

# Secrets of the mind the 10 channels revealed

**By Dr Claudia Welch, DOM**

Exploring Medicine and Consciousness



## About the Author

**Dr Claudia Welch**, *Doctor of Oriental Medicine*, began studying Ayurvedic medicine under the personal supervision of Dr. Robert Svoboda in 1987. She pursued her interest for 3 years in India, and continued her education while working with Dr. Vasant Lad at the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, NM for 7 years. She has studied India's sister sciences Sanskrit and Jyotish and graduated from Hart De Fouw's Advanced Jyotish course. She is currently on the teaching faculty of both The Ayurvedic Institute and Southwest Acupuncture College in Albuquerque, from which she graduated in 1997. Claudia has lectured on Eastern Medicine internationally. Her goal as a teacher is to bring honor to her outstanding teachers and mentors through sharing the joy of learning Ayurveda. She maintains a private practice in Albuquerque.

**Illustrations** by Joseph Goldfedder

## About the Publisher

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## ***Author's Prefatory Note:***

This document includes quotes directly from classical texts, with only grammatical and spelling corrections. Although some of the quotes may be difficult to follow in their classical form, they do help to clarify that this presentation is not based on my opinions, but can be referenced within the classical texts.

It is my hope that this work will support practitioners of Yoga, Pranayama, Tantra, Jyotisha and Ayurveda to feel confident about moving forward with this information and exploring its implications.

Dr Claudia Welch. DOM



## Introduction

The *manovahasrotas*, literally “the channel system of the mind”, is a set of integrated channels in the human being that is associated with the mind.

Because Ayurvedic medicine is seen as a medicine that addresses the mind, body, spirit connection and integration, it would seem that the *manovahasrotas* would be important. Yet we find very little direct information about it in classical Ayurvedic texts.

Because of its potential importance to practitioners and patients alike this study explores the following considerations around the function and organization of the *manovahasrotas*.

How do the *brihat trayi*<sup>1</sup> and other classical Ayurvedic texts describe the *manovahasrotas*?

- What information is missing?
- Why would it not be included if it is of potentially great importance?
- Are missing links described in some other authoritative text?
- If so, what are the implications of such knowledge and how might we benefit from it?

This study makes connections between Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra that have not to my knowledge, been made before. It clarifies, exactly what the ten vessels are that classical Ayurvedic texts refer to, but do not explain. This will help us to understand:

- how the mind is organized
- how the mind functions in relationship with other physiological systems
- how the senses affect the mind

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<sup>1</sup> The *brihat trayi* (the classical “Great Three” authorities) are Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhata, authors of the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and the *Ashtanga Hridaya* respectively, from which we understand the fundamentals of Ayurvedic medical theory.

- how the mind and body affect each other
- the effects of *pranayama* on the mind

In order to better understand the connection between the channels of the mind and the channels of the body, let us begin with an overview of the various channel systems described in classical Ayurvedic texts.



## Chapter 1 - The Channel Systems (*Srotamsi*)<sup>2</sup> of the Body

*Srotamsi* are channels in the body and/or mind that have delineated pathways and functions.

Because *srotamsi* include physical structures, such as the bronchi, the digestive tract, the ears, etc. it is tempting to want to think of them as physical systems. However, it may be more accurate to consider *srotamsi* as being “channels” of energy or *prana*, around which physical structures coalesce; a case of structure following function. Function, in turn, could be said to follow the dictates of the higher intelligence of *prana*.

Classical Ayurvedic literature discusses three types of channels:

1. *bahya* (external) or *sthula* (gross) *srotamsi* (channels), relating to channels that open to the exterior
2. *abhyantara* (internal) *srotamsi* (channels), that are more interiorly situated, and
3. *manovahasrotas*, the channel system of the mind.

### **Bahya (external) or Sthula (gross) Srotamsi**

*Bahya* (external) or *sthula* (gross) *srotamsi* are big (wide) in size and open to the exterior of the body. There are nine gross channels in the body that are common to men and women. They open to the:

- two nostrils
- two ears
- two eyes
- mouth
- rectum
- urethra

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<sup>2</sup> *Srotamsi* is the plural form; *srotas* the singular

These *srotamsi* are also called *nava dvara*, or the nine doors of the body allowing *prana* to flow in or out.<sup>3</sup>

There are three additional *bahya srotamsi* in women: one in each breast, providing for the passage of breast milk and opening to the exterior at the nipple, and one for the passage of menstrual blood.

