

NĀDI MANDALA & CAKRAS IN THE BODY

‘Lalitanandanadha’ Prasad.JL.

NĀDI: Nādi-vijnāna said that there are 3½ crores of Nādis in the human body, of which some are gross and some are subtle. Nādi means a nerve or artery in the ordinary sense; but the books on Yoga like Sat-cakra-nirūpana quoting from Bhūta śuddhi-Tantra, speaks of 72000 Nādis, as also Niruttara-Tantra, Prānatosinī, and the Śiva-samhitā said of three and a half lac Nādi. These books that speak of Nādi that are not of this physical character, but are subtle channels of energy. Of these Nādis, the principal are fourteen; they are:

‘Alambusa, kuhu, visvodara, varuna, hasti – jihva, yasovati, payasvini, gandhari, pusha, samkhini, sarasvati, ida, pingala, sushumna cethicaturdasa nadya sarva – samkhobhinyadi devatah’

The concept of nerve channels was well explained in ‘*Tantra – raja – tantra*’, with the identity of the life –currents (*prana*) in the body with the aspects of ‘*Sri cakra*’.

As per ‘*tantra –raja-tantra*’ and ‘*Darsanopanishad*’ of ‘*Sama-veda*’, Of the network of 72,000 channels (*nadi-mandala*), the most important are the fourteen mentioned above and they correspond to the fourteen powers or *saktis*. They are:

1. *Alambusa* –starting from the base of ‘*mooladhara*’ reaching the anus (*payu*).
2. *Kuhu* – starts from both sides of the ‘*mooladhara*’ and reaches the penis, (*dhvaja*).
3. *Visodara* –is inside the stomach (*jathara*)
4. *Varana (varuna)* –starts from the stomach region extending upward and downward.
5. *Hasta –jihva* –starts from the easter part of ‘*ida*’ and goes to left –toe.
6. *Yasovati (Yasavati)* –begins at the same place and reaches right-toe.
7. *Payasvini* –is the channel reaching right ear.
8. *Gandhari* –reaches the left eye.

9. *Pusha* - reaches the right eye.

10. *Samkhini* –reaching the left ear.

11. *Sarasvati* –reaches the tip of the tongue.

12. *Ida* – ‘is on the left of the central channel (*sushumna*).

13. *Pingala* –starts to the right of central channel.

14. *Sushumna* –the central channel that reaches the ‘*brahma randra*’ on the crown of the head.

The location and directions of these ‘*nadis*’ are given differently in different texts.

And of these fourteen, *Ida*, *Pingalā* and *Sushumna* are the chief; and again, of these three, *Sushumna* is the greatest, and to it all others are subordinate. *Sushumna* is in the hollow of the meru in the cerebro-spinal axis. It extends from the *Muladhara*, to the cerebral region. *Sushumna* is in the form of Fire (*vahni-svarūpa*), and has within it the *vajrini-nādi* in the form of the sun (*sūrya-svarūpā*). Within the latter is the pale nectar-dropping *citrā* or *citrinī nādī*, which is also called *Brahma-nādī*, in the form of the moon (*candra-svarūpā*). *Sushumna* is thus *trigunā*. The various lotuses in the different *Cakras* of the body are all suspended from the *citra-nādī*, the *cakras* being described as knots in the *nādī*, which is as thin as the thousandth part of a hair. Outside the meru and on each side of *Sushumna* are the *Nādis Idā* and *Pingalā*. *Idā* is on the left side, and coiling round *Sushumna*, has its exit in the left nostril. *Pingalā* is on the right, and similarly coiling, enters the right nostril. The *Sushumna*, interlacing *Idā* and *Pingalā* and the *Ājñā-cakra* round which they pass, thus form a representation of the caduceus of Mercury. *Idā* is of a pale color, is moon-like (*candra-svarūpā*), and contains nectar. *Pingalā* is red, and is sun-like (*sūrya-svarūpā*), containing “venom,” the fluid of mortality.

The *mūlādhāra* is called *Yuktā* (united) *triveni*, since it is the meeting-place of the three *Nādis* which are also called *Ganga* (*Idā*), *Yamunā* (*Pingalā*), and *Sarasvati* (*Sushumna*), after the three sacred rivers of Hindus. The opening at the end of the *Sushumna* in the *mūlādhāra* is called *brahma-dvāra*, which is closed by the coils of the sleeping *Devī Kundalinī*.

