the fifth and ninth month the infant is able to differentiate its physical self from the physical environment

(hatching). Around the eighteenth month or so, the infant differentiates its emotional self from the emotions of others.³²

We find some similarities here with the highest mystical experiences. In the mystical state of Qualified Nondualism the almost egoless yogi is one with the world and not physically separate. According to Ramanuja (c. 1017-1137) in heaven people live in harmony with Brahman (God) and share and participate in His bliss, for the reason that they are part of Him. Srinivasa (fl. 1625) a member of the Ramanuja School taught in heaven the freed soul has the semi-omnipotent power of fulfilling its desires at will and also possesses the power to move to any location at will. It has been mentioned that in dreamless sleep the mind is in the causal state but unconscious, and in samadhi it is in the same state but conscious. There must be some profound metaphysical reason that explains why the highest and lowest states of evolutionary development have some similar characteristics. More study is necessary to solve this difficult problem.

According to Ken Wilber's "Pre/Trans Fallacy," "These confuse infantile (prepersonal) states and stages with mature spiritual (transpersonal) states and stages. They are easy to confuse because both are non-personal and non-egoic. For example, Freud mistakenly reduced all transpersonal states into infantile dissociation, a pathological diagnosis that required therapy."³³ "All higher and transrational states are reduced to lower and prerational states. Genuine mystical or contemplative experiences, for example, are seen as a regression or throwback to infantile states of narcissism, oceanic nondualism, in dissociation, and even primitive autism." The superconscious is reduced to the subconscious or unconscious. They incorrectly conceive of the Buddhist Nirvana as a psychological regression to intra-uterine life (womb), the demolition of ontogenetic development back to the beginning of embryonic development. Conversely, Wilber believes Carl Jung (1875-1961) mistakenly elevated the prepersonal (phantasmic, magic, mythic) to the transpersonal level.³⁴

After one of Sri Aurobindo's students who tried psychoanalysis explained the procedure to him, he responded, "If one wishes to purify and transform the nature [of one's character], it is the power of these higher ranges to which one must open and raise to them and change by them both the subliminal and the surface being.... But to begin by opening up the lower subconscious, risking to raise up all that is foul or obscure in it, is to go out of one's way to invite trouble. First, one should make the higher mind and vital strong and firm and full of light and peace from above; afterwards one can open up or even dive into the subconscious with more safety and some chance of a rapid and successful change."³⁵

3. The Seven Chakras

Sri Ramakrishna discussed the seven chakras, "The first three planes of the Vedas may be compared to the first three Yogic centres, namely, Muladhara, Svadhithana, and Manipura. With ordinary people the mind dwells in these three planes, at the organs of evacuation and generation and at the navel. When the mind ascends to the fourth plane, the centre designated in Yoga as Anahata [at the heart level], it sees the individual soul as a flame. Besides, it sees light. At this the aspirant cries: 'Ah! What is this? Ah! What is this?' When the mind rises to the fifth plane, the aspirant wants to hear only about God. This is the Visuddha centre of Yoga [at the throat level]. The sixth plane and the centre known by the yogi as Ajna [between the eyebrows] are one and the same. When the mind rises there, the aspirant sees God. But still there is a barrier between God and the devotee. It is like the barrier of glass in a lantern, which keeps one from touching the light. King Janaka used to give instruction about Brahma-jnana from the fifth plane. Sometimes he dwelt on the fifth plane, and sometimes on the sixth. After passing the six centres the aspirant arrives at the seventh plane. Reaching it, the mind merges in Brahman. The individual soul and the Supreme Soul become one. The aspirant goes into samadhi.

His consciousness of the body disappears. He loses the knowledge of the outer world. He does not see the manifold any more. His reasoning comes to a stop.”³⁶

Sri Ramakrishna’s explanation of the chakras in the subtle body is different from that of Sri Aurobindo, Ken Wilber, and various Western experts on the subject. Ramakrishna stated most people dwell only in the first three chakras and that the higher four are spiritual centers. Yet, Aurobindo believed both higher (love) and lower (hate) emotions arise in the heart chakra, and desires and passions in the throat chakra. According to Wilber, “Each chakra must also contain gross, subtle, and causal energies and their correlative states of consciousness” (and body organ), so that non-spiritual characteristics are found in the fourth, fifth, and six chakra. Is it possible that an outstanding orator or singer is functioning at the subtle (not causal) fifth chakra level (throat), and an intellectual while studying his subject is working at the level of the subtle sixth chakra (mind)?³⁷

The seven chakras are centers of psychic energy located in the subtle body. They exist only in a living body and not in a corpse, since the subtle body departs from the physical body at the moment of death. The chakras were identified in 1889, with the various plexuses by Major B. D. Basu of the Indian Medical Service. Mahesh Mehta offers the following classification system of where the chakras are connected with aspects of the physical body. But we must remember while the physical nerve plexus is outside of the spinal aperture, the chakras are located within the innermost channel of the cerebro-spinal axis.³⁸ The following is subject to possible alteration.