### **Abhyantara srotamsi (internal channels)<sup>4</sup>**

There are 13 *abhyantara srotamsi* (internal channels), found in both men and women. Each channel has a set of associated functions:

- a *mula* (root) where it originates,
- a *marga* (passage) where it travels and
- a *mukha* (mouth or opening), where it ends.

Unlike the gross channels (*bahya srotamsi*), *abhyantara srotamsi* do not always end by opening to the exterior.

These *abhyantara srotamsi* are distributed as follows.

There are seven *abhyantara srotamsi* (internal channels) associated with each of the seven tissues of the body, the *dhatu*s. Each tissue is successively more complicated and concentrated than the last. The health of each tissue depends, in part, on the health of the preceding tissues, so the health of the first tissue, *rasa dhatu*, is the basis for the health of the remaining tissues. These seven tissues are:

1. *rasa* - plasma or chyle
2. *rakta* - blood
3. *mamsa* - muscle tissue
4. *medas* - adipose tissue
5. *asthi* - bone

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<sup>3</sup> AH: Sharirasthana: III:30-46 + commentary and Sargeant. Ch V:13

<sup>4</sup> AH: Sharirasthana: III:40

<sup>6</sup> Madhava Nidanam is one of the *laghu trayi* or "light three" classical Ayurvedic reference books, considered authority on Ayurveda. The other two are Sharngadhar-Samhita and the Bhava Prakasha.

6. *majja* - that which fills the space in bones, which includes marrow and has come to include nervous tissue, cerebral-spinal fluid and brain matter as well, and
7. *shukra* - male reproductive fluid or matter or  
*artava* - female reproductive fluid or matter.

One *abhyantara srotas* is associated with each of the three *malas* or waste products, which are:

8. *mutra* - urine
9. *mala* - feces, and
10. *sveda* - sweat

One *abhyantara srotas* is associated with each of the following three substances:

11. *prana* - the circulating life force
12. *anna* - food
13. *ambu* - water.

Some of these internal channels, such as the channel for food (the *annavahasrotas*), originate internally and express externally through openings, and so share similarities with the outer (*bahya*) channels. However, they are more clearly related to internal organ systems, such as the respiratory or digestive system. This qualifies them as "internal".





## Chapter 2 - The Channel System of the Mind (Manovahasrotas) According to Classical Ayurveda

### How do classical texts describe the manovahasrotas?

There is very little mention of the channels of the mind in classical Ayurvedic texts. Nowhere is its *mula* (root), *marga* (pathway) or *mukha* (mouth, or opening) described in the detail that accompanies the other internal channels. There are hints however, and clear information in related texts, that help us fill in the picture. It may be useful for us to follow the *mula*, *marga* and *mukha* format (root, passage and mouth—or opening), in order to develop a more clear sense of the organization of the *manovahasrotas*.

### Mula (Root) and the Heart

The following passage from Madhava Nidana<sup>6</sup> names the heart as the “seat” of the mind.

In persons who are mentally weak, the doshas<sup>7</sup>, having undergone increase, invade the hridaya, the seat of mind. They get lodged in all the channels of the mind and bring about its derangement quickly.<sup>8</sup>

Later we will see that the *marga*, or passage, of the mind is concentrated in ten vessels. In the following passage, we see that the heart is the root of these ten vessels, acting then as *mula* (root) of the *manovahasrotas*.

From the heart as root, ten great vessels carrying ojas<sup>9</sup> pulsate all over the body... One who wants to protect the heart, the great vessels and the ojas, should particularly avoid the causes of the affliction of mind.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The three doshas, Vata, Pitta and Kapha, are biological forces that respectively govern all movement, transformation and structure, in the body and mind.

<sup>8</sup> MN:20:5 (chapter on insanity)

<sup>9</sup> Super fine end product of seven healthy bodily tissues and is responsible in great measure for healthy physical immunity and spiritual strength.