Kundalini imagined to be like a coiled serpent slumbering in the basal center, and is the representative of the principle of ‘*sakti*’ in man (deliberation, ‘*vimarsā*’). The prescribed principle in ‘*Sri Vidya*’ is ‘to arouse’ the *kundalini*, which, uncoiling itself, would ascend

through '*sushumna*' and reach 'the thousand-petalled lotus' or '*sahasrara*'. The deliberation of '*sakti* is actualized in the central canal (*sushumna*).

It is in this sense that the '*guru*' is identified with '*sushumna*' or the actualized power of '*vimarsa*'.

The central channel or '*sushumna*', functioning in several regions, is responsible for different body functions, broadly grouped as follows: the organ of gestation (tongue, in the *svadhistana* region), the organs of vision (eyes, *manipura*), the organs of elimination and the organ of reproduction (anus and penis, *anahata*) and the two organs of audition (ears, *visuddha*). They function as gateways or apertures for the vital force to establish contact with the physical world outside.

'Bhujangaakaara rupena muulaadhaarm samaasrita

Sakthih kundalini naama bisatantu nibhaa subhah.

Muulakandam phanaagrena damstrva kamala kandavath

Mukhena putcham samgruhya brahmarandram samaasritaa.'

--- *vamakeswara tantram.*

'Mayaa kundalini kriyaa madhumathi kali kalamalini

Matango vijaya jaya bhagavathi devi siva sambhavi

Sakti sankara vallabha trinayana vagvadini bhiravi

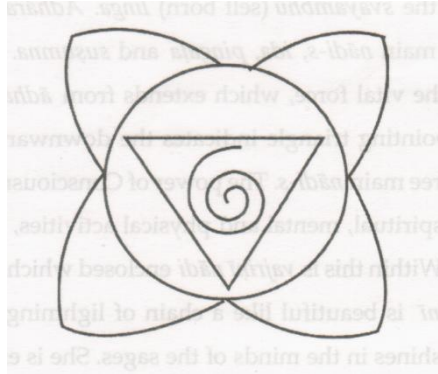
Hrim kari tripura para paramayi mata kumari tyapi'

--- *laghu stavam (kalidasa)*

Kundalini is *jivatma* and its union with *paramatma* in *sahasrara* is the goal of '*samayachara*'.

CAKRAS: There are six cakras, or Tattvik centers, in the body—they are *mūlādhāra*, *svādhis-thāna*, *manipūra*, *anāhata*, *visuddha*, and *ājñā*. Over all these is the thousand-petalled lotus (*Sahasrāra*).

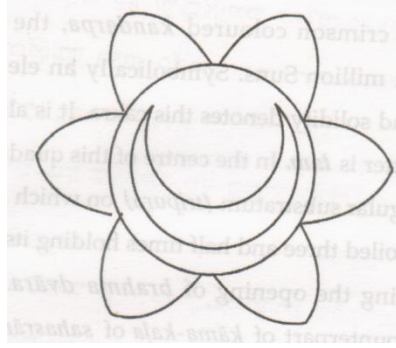
MŪLĀDHĀRA:



(Mūla, the root; Ādhāra, support; for the mūlādhāra is the root of Sushumna and that on which Kundalinī rests.) is a triangular space in the midmost portion of the body, with the apex turned downwards. It is described as a red lotus of four petals, situate between the base of the sexual organ and the anus. “Earth” evolved from “water” is the Tattva of the cakra. On the four petals are the four golden varna—“vam,” “sam,” “s,am” and “sam” It need hardly be said that it is not supposed that there are any actual lotuses or letters engraved thereon. These and other terms are employed to represent realities of yoga experience. Thus the lotus is a plexus of Nādis, the disposition of the latter at the particular cakra in question determining the number of the petals. In the centre of this lotus is *Svayambhū-linga*, ruddy brown, like the color of a young leaf. *Citrinī-nādi* is figured as a tube, and the opening at its end at the base of the linga is called the door of Brahman (Brahma-dvāra), through which the Devi ascends. Hence She is called in the *Lalitā-sahasra-nāma* (verse 106) *Mūlā-dhārām-bujārudha*. The lotus, linga and brahma-dvāra, hang downwards. The Devi Kundalinī, more subtle than the fiber of the lotus, and luminous as lightning, lies asleep coiled like a serpent around the linga, and closes with Her body the door of Brahman. The Devi’s subtlest form in the pindānda, or body, is called Kundalinī, a form of Prakṛti pervading, supporting, and expressed in the form of the whole universe; “the Glittering Dancer” (as Śārada-Tilaka calls Her) “in the lotus-like head of the Yogī.” When awakened, it is