Chakras	Physical Body Endocrinal Glands	Plexuses	Spinal Regions
1. Muladhara	Anus Gonads?	Perineal	Coccygeal-Sacral

2. Svadhisthana Gonads?		Prostatic	Sacral
		or Hypogastric	
3. Manipura Pancreas Adrenal Umbilicus, Navel	Abdomen	Solar	Lumbar or Epigastric
4. Anahata Thoracic	Heart Thymus	Cardiac	Dorsal or
5. Visuddha Thyroid	Throat	Laryngeal	Cervical and Pharyngeal
6. Ajna Oblongata	Between the Pineal eyebrows	Cavernous	Medulla or Nasociliary
7. Sahasrara Pituitary	Brain	Cerebral	Cerebrum

The chakras are associated with the following characteristics:

1. The muladhara the first chakra, is located in the subtle body at the base of the spinal column. In its positive aspect muladhara consciousness is concerned with the will to live, self-preservation, and survival of the physical body, meeting physiological needs like hunger and thirst, and coping with life threatening situations. Without an innate desire to preserve the physical body, people would be short lived.

If the desire for self-preservation is deficient, it is apt to result in what Sigmund Freud called the “Death Instinct” (Thanatos). Driven by this instinct the person seeks to destroy, differentiate, separate, and dissolve things, resulting in a regression to the inorganic level of existence. Thanatos takes on two basic forms, internal self-destruction against oneself and external destructiveness in opposition to others.³⁹ The death instinct is the impulse to devolve, to retrogress to a lower tier on the evolutionary scheme and finally

to the level of insentient matter. Being self-destructive it is the tamasic will to inertia, unconsciousness, impotence, disintegration, undifferentiation, incoherence, indecision, and oblivion. The person seeks to escape from the daily struggles of life, from despair, guilt, anxiety, and pain; to depart from the conscious level; and to enter into lower states of consciousness at the instinctual level and eventually to self-dissolution. This is a process of negative transformation; what had previously been created is now destroyed. These characteristics are found in drug addiction, alcoholism, suicide, severe depression, and psychoses. This process may be an attempt to return to the infant state, where the self of the child, and the physical environment are not distinguished.⁴⁰ The psychologist Otto Rank (1884-1939) wrote of a regressive desire to return to the security of the womb. Nevertheless, overall fortunately in most people the universal will to evolve is more powerful than the will to devolve. Freud mistakenly referred to the death instinct as the “Will to Nirvana,” which is its opposite since Nirvana involves the sattvic will to advance to a higher level of existence.

2. The svadhisthana chakra is located in the subtle body at the root of the genitals. It is related to liquid matter and the sense of taste and is a combination of the gunas of tamas and rajas. This level of consciousness is identified with the vital body (Pranamaya-kosha), which control the life forces found in plants, animals, and humans.⁴¹ Svadhisthana consciousness is identified with kama, which is the desire to experience emotions derived from the various pleasures of the senses. There is a pursuit of pleasure characterized by a desire for delicious food, sexual objects and physical comfort.⁴² For Freud when uncontrolled the pleasure principle seeks immediate gratification of instinctual sensual urges and desires such as hunger, thirst, anger, and sex.⁴³ A deficiency of the pleasure principle can lead to a feeling of aversion for material objects. These people may remain fixated at the muladhara level and experience depression, boredom, and cynicism.