<sup>10</sup> CS: Sutrasthana: XXX:1-15

The words and concepts “mind” and “heart” are intimately connected, though not synonymous, as we see in the preceding and the following passages. One differentiating aspect is locale. The *manas*, the thinking and measuring aspect of the mind, is described below as being located in the head. The *buddhi*, or higher intellect, and the *chitta*, often translated as memory, consciousness or attention, are said to reside in the heart, as we see in the following passage:

Manas is enclosed (in the space) between the *shiras* (skull) and *talv* (hard-palate). It is *sarvendriyapara*<sup>11</sup>. The *manas* located in its own place, receives the objects of the *indriyas* (senses) such as *rasadi* (i.e., *rasa*, *gandha*, *sparsha*, *rupa* and *shabda*)<sup>12</sup> and is thus made aware of its surroundings. It then analyses the entire knowledge into three *bhavas* (aspects). The strength of all *indriyas* is derived from the *manas*.

The cause of all aspects of *buddhi* is *chitta*, which is located in *hridaya*. *Chitta* is also the source of all other functions.<sup>13</sup>

As for the heart (*hridaya*, or *hrid*), we see in the Upanishads that the heart is an organ, a function, and a place where all sensory perceptions gather. The word heart is sometimes used simply as a metaphor for consciousness, yet the term is not used with anatomical precision.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that the heart was simply anywhere where one would collect and concentrate his consciousness or *prana*. Perhaps some adepts in esoteric sciences can choose where they would like to keep their *prana* (life force) collected, but for most of us and, when we reference classical texts, the heart resides in the chest, or at least, “a little above the navel.”<sup>15</sup>

If we see the mind and heart as separate but integrated, and the latter as the root of the former, we see the health of one intimately connected with the health of the other.

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<sup>11</sup> “that which holds all the senses in the highest place,’ the container of all the senses in the mind, and the place from which they derive.” Definition from Fred Smith, professor of Sanskrit at University of Iowa, 2005. “beyond all the senses” definition from Dr. Robert Svoboda, BAMS, in conversation with the author. 2005.

<sup>12</sup> The five senses: taste, smell, touch, sight and sound

<sup>13</sup> Dwarkanatha, pp 167-168 (from *Bhela Samhita*; *Unmada Chikitsa*)

<sup>14</sup> Muller-Ortega, pp 64-67

<sup>15</sup> ShSv: 32

## Marga (Pathway) and Discussion on the 10 Vessels

It is curious to note that, where Charaka describes the 13 *abhyantara srotamsi* (internal channels) common to both men and women in some detail, the channel of the mind is only mentioned in passing, where he simply says,

I will describe roughly some types of srotamsi (channels). As regards vata, pitta and kapha, they move all over the body with all the srotamsi serving the purpose of their passage. Similarly, for mind etc., which transcends sense organs; the entire sentient body serves as passage as well as location. As long as these srotamsi are normal, the body is not inflicted with any disorder.<sup>16</sup>

Because Charaka says this at the same place where he describes the pathways of the other internal channels, it doesn't seem like much of a leap to admit the possibility that he is saying that the "entire sentient body" serves as the pathway for the *manovahasrotas*. Further, while it moves through all through the body, the *manovahasrotas* appears to be concentrated in the "ten *dhamanis*"<sup>17</sup> connected to the heart," as we see in the following passage, where they are equated, giving us a further hint into the organization of the mind:

Manovaha Srotas is the ten dhamanis connected to the heart. Even though manas (mind) travels in all the srotamsi of the body, in the present context, it is the ten dhamanis.<sup>18</sup>

A *dhamani* is literally, "that which throbs," or "pulsates." We could think of *dhamanis* as physical arteries, but this is probably not an accurate representation. In Sharngadhara Samhita, it is *siras*, or "veins" that "bind the parts together and transport the *doshas* and *dhatu*,"<sup>19</sup> perhaps more closely relating to what we think of as "arteries" in western allopathic medicine. Whereas *dhamanis*, though described as a kind of artery, "carry *rasadhatu* all over the body and fill it with air."<sup>20</sup> These

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<sup>16</sup> CS: Vimanasthanam:V:7

<sup>17</sup> pulsating vessels

<sup>18</sup> MN:Appendix I Some salient points from Madhukosa Vakhyas, commentary on Chapter 20

<sup>19</sup> SgS: Prathama Khanda:V:38-39. *Doshas* are the three bodily humors: *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

*dhamanis* are not synonymous with the western anatomical definition of arteries but, rather, channels that pulsate with life force.