She who gives birth to the world made of mantra. A red fiery triangle surrounds svayambhū-linga, and within the triangle is the red *Kandarpa-vāyu*, or air, of Kāma, or form of the apana vāyu, for here is the seat of creative desire. Outside the triangle is a yellow square, called the *prthivi*-(earth) mandala, to which is attached the “eight thunders” (*ahṣṭa-vajra*). Here is the bīja “*lam*”. Here also are *Brahmā* and *Savitri*, and the red four-handed *Śakti Dākinī*. (according to the *Sammohana-Tantra* (chap. ii), acts as keeper of the door.

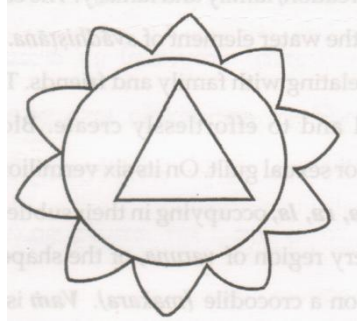
SVĀDHISTHĀNA:



Is a six-petalled lotus at the base of the sexual organ, above mūlādhāra and below the navel. Its pericarp is red, and its petals are like lightning.

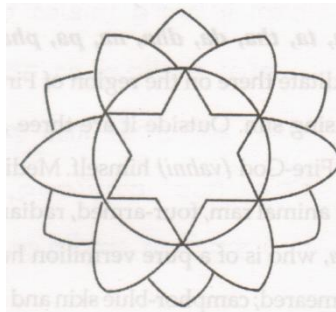
“Water” evolved from “fire” is the Tattva of this cakra. The Varna on the petals are “*bam*,” “*bham*,” “*mam*,” “*yam*,” “*ram*,” and “*lam*.” In the six petals are also the vṛttis (states, qualities, functions or inclinations)—namely, *praśraya* (credulity) *aviśvāsa* (suspicion, mistrust), *avajñā* (disdain), *mūrchchā* (delusion, or, as some say, disinclination), *sarva-nāśa* (false knowledge), and *krūratā* (pitilessness). Within a semicircular space in the pericarp are the Devatā, the dark blue Mahāvishnu, Mahālaksmī, and Saraswatī. In front is the blue four handed *Rākinī Śakti*, and the bīja of Varuna, Lord of water or “*vam*.” Inside the bīja there is the region of Varuna, of the shape of a half-moon, and in it is Varuna himself seated on a white alligator (makara).

MANI-PŪRA:



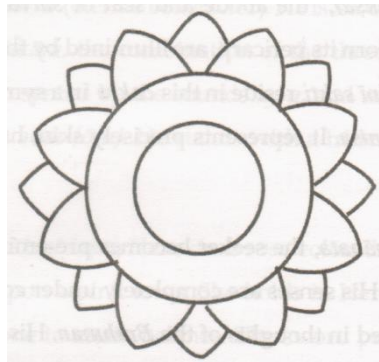
So-called, because during Samaya worship the Devi’s abode (Pūra) is studded with gems (Mani): see Bhāskararāya’s Commentary on Lalitā-sahasra-nāma, verses 37 and 38. By others it is so called because (due to the presence of fire) it is like a gem. Is a ten-petalled golden lotus, situate above the last in the region of the navel. “Fire” evolved from “air” is the Tattva of the cakra with ten petals and on them are the blue varna—“dam,” “dham,” “nam,” “tam,” “tham,” “dam,” “dham,” “nam,” “pam,” “pham” and the ten Vṛtti namely, *lajjā* (shame), *piśunata* (fickleness), *īrshā* (jealousy), *trshnā* (desire), *sushupti* (laziness), *vishāda* (sadness), *kasāya* (dullness), *moha* (ignorance), *ghṛnā* (aversion, disgust), *bhaya* (fear). Within the pericarp is the bīja “ram,” and a triangular figure (maṇḍala) of Agni. Agni, red, four-handed, and seated on a ram, is within the figure. In front of him are Rudra and his Śakti Bhadrakālī. His body is smeared with ashes. He has three eyes and two hands. With one of these he makes the sign which grants boons and blessings, and with the other that which dispels fears. Near him is the four-armed Lākinī-Śakti of the color of molten gold (tapta-kāncana), wearing yellow raiments and ornaments. Her mind is maddened with passion (mada-matta-citta). Above the lotus is the abode and region of Sūrya.