3. The manipura is located in the subtle body near the naval and is related to the adrenal gland. It is identified with luminous matter and energy and the sense of sight.⁴⁴ As an unfoldment of Manipura consciousness in the third center there is a “will to manifest prana,” the innate desire to manifest various energies through practical, intellectual, aesthetic, social, humanitarian, athletic, heroic, and other forms of activity.⁴⁵ It is expressed through the will, intellect, emotion, and action. Self-respect, wealth, power, honor, and popularity are some of its goals. It includes artha, which is the economic life goal of striving for wealth and material prosperity. Though the will to prana or power is primarily rajasic in nature, it may be expressed tamasicly as cruelty or self-destruction; rajasicly as acquisitiveness, ambition, physical strength, heroism; or sattvicly as spirituality, goodness, altruism, higher knowledge, and love. Manipura desires include some of the needs listed by Karen Horney (1885-1952), which are the striving for: power, affection, approval, prestige, personal admiration, achievement, self-sufficiency, and independence. Henry Murray’s (1854-1934) list of secondary needs also falls into this class. They consist of the drives to attain achievement, recognition, dominance, aggression, exhibition, construction, and affiliation. There is also a basic need for knowledge, happiness, self-esteem, and to be a moral person.⁴⁶ Freud’s Reality Principle operates at this level to achieve instinctual satisfaction, by regulating behavior in accordance with the demands of the external world. Behavior is acquired and learned, and immediate gratification is denied or postponed in order to gain pleasure or avoid pain in the future. In the secondary process psychic energy is bound, checked, and controlled in its movement toward discharge. Satisfaction is postponed in accord with the conditions imposed by the external world, seeking out the optimum path to attain its goal.⁴⁷ At the first three levels there is a human tendency to project the opposite behavioral characteristics resulting in the polarities of existence. For example, first chakra consciousness actualizes as both a life and death drive, and second

chakra consciousness both as attraction and aversion to sense objects. When consciousness is expressed through the third chakra it can objectify as optimism or pessimism, success or failure, dominance or submission, and superiority or inferiority. The second member of the polarity is often a reaction to the stress and frustration of not being able to attain the desired goals. People react to frustration through aggression, hypercriticism, cynical pessimism, various forms of self-destruction, and/or retreatism.

4. Sri Ramakrishna mentions at the level of the anahata chakra (heart center of the subtle body) one “feels the awakening of Divine Consciousness and sees Light.”⁴⁸

On the subject of the Divine Light, Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) in her classic work on Mysticism (1911) asks the question, “What is the nature of this mysterious mystic illumination? Apart from the certitude it imparts, what is the form which it most usually assumes in the consciousness of the self? The illuminatives seem to assure us that its apparently symbolic name is really descriptive; that they do experience a kind of radiance, a flooding of the personality with new light. A new sun rises above the horizon, and transfigures their twilit world. Over and over again they return to light-imagery in this connection. Frequently, as in their first conversion they report an actual and overpowering consciousness of radiant light, ineffable in its splendour, as an accompaniment of their inward adjustment. ‘Light rare, untellable!’ said Walt Whitman. ‘The flowing light of the Godhead’, said Mechthild of Magdeburg, trying to describe what it was that made the difference between her universe and that of normal men. ‘Lux vivens dicit’, said St. Hildegarde of her revelations, which she described as appearing in a special light, more brilliant than the brightness round the sun. It is an ‘infused brightness’, says St. Teresa, ‘a light which knows no night; but rather, as it is always light, nothing ever disturbs it’.... ‘In Eternal Nature, or the kingdom of Heaven,’ said William Law, ‘materiality stands in life and light.’ The cumulative testimony on this point is such as would be held to prove, in any other department of

knowledge, that there is indeed an actual light, 'lighting the very light' and awaiting the recognition of men. Consider the accent of realism with which St. Augustine speaks of his own experience of Platonic contemplation; a passage in which we seem to see a born psychologist desperately struggling by means of negations to describe an intensely positive state. 'I entered into the secret closet of my soul, led by Thee; and this I could do because Thou wast my helper. I entered, and beheld with the mysterious eye of my soul the Light that never changes, above the eye of my soul, above my intelligence. It was not the common light which all flesh can see, nor was it greater yet of the same kind, as if the light of day were to grow brighter and brighter and flood all space. It was not like this, but different: altogether different from all such things. Nor was it above my intelligence in the same way as oil is above water, or heaven above earth; but it was higher because it made me, and I was lower because made by it. He who knoweth the truth knoweth that Light: and who knoweth it, knoweth eternity. Love knoweth it.' Here, as in the cases of St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Genoa, and Jacopone da Todi, we have a characteristically 'immanent' description of the illuminated state. The self, by the process which mystics call 'introversion', the deliberate turning inwards of its attention, its conative powers, discerns Reality within the heart: 'the rippling tide of love which flows secretly from God into the soul, and draws it mightily back into its source.' But the opposite or transcendental tendency is not less frequent. The cosmic vision of Infinity, exterior to the subject—the expansive, outgoing movement towards a Divine Light, wholly other than anything the earth-born creature can conceive—the strange, formless absorption in the Divine Dark to which the soul is destined to ascend—all these modes of perception are equally characteristic of the Illuminative Way."⁴⁹