The following powerful passage from Charaka explores the connection between the heart, ten vessels, five senses and the mind:

Now (I) shall expound on the ten great vessels of heart etc. as propounded by Lord Atreya. (1-2) Attached to, and rooted in the heart, are ten vessels of great significance. The words 'mahat' (great), 'artha' (serving all purposes) and 'hridaya' (heart) are synonymous. The body with six divisions, intellect<sup>21</sup>, sense organs, (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, sense of touch) five sense objects, (rasa, gandha, sparsha, rupa, shabda) and self<sup>22</sup>; together with qualities<sup>23</sup>, and mind<sup>24</sup>, along with its objects, are located in the heart. (3-4)

The heart specialists regard the heart as the substratum of these entities like the central girder of the small beams in a house. One gets fainting on its injury and death on its severe painful condition. (5) Life known by the sense perception<sup>25</sup> (reflexes) is located there. It is also the seat of the excellent ojas<sup>26</sup> and reservoir of consciousness<sup>27</sup>. That is why the heart has been said as 'mahat' (great) and 'artha' (serving all purposes) by the physicians. (6-7)

From the heart as root, ten great vessels carrying ojas pulsate all over the body (8). The ojas, which maintains the living beings by its saturation; without which no life of creatures exists, which is the initial essence of embryo and also the essence of its nourishing material, which enters into the cardiac cycle first, which—if destroyed—leads to destruction, which is the sustainer and located in heart, which is the cream of the nutrient fluid in the body. It is the fruit of vital factors and produces various types of

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<sup>21</sup> vijñana

<sup>22</sup> atman

<sup>23</sup> saguna

<sup>24</sup> cetas

<sup>25</sup> sparshavijñana

<sup>26</sup> Super fine end product of seven healthy bodily tissues and is responsible in great measure for healthy physical immunity and spiritual strength.

<sup>27</sup> caitanya

fruits (effects). Hence the vessels are called as 'mahaphala' (having important fruit or great variety of fruits). (9-11)

Dhamanis are (called so) due to pulsation, srotas (channels) due to flowing and siras (veins) due to moving swiftly (12). One who wants to protect the heart, the great vessels and the ojas, should avoid particularly the causes of the affliction of mind.<sup>28</sup>

These 10 *dhamanis*, referred to as the *manovahasrotas*, appear to reside mainly in the upper part of the body, as we may infer from these passages:

Doshas that have undergone increase and traverse upwards through the channels of the mind, get localized in the mind and cause its abnormality.<sup>29</sup>

Prakupita<sup>30</sup> doshas traverse the upper regions of the body, involve the *manovahasrotas*, and produce a distracting state of the *manas*. It is a disease of the *manas*.<sup>31</sup>

The question then arises, exactly what are these 10 main vessels. We know that there are also 10 main vessels discussed in relation to *rasavahasrotas*. *Rasavahasrotas* is the channel system that transports *rasa dhatu* (plasma, chyle and/or lymph—the basic nutritional tissue of the body) around the body.

Charaka describes the root of *rasavahasrotas* as being the heart and the ten vessels.<sup>32</sup> Vagbhata also refers to ten vessels associated with *rasavahasrotas*.<sup>33</sup> But Sushruta gives us perhaps the clearest description of the relation of these vessels to *rasavahasrotas*:

The lymph chyle (Rasa), though running through the whole organism, has its primary seat in the heart, whence it flows through the twenty-four vessels which branch off from the latter (heart) to the remotest parts and extremities of the body. Of the aforesaid twenty-four vessels, ten are up-coursing, ten are down-

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<sup>28</sup> CS: Sutrasthana: XXX:1-15

<sup>29</sup> MN:20:1

<sup>30</sup> prakupita: aggravated

<sup>31</sup> Sushruta Uttara Tantra 62:3

<sup>32</sup> CS: Vimanasthanam:V:7-8

<sup>33</sup> AH: Sharirasthana: III: 18-19

coursing, and four have a lateral direction. The Rasa or the lymph chyle, thus flowing out of the heart, constantly soothes, maintains, and irrigates the body by transudation, and further contributes to its growth, and supports life owing to the dynamical effects of causes that lie beyond the ken of human understanding.<sup>34</sup>

Are the ten vessels associated with the *manovahasrotas* the same as these 10 'up-coursing' vessels that relate to *rasavahasrotas*? If so, what, exactly, are these 10 vessels? The answer to these questions will allow us to further understand the *marga* of the *manovahasrotas*.

What we know now is that the *marga* of the *manovahasrotas* is the entire body, but that it is especially concentrated in ten vessels. What we do not know is what these ten vessels are. This is the main secret of *manovahasrotas* and is what we will explore in the next chapter, where our understanding of the *marga* (pathway) of the channels of the mind will be vastly enhanced.