ANĀHATA:



Anāhata-cakra is a deep red lotus of twelve petals, in the region of the heart, which is to be distinguished from the heart-lotus facing upwards of eight petals, spoken of in the text, where the patron deity (Ishta-devatā) is meditated upon. “Air” evolved from “ether” is the Tattva of the former lotus. On the twelve petals are the vermilion Varna—“Kam,” “Kham,” “Gam,” “Gham,” “Nam,” “Cam,” “Cham,” “Jam”, “Jham,” “Ñam,” “Tam,” “Tham,” and the twelve Vṛtti -namely, āśa (hope), cinta (care, anxiety), ceṣṭā (endeavor), mamatā (sense of mineness), dambha (arrogance or hypocrisy), vikalatā (languor), ahamkāra (conceit), viveka (discrimination), lolatā (covetousness), kapaṭata (duplicity), vitarka (indecision), anutāpa (regret). A triangular mandala within the pericarp of this lotus of the luster of lightning is known as the Trikona Śakti. Within this mandala is a red bānalinga called Nārāyana or Hiraṇ yagarbha, and near it Īśvara and his Śakti Bhuvaneśvarī. Īśvara, who is the Overlord of the first three cakras is of the color of molten gold, and with His two hands grants blessings and dispels fear. Near him is the three-eyed Kākinī-Śakti, lustrous as lightning, with four hands holding the noose and drinking-cup, and making the sign of blessing, and that which dispels fear. She wears a garland of human bones. She is excited, and her heart is softened with wine. Here, also, are several other Śaktis, such as Kala-ratri, as also the bīja of air (vāyu) or “yam.” Here, too, is the embodied ātmā (jīvātmā), like the tapering flame of a lamp.

VIŚUDDHA:



Also called Bhārati-sthāna, abode of the Devī of speech, is above the last and at the lower end of the throat (kaṇṭha-mala). The Tattva of this cakra is “ether.” The lotus is of a smoky color, or the color of fire seen through smoke. It has sixteen petals, which carry the red vowels—“am,” “āṁ,” “im,” “īṁ,” “um,” “ūṁ,” “ṛm,” “ṝm,” “l̄m,” “l̄̄m,” “em,” “aim,” “om,” “am,” “aḥ ”;(The last two are the anusvarā and viśarga, not strictly vowels that which modify vowel sounds, traditionally counted with the vowels in the alphabet.) the seven musical notes (nisada, rsabha, gāndhāra, sadja, madhyama, dhaivata and pañcama): “venom”(in the eighth petal); the Bījas “hum,” “phat,” “vaushat,” “vashat,” “svadhā,” “svāhā,” “namah,” and in the sixteenth petal, nectar (amrita). In the pericarp is a triangular region, within which is the androgyne Śiva, known as Ardha-nārīśvara. There also are the regions of the full moon and ether, with its bīja “ham.” The ākāśa-mandala is transparent and round in shape. Ākāśa has four hands, which hold the noose (paasa) (The Devī herself holds the noose of desire. Desire is the vāsanā form and the noose is the gross form), the elephant-hook (ankuśa) (The Vāmakeśvara-Tantra says: “The noose and the elephant-hook of Her are spoken of as desire and anger.” But the Yoginīhrdaya says: “The noose is icchā-śakti, the goad jñāna-śakti, and the bow and arrows kriyā-śakti.), and with the other he makes the mudras which grant blessing and dispel fear. Śiva is white, with five faces, three eyes, ten arms, and is dressed in tiger skins. Near Him is the white Śakti Śākini, dressed in yellow clothes, holding in Her four hands the bow, the arrow, the noose, and the hook. Above the cakra, at the root of the palate (tālumula) is a concealed cakra, called Lalanā and, in some Tantras, Kalā-cakra. It is a red lotus with twelve petals, bearing the following Vṛtti:- śraddhā (faith), santosha (contentment), aparādha (sense of error),dama(self-command),māna (anger)(Generally applied to the case of anger between two persons who are attached to one another, as in the case of a couple.), sneha (affection),(Towards those younger or lower than oneself.) śoka (sorrow, grief), kheda (dejection), śuddhatā (purity), arati (detachment), sambhrama (agitation),(Through respect.)Urmi (appetite, desire).