The awakening of the fourth chakra is also associated with love, compassion, sympathy, selfless service, and inner joy. Arthur Schopenhauer describes a person of this type, "Boundless compassion for all living beings is the firmest and surest guarantee

of pure moral conduct, and needs no casuistry. Whoever is inspired with it will assuredly injure no one, will wrong no one, will encroach on no one's rights; on the contrary, he will be lenient with everyone, will forgive everyone, will help everyone as much as he can, and all his actions will bear the stamp of justice, philanthropy, and loving-kindness.”⁵⁰

5. Visuddha located at the throat center of in the subtle body was probably experienced by Richard Rolle (1290/1300-49) “the Father of English mysticism,’ who heard the music of the soul. He did not see the spiritual world, he heard it. His joyous love was awakened by the sweetest heavenly melody. “I took heed, suddenly in what manner I wot not, in me the sound of song I felt; and likeliest heavenly melody I took, with me dwelling in mind.” It had little in common with earthly music, “the tone and sweetness of that song they may not learn.” For him as for Francis of Assisi it is a “heavenly melody, intolerably sweet.”⁵¹

6. Sri Ramakrishna described his first visitation of Mother Kali when he entered the ajna state of consciousness. “I had a marvelous vision of the Mother and fell down unconscious. Afterwards what happened in the external world, or how that day and the next passed, I don't now. But within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss that I had never before experienced, and I felt the immediate presence of the Divine Mother.”⁵²

7. As an example of sahasrara consciousness (while retaining earthly consciousness), Swami Vivekananda described the following event that occurred to him after Sri Ramakrishna transmitted spiritual energy to him. “The magic touch of the Master that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was astounded to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! I saw it quite clearly, but kept silent to see whether the impression would last; but it did not abate in the course of the day. I returned home, but there too, everything I saw appeared to be Brahman. I sat down to take my meal, but found that everything—the food, the plate, the person who served, and even myself—was

nothing but That. I ate a morsel or two and sat still. I was startled by my mother's words, 'Why do you sit still? Finish your meal', and then began to eat again. But all the while, whether eating or lying down, or going to College, I had the same experience and felt myself always in a sort of trance. While walking in the streets, I noticed cabs plying, but I did not feel inclined to move out of the way. I felt that the cabs and myself were of one stuff. There was no sensation in my limbs, which seemed to be becoming paralyzed. I did not relish eating, and felt as if somebody else were eating. Sometimes I lay down during a meal; after a few minutes I got up and again began to eat. The result would be that on some days, I would take too much, but it did no harm. My mother became alarmed and said that there must be something wrong with me. She was afraid that I might not live long. When there was a slight change in this state, the world began to appear dream-like. While walking in Cornwallis Square, I would strike my head against the iron railings to see if they were real or only a dream. This state of things continued for some days. When I became normal again, I realized that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita [Nondualistic] philosophy." Is this the way the Divine Mind perceives the world? Meister Eckhart wrote, "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He and He I: so that this he and this I become and are one."⁵³

Endnotes

¹ CW, VI:29.

² Web: [ens.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_mechanisms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_mechanisms)

³ GSR, pp. 162a, 220f, 428a; Robert Goldenson, *The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1975), p. 229.

⁴ GSR, p. 83g; RAWSH, p. 78; CW, III:78.

⁵ GSR, p. 861e.

⁶ GSR, pp. 269b 788i.