## Mukha (Mouth or opening)

If the *mula* is the root, or beginning, of a channel system and *marga* is the pathway, *mukha* is the end. It is an opening or "mouth" through which we can often access the channel system.

The classical Ayurvedic texts do not describe the *mukha* of the *manovahasrotas*. Until we gain further insight into the *marga* of the *manovahasrotas*, we cannot know the *mukha*. Therefore, we will revisit the *mukha* after learning the tantric secrets of the mind.

After we fill in some of the missing pieces, we will revisit the heart, root, pathway and opening of the mind.



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<sup>34</sup> SS: Sutrasthanam: XIV:3-6

## Chapter 3 – Tantric Secrets

### Why would the *manovahasrotas* not be clearly described if it is potentially of great importance?

In Chapter two, we looked to the classical Ayurvedic texts to learn about the *mula*, *marga* and *mukha* of the *manovahasrotas*. What we found was that the root of the mind (the *mula*) is the heart, that the *marga* is associated with 10 vessels that are not clearly described and we learned nothing about the *mukha*.

With many references scattered throughout Ayurvedic literature about the effect of the mind on the body, it would seem odd that the very *srotas* that would address the manner in which this occurs, is described so vaguely. Why would this *srotas* be explained so incompletely? Sushruta himself explains to us what our response to this situation could be:

For explanations of truths and principles quoted from other branches (of science or philosophy) and incidentally discussed in the present work, the student is referred to expositions made by the masters (of those sciences or philosophies), since it is impossible to deal with all branches of science, etc. in a single book (and within so short a compass). (5) ... By the study of a single Shastra, a man can never catch the true import of this (Science of Medicine). Therefore a physician should study as many allied branches (of science or philosophy) as possible. The physician, who studies the Science of medicine from the lips of his preceptor, and practices medicine after having acquired experience in his art by constant practice, is the true physician, while any other man dabbling in the art, should be looked upon as an impostor.<sup>35</sup>

With this counsel in mind, we may consider that the 10 vessels of *manovahasrotas* may not be a secret but rather that they are simply covered in allied science and philosophy much more completely than they are in classical Ayurvedic texts.

We find a similar situation in allopathic medicine, where the family practice physician may know the rudiments of psychology, yet in-depth study is relegated to the allied subjects and professions of

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<sup>35</sup> SS: Sutrasthanam IV:5-6



psychiatry and/or psychology. Likewise, it may be more appropriate to find issues of the mind covered in more depth in one of Ayurveda's sister philosophical systems, rather in Ayurveda's major classical texts, which are devoted primarily to bodily questions.

We could look to Jyotisha, Sankhya and/or Tantric philosophical systems for more information to flesh out our understanding of the *manovahasrotas*.

## The Ten Vessels According to Tantra

We are interested in any information that can shed light on the organization of the *manovahasrotas* and we are particularly interested in the 10 vessels, in order to enhance our understanding of its *marga* (pathway) and *mukha* (opening). Indeed we do find what we are looking for. In this case, our answer comes from the ancient Tantric text, the Shiva Svarodaya. And it is right in the beginning of this text where we discover why the 10 vessels are not discussed in detail in the *brihat trayi*:

The science of Svarodaya (knowledge of the rise of breathing in one or the other nostril) is higher than the highest of the Shastras, and is like the wick of the lamp to illumine the pot in the form of Atman. The science of Svarodaya should not be imparted to all and sundry who happen to ask for it, but it should be mastered for one's own self by one's own intellect in his own body.<sup>36</sup>

Having observed this caution, it would be appropriate to approach this subject under the supervision or guidance of a competent guru. As this is difficult, we should take a moment to silently invoke the guidance of the *Ayurveda*—the divine and inspired deity of the body of knowledge that is Ayurveda—to request her to help us use this information wisely and to see its value in a true light.

The Shiva Svarodaya is an ancient text of unknown date, wherein Lord Shiva reveals to His consort Parvati, secrets of the breath. In the passage below, Shiva describes twenty-four vessels. When reading this passage, keep in mind that Sushruta also discussed twenty four vessels, in relation to *rasavahasrotas*, ten which move upwards, ten downwards and two on each side that move horizontally-- all rooted in the heart. See if this sounds familiar.