ĀJÑĀ:



Also called parama-kula and mukta-trivenī, since it is from here that the three Nādis-

Idā, Pingalā and Sushumna-go their separate ways. It is a two petalled lotus, situate between the two eyebrows. In this cakra there is no gross Tattva, but the subtle Tattva mind (Buddhi (as opposed to Manas or the various other subtle tattvas which may be summarized in the English “mind.”) is here. Hakārārdha, or half the letter Ha, is also there. On its petals are the red varna “ham” and “ks am.

In the pericarp is concealed the bīja “om.” In the two petals and the pericarp there are the three gunas-sattva, rajas and tamas. Within the triangular mandala in the pericarp there is the lustrous (tejō-maya) linga in the form of the pranava (pranavākṛti), which is called Itara. Para-Śiva in the form of hamsa (hamsa-rūpa) is also there with his Śakti-Siddha-Kāli.

In the three corners of the triangle are Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheśvara, respectively. In this cakra recides the white Hākini-Śakti, with six heads and four hands, in which are jñāna-mudra,

(The gesture in which the index finger is uplifted and the others closed.) a skull, a drum (damaru), and a rosary.

Above the Ājñā-cakra there is another cakra called **Manas-cakra**. It is a lotus of six petals, on which are Śabda-jñāna, Sparta-jñāna, rupa-jñāna, āghraṇ opa-labhi, rasopabhoga, and Svapna, or the faculties of hearing, touch, sight, smell, taste, and sleep, or the absence of these. Above this, again, there is another cakra, called **Soma-cakra**. It is a lotus of sixteen petals, which are also called sixteen Kalas (a part, also a digit of the moon). These Kalas are called kṛpā (mercy), mruduta, (gentleness), dhairya (patience, composure), vairāgya (dispassion), dhṛti (constancy), sampat (prosperity)(That is, spiritual prosperity) hasya (cheerfulness), romānca (rapture, thrill), vinaya (sense of propriety, humility), dhyāna (meditation), susthiratā (quietitude, restfulness),

gambhīrya (gravity)(Of demeanor evidencing a grave nature), udyama (enterprise, effort), akshobha (emotionlessness) (State of being undisturbed by one’s emotions), audarya (magnanimity) and ekāgratā (concentration).

Above this last cakra is “the house without support” (**nirālamba-purī**), where yogis see the radiant Īśvara. Above this is the pranava shining like a flame and above pranava the white crescent Nāda, and above this last the point Bindu. There is then a white lotus of twelve petals with its head upwards, and over this lotus there is the ocean of nectar (**sudhā-sāgara**), the island of gems (**manidvīpa**), the altar of gems (**mani-pītha**), the forked lightning-like lines a, ka, tha, and therein Nāda and Bindu. On Nāda and Bindu, as an altar, there is the Paramahamsa and the latter serves as an altar for the feet of the Guru; there the Guru of all should be meditated. The body of the Hamsa on which the feet of the Guru rest is jñāna maya, the wings Āgama and Nigama, the two feet Śiva and Śakti, the beak Pranava, the eyes and throat Kāma-Kalā.

Close to the thousand-petalled lotus is the sixteenth digit of the moon, which is called **amā kalā**, which is pure, red and lustrous like lightning, as fine as a fiber of the lotus, hanging downwards, receptacle of the lunar nectar. In it is the crescent **nirvāna-kalā**, luminous as the Sun, and finer than the thousandth part of a hair. This is the Ishṭa-devatā of all. Near nirvāna-kalā is parama-nirvana-Śakti, infinitely subtle, lustrous as the Sun, creatrix of tattva-jñāna. Above it are Bindu and Viśarga-Śakti, root and abode of all bliss.

Between ĀJÑĀ cakra and Sahasradala Padma, there are nine (9) Sukshma cakras. They are:

When the awakened ‘*kundalini*’ moves upward towards ‘*sahasrara*’, it passes through nine (9) ‘*cacras*’.