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- ⁷ GSR, pp. 375e, 379b, 519k, 658c.
- ⁸ GSR, pp. 138f, 159c; cf., 820c; CW, I:233.
- ⁹ GSR, pp. 96f, 176j, 429q-30, 560c, 737b; SSR, p. 116; Goldenson, p. 391.
- ¹⁰ Saradananda, p. 491.
- ¹¹ GSR, p. 292c; SSR, p. 213; Goldenson, p. 390.
- ¹² GSR, pp.173b, 330f, 585a, 915b.
- ¹³ GSR, pp. 241h, 161d, 231g-32, 548b; cf. 546p-47.
- ¹⁴ SSR, p. 136; Web: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superiority_complex
- ¹⁵ GSR, p. 292c; Goldenson, p. 853.
- ¹⁶ CW, I:72; III:44.
- ¹⁷ GSR, pp. 101c, 209h; Goldenson, p. 312.
- ¹⁸ CW, I:208, 261.
- ¹⁹ GSR, p. 951n; Goldenson, pp. 720-21, 864.
- ²⁰ CW, I:208.
- ²¹ GSR, pp. 660g 750f; SSR, p.137.
- ²² GSR, p. 633g; SSR, p. 135.
- ²³ GSR, pp. 452f-g, 467i-68, 584h, 856c, 956h; Goldenson, pp. 264-65, 425.
- ²⁴ Web: En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics
- ²⁵ GSR, pp. 171f, 265k, 337j-38a, 862d; cf., pp. 250d, 381f, 541c, 865c; SSR, p. 136.
- ²⁶ CW, II:225.
- ²⁷ GSR, pp. 82bc, 350g, 587a, 607h; SSR, p. 100; Goldenson, pp. 423, 878-79.
- ²⁸ GSR, pp. 133d, 802d, 862f, I; cf., 467h.
- ²⁹ GSR, p. 208f.
- ³⁰ GSR, pp. 604g, 745a.
- ³¹ GSR, pp. 405b, 544f, 792c, 833a.
- ³² Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), p. 223; Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 210-11, 215-16, 584-85; M. Mahler, et al. *The Psychological Birth of the Infant* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 41-55; G. and R. Blanck, *Ego Psychology* (New York: Columbia University, 1974, 1994), pp. 53-60, 146-52.
- ³³ Web: www.kenwilber.com/Writings/PDF/ExcerptG_KOSMOS_2004.pdf
- ³⁴ Wilber (1995), pp. 205-06.
- ³⁵ Michael Miovic, "An Introduction to Spiritual Psychology," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* (March/April 2004), p. 113.
- ³⁶ GSR, p. 245ab; cf., pp. 150i, 169h, 499-500.

³⁷ Web: www.kenwilber.com/Writings/PDF/Excerpt_KOSMOS_2004.pdf

³⁸ Mahesh Mehta, "Kundalini in the Light of Vedanta ad Yoga," *Indica* (1979), p. 132-33; Benjamin Walker, *Hindu World* (2 vols.; Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1983), I, pp. 163, 217-20; Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (5 vols.; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1922, 1988), II, p. 356. Carolyn Myss and others on the Internet attempt to relate each chakra with specific forms of illness. She thinks that each type of illness is connected with specific chakras, due to a particular personality deficiency. For example, she believes pancreatic disorders (pancreatic cancer, diabetes) are related to the 3rd chakra. If one feels they should be overly responsible for too many things or lack responsibility this disrupts the energy balance of the 3rd chakra and an illness of the pancreas results. Heartaches due to a bad romance combines the 2nd and 4th chakras and can produce heart illness. Though these relations can be tested scientifically, it is questionable that a specific personality deficiency will produce a particular type of illness.

³⁹ *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), XVIII, pp. 36-38, 49, 55-56, 258-59; XIX, pp. 159-61; XXXIII, pp. 148-49.

⁴⁰ Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 232-33.

⁴¹ Benjamin Walker, *Hindu World* (2 vols.; Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), I, pp. 162-63, 218-19. According to modern theory, "The five specific tastes received by the gustatory receptors are salty, sweet, bitter, sour, and umami, which means 'savory' or 'meaty' in Japanese," Web: en.wikipedia.com/wiki/Gustatory_system). The traditional Jain gustatory sensations are bitter, sweet, sour, saline, and pungent. Ayurvedic medicine and the Indian Buddhists distinguished six different forms of taste: sweet, sour, bitter, salty, pungent, and astringent (Sinha, II, p. 51).

⁴² Swami Ajaya, *Psychotherapy East and West* (Honesdale PA: The Himalayan International Institute, 1983), pp. 248, 255-61.

⁴³ Strachey (1986), xxiii, 148; Goldenson (1975), pp. 629-30, 640.

⁴⁴ Walker (1983), I, pp. 162-63, 218-19.

⁴⁵ Ajaya (1983), pp. 248, 261-62, 268. The "will to prana is discussed in more detail in, Gopal Stavig, "Swami Vivekananda's Scientific Cosmology, Einstein's Relativity, and Quantum Physics, *BRMIC* (July and August 2013), pp. 326-32, 374-82.

⁴⁶ Goldenson (1975), pp. 371, 537, 612.

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- ⁴⁷ Goldenson (1975), pp. 707-08, 750-51.
- ⁴⁸ GSR, pp. 245a, 499c.
- ⁴⁹ Underhill, pp. 249-51.
- ⁵⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, tr. E. F. J. Payne (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1965), p. 172.
- ⁵¹ Underhill, pp. 77-78, 241.
- ⁵² Saradananda, II:6.13, p. 212.
- ⁵³ Life, I, pp. 96-97; *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven Katz (Sheldon Press: London, 1978), p. 41.