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<sup>36</sup> ShSv:27-28





There are numerous Nadis of different sizes in the body and they should be studied by the erudites (sic) for knowledge about their own bodies. (31) Originating like sprouts from the root situated a little above the navel, there are 72,000 nadis in the body. (32) In the nadis, sleeps the Serpent-like Kundalini Shakti. Ten nadis go upwards from the root-point and ten also downwards in the body. Two nadis each go in oblique directions, which thus make twenty four in all. Out of these, ten are the main Nadis which provide the flow of Vayu (here meaning life force or current) in the body. (33, 34).

All the nadis of the body, going oblique, upwards or downwards, are situated in the form of a chakra and are under the sway of Prana (Vayu). (35). Out of ten, which have been said to be the main nadis, there are only three, viz. The Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna, which should be regarded as most important. (36)

The names of the remaining seven (apart from ida, Pingala, and Sushumna) are Gandhari, Hastajihva, Pusa, Yasavini, Alambusa Kuhu, and Sankhini. (37) Ida is situated on the left (side of the spinal cord), Pingala on the right and Sushumna in the middle (of the Spinal cord). Gandhari is situated in the left and Hastajihva in the right eye; Pusa in the right ear, Yasasvini in the left ear; Alambusa in the mouth; Kuhu in the genital organ, and the Sankhini in the anus. In this manner are the ten nadis situated in the ten gates of the body. (38, 39, 40) All these ten nadis are situated in the middle of the body and the Ida, Pingala and the Sushumna are situated in the passage of the Prana. (41)

I now enumerate the names of the winds which flow through the nadis. These are Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana, and Vyana; Naga, Kurma, Devadatta, Dhananjaya and Krkala. The Prana-Vayu resides in the heart and the Apana Vayu in the anus. (42, 43) Samana is situated in the navel region, Udana at the centre of the neck and the Vyana flows all over the body. These ten Vayus or winds are most important (44)

There are five Prana etc., and five Naga etc., sets of Vayus (winds). The places of the first five have already been described. I now describe the places of the remaining five Naga etc., Vayus. (45) In vomiting should one know the Naga Vayu to be inherent and in the winking of eyes the Kurma Vayu. The Krkala is inherent in sneezing and the Devadatta in yawning. (46) The Dhananjaya Vayu, which pervades the entire body, does not



leave the body even after death. In this manner the ten Vayus roam in the body. (47) The erudites should know that the vital winds flowing in the center of the body are controlled by the Ida, Pingala and Sushumna. (48)

Ida should be known as situated on the left side (of the spinal cord) and the Pingala on the right in the reverse form. (49) The Moon resides in the Ida, the Sun in the Pingala and the Hamsa in the Sushumna—this Hamsa is Shambhu (Siva). Thus Hamsa in the form of Shambhu resides in the Sushumna. (50) The process of exhalation is said to contain the alphabet Ha and the inhalation contains the alphabet Sa. Ha-kara (the alphabet Ha) is the form of Siva and Sa-kara (the alphabet Sa) the form of Shakti. (51) The controller of the flow of the left nadi (i.e. Ida, which flows through the left nostril) is Moon who also resides in it in the form of Shakti. The controller of the flow of the right Nadi (i.e. Pingala, which flows through the right nostril) is the Sun who also resides in it in the form of Shambhu (Siva). (52)<sup>37</sup>

Both Sushruta, in relation to the *rasavahasrotas*, and Shivaji, above, discuss 24 vessels. Both texts state that there are 10 downward moving vessels, 10 upward-moving vessels and 2 vessels on each side of the body that move horizontally, adding up to 24 vessels that are rooted in the heart, or *hridaya*, or area “a little above the navel.”

So, in this one passage, Lord Shiva reveals two important pieces that were missing before. One is that the 10 vessels referred to in relation to *rasavahasrotas* and to *manovahasrotas* are one and the same. The second is the actual description of the 10 vessels.

The implications of this information are marvelous and provide the key to further understanding how the mind affects the body and vice versa.



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<sup>37</sup> ShSv: 31-52

## Chapter 4 – Revisiting The Channel System of the Mind (*Manovahasrotas*) Now that We Know Its Secrets

### Mula (Root) Revisited

In Chapter Two, we found that the classical Ayurvedic texts show that the heart is the root of *manovahasrotas*. In Chapter Three Lord Shiva corroborated this when he said that the ten vessels, that we know comprise the main *marga* (pathway) of the mind, originate “like sprouts from the root situated a little above the navel.”<sup>38</sup>

In Chapters Five and Six, we will look at the implications of this knowledge.