‘Bindo tadardham rodinyam nado nadantaevacha

Sakti punaryapikyam sumana unmana gochare’

These *cacras* are:

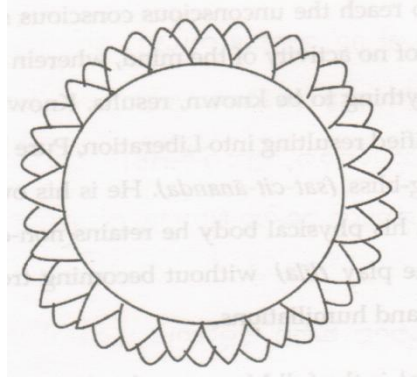
1. *bindu*
2. *ardhachandra*
3. *rodini*
4. *nadam*

5. *nadantamu*
6. *sakti*
7. *vyapika*
8. *sumana*
9. *unmana*

When '*kundalini shakti*' moves through these nine *cakras* the '*saadhaka*' or the practitioner experiences some sounds and scenes. All these sounds merge into '*nada bindu kala*' and the '*saadhaka*' or the practitioner gets into '*turiyavasta*' or the ultimate state of bliss.

This state is called as '*unmani*' or '*amanaska yoga*' or '*raja yoga*'.

SAHASRĀRA PADMA:



Sahasrāra-Padma- or thousand-petalled lotus of all colors—hangs with its head downwards from the brahma-randhra above all the cakras. This is the region of the first cause (Brahma-loka), the cause of the six preceding causes. It is the great Sun both cosmically and individually, in whose effulgence Parama-Śiva and Ādyā-Śakti reside. The power is the vācaka-Śakti or Saguna Brahman, holding potentially within itself the gunas, powers and planes. Parama-Śiva is in the form of the Great Ether (paramākāśa-rūpī), the Supreme Spirit (Paramātmā), the Sun of the darkness of ignorance. In each of the petals of the lotus are placed all the letters of the alphabet; and whatever there is in the lower cakra or in the universe (Brahmānda) exists here in potential state (avyakta-bhāva). Śaivas call this place Śivasthāna, Vaishnavas, Parama-Purusha, Śāktas,

Devī-sthāna, the Samkhya-sages, Prakṛti-purusha-sthana. Others call it by other names, such as Hari-hara-sthāna, Śakti-sthāna, Parama-Brahma, Parama-hamsa, Parama-jyotih, Kula-sthāna, and Parama-Śiva-Akula. But whatever the name, all speak of the same.

There are three '*grandhis*' or knots in these '*shatcacras*'

They are:

- *Brahma grandhi* – situated after *adhara* and *svadhistana cacras*.
- *Vishnu grandhi* – situated after *Manipura* and *anahata cacras*.
- *Rudra grandhi* – situated after *visudha* and *ajna cacras*.

Awakened '*kundalini*' starts upward movement through '*sushumna*' and reaches '*brahma grandhi*'. Then the '*saadhaka* or the practitioner will have self realization and attains the path of '*mukti*'.

From there it progresses further and reaches '*Vishnu grandhi*'. Then the *saadhaka* or the practitioner demolishes his ego and gets over the feeling of ego and that he is the cause and result of everything. After progressing further it reaches '*Rudra grandhi*'. Then the *saadhaka* attains the innermost peace and attains the spiritual immortality.

The same was explained by Sri Goudapaadacharya in their '*subhagodaya stuti*' and said that the '*kundalini*' has three phases. They are

1. *nidravasta* (sleeping stage),
2. *prayaanaavasta* (traveling stage) and
3. *sukhaavasta* (happy state)

'Koumari yenmandra dhvanatica tato yoshada para

Kulamtavktva routi sputatica mahaakala bhujagee

Tatah praativratyam bhajati daharaakaasakamale

Sukhaaseenaa yoshaa bhavasi bhavaseetkara rasica.'

--- *subhagodaya stuti*.

They are also known as 1. *koumaravasta* 2. *yoshidavastha* and 3. *pativrataavastha*.

Just below the '*brahma randhra*' is the lotus with thousand petals known as '*sahasra dala padma*'.

This is in fact a lotus with eight petals and each of these petals has 125 sub-petals thus making it a lotus with thousand petals.

This lotus with thousand petals or the '*sahasra dala padma*' has blemishless moon or '*chandra*' and he always has 16 *kalas*. This is also known as '*chandramandala*'.