### Marga (Pathway) Revisited

In Chapter Two we learned that the *marga* is the entire body and especially the ten channels. With our newfound understanding of the ten vessels of the mind, from Chapter Three, we can now better understand the *marga* (pathway) of the *manovahasrotas*.

We now know that these ten vessels are rooted in the heart and move to the two eyes, two ears, the mouth, the anus, the genital organ and, especially to the two nostrils and in the *sushumna*, which moves up the spine.

We now know that, of these ten vessels, three are most important: the *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*, those vessels that move up the left side, right side and middle of the spine, respectively.

As with the *mula*, we will look at the implications of this information in Chapters Five and Six.

### Mukha (Mouth or opening) Revisited

In Chapter One, we learned about the *bahya srotamsi* (gross or exterior channels). In Chapter Three, we learned what the ten vessels are.

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<sup>38</sup> ShSv: 32

What we find is that nine of the 10 vessels correlate exactly with the nine *bahya srotamsi* that are common to men and women. These openings are referred to in the Bhagavad Gita as the “nine gates.”<sup>39</sup>

We could perhaps think of the nine *bahya srotamsi* (gross or exterior channels) as the *mukhas*, or openings, of nine of the ten vessels of the *manovahasrotas*.

This would leave only the *sushumna* vessel lacking a *mukha*, or opening.

The *sushumna* must have an opening though, because we read, in the above passage from the Shiva Svarodaya, “In this manner are the ten nadis (channels) situated in the ten gates of the body.”<sup>40</sup> This passage leads us to believe that there is a tenth gate, door or opening.

Indeed, there is a “tenth door”<sup>41</sup> widely referred to by guru Nanak, Kabir and others, that leaves this body as well as the other nine do; only it leaves this body for other spheres of reality, from an ethereal door located at the top of the head, at the *sahasrara chakra*. Perhaps it is this tenth door that is the *mukha* of *sushumna*.

The Katha Upanishad confirms the existence of a channel from the heart that leaves the crown of the head:

There are a hundred and one arteries of the heart; one of them penetrates the crown of the head. Moving upwards by it, a man (at his death) reaches the Immortal; the other arteries serve for departing in different directions.<sup>42</sup>

It is only by collecting the *prana* that generally flows consistently and habitually out of the other nine doors (and all the other myriad smaller channels or *nadis*) and directing it inside, with the help of an adept guru that we may consciously move through the tenth door, during life.

By knowing that we can access the *manovahasrotas* through these ten doors, or *mukhas*, we can know how to affect the mind.

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<sup>39</sup> Sargeant. Ch V:13

<sup>40</sup> ShSv:40

<sup>41</sup> synonyms: “dashama dvara” or “brahma dvara” or “brahma randhra”

<sup>42</sup> Katha Upanishad: II:6:16

In the next two chapters, we will look more closely at how the mind, body and heart overlap and the profound implications of this knowledge.



## Chapter 5 - Revisiting the Heart

Since we looked at the heart in chapter two, we have learned more about it as it relates to the 10 channel system of the mind. Considering what we have learned, let us take another look and add a couple more factors that will further increase our understanding of the heart.

### The heart as a grand central station

The heart is the meeting point for:

- The *manovahasrotas*
- The *rasavahasrotas*
- The three *doshas* (bodily humors)
- Prana (life-force)
- Ojas<sup>43</sup>

Let's look briefly at how each of these connects with the heart.

### Manovahasrotas

We have explored the ten vessels of the *manovahasrotas* sufficiently to know that they are rooted in the heart.

### Rasavahasrotas

We have also explored the ten vessels of the *rasavahasrotas* sufficiently to know that they are rooted in the heart.

### The Three Doshas (bodily humors)

The *doshas* are Vata, Pitta and Kapha. While it is beyond the scope of this document to introduce these in any depth, they are present in every person. They bring health if they are in a balanced state. If they

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<sup>43</sup> Super fine end product of seven healthy bodily tissues and is responsible in great measure for healthy physical immunity and spiritual strength.

are in a disordered condition, they create an environment that fosters illness. All three *doshas* naturally reside, in part, in the heart.<sup>44</sup>

## Prana (life force)

*Prana* is distributed throughout the body via the *pranavahasrotas* (channel system of *prana*). The root of the channel system of *prana* is the heart.<sup>45</sup> This explains why the ten vessels, also rooted in the heart, are under the governance of *prana*.<sup>46</sup>

## Ojas

As with the *doshas*, it is beyond the scope of this project to define *ojas* in depth. In short, it is the super fine end product of seven healthy bodily tissues (*dhatu*s) and is responsible in great measure for healthy physical immunity and spiritual strength. As the following passage indicates, the seat of super fine *ojas* is the heart, which then serves to transport *ojas* all around the body.

(The heart) is also the seat of the excellent *ojas* and reservoir of consciousness. That is why the heart has been said as 'mahat' (great) and 'artha' (serving all purposes) by the physicians. (6-7) From the heart as root, ten great vessels carrying *ojas* pulsate all over the body (8).<sup>47</sup>



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<sup>44</sup> SgS:Prathama Kanda:5:25-35

<sup>45</sup> CS: Vimanasthanam:V:7-8. This is the channel system that delivers *prana*—the life force—throughout the body.

<sup>46</sup> ShSv:35

<sup>47</sup> CS: Sutrasthana:XXX:1-15

## Chapter 6 - The Implications of These Connections

### **We learn how to powerfully and directly affect the mind**

The *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna* are the most important of the 10 vessels of the *manovahasrotas*. It would stand to reason, then, that working with *pranayama*, which targets the stimulation of *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*, can be used to powerfully affect the mind. As with any tool that can exert powerful effects, we will want to exercise caution in how we use this one and will want to engage adept teachers as well as the *vidyas* to guide us in its use.

### **We gain increased understanding of how the sense organs can affect the mind**

We can directly access, and thereby affect, the mind through the other seven “doors” (other than the *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*) that relate to our senses. This suggests that control of the sense organs in general serves to control the mind. Not a new concept within the framework of Indian philosophies and sciences, but this clear depiction of the organization of the *manovahasrotas*, lends understanding as to how this works.

### **We gain insight into how the mind and body affect each other**

When we look at the various mental and physical channels and forces or substances that overlap in the heart, we gain clearer understanding of how the mind affects the body. While it is work for a future project to elaborate on each of these points, we can get a taste of what may be possible.

If the ten channels become affected, then the other elements that meet in the heart will be affected.

If the mind and the basic nutritional pathways (*rasavahasrotas*) share the same ten vessels and all other bodily tissues are created<sup>48</sup> from that basic nutritional pathway, the mind affects all the tissues of the body.

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<sup>48</sup> *Rasa dhatu* is the first of seven, successively more complicated and concentrated bodily tissues. The health of each tissue depends, in part, on the health of the preceding tissues, so healthy *rasa dhatu* is the basis for the health of the remaining tissues.



Because the mind overlaps with *ojas*, in the heart, we can begin to understand how thought processes affect the state of *ojas*.

As the following passage illustrates, the state of the *doshas* directly affects the heart, and therefore also the mind and, we can assume, everything else connected with the heart.

In persons who are mentally weak, the doshas having undergone increase invade the *hridaya* the seat of mind, get lodged in all the channels of the mind and bring about their derangement quickly.<sup>49</sup>

In short, what we see is that the overlap of the mind, *prana*, heart, *doshas*, *ojas* and basic bodily nutrition channels are so integrated that it is impossible to affect one without affecting the others.

This leads us to see the tremendous psychological and physical benefits of learning certain skills, including how to encourage the smooth flow of *prana* in the body and mind, to support formation of healthy *rasa dhatu*, to protect our *ojas*, control our senses and gain, regain or maintain balanced *doshas*. We can learn these skills with the help of *Ayurveda* and her sister sciences. These implications are profound for all who practice Yoga, Tantra, *pranayama* and *Ayurveda*; especially *Ayurvedic* psychology.

It is my sincere hope that serious students of these traditions may find use for this information and further it, under the protection and direction of the *Ayurveda*.

A whore of spirit that delights in the nine sense organs  
does not get to the wondrous Reality.  
Kabir therefore saith  
all the nine chambers lie deserted,  
Essence is only in the tenth.  
- Kabir<sup>50</sup>

At the tenth door rings the unstruck melody.  
The Lord echoes this in every heart.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> MN:20:5 (chapter on insanity)

<sup>50</sup> from Gauri Kabir.

<sup>51</sup> Adi Granth Vadhans M. 5



*“On the 22nd day after fertilization, an embryo consists of  
heart, brain and spine”*

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