

Lesson 19

Only the practitioner of Kriya achieves siddhi (perfection) and none else. It cannot be achieved by mere reading of the scriptures. Neither by having dressed like a yogi can one get this. But siddhi is available only by the practice of Kriya. There is no doubt in it.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika (1:64-66)

The Chakras (Part 1)

The chakras are pranic centres within the human framework. In each person, there are myriad of chakras. However, only a few principal ones are utilized in yogic practice. These few are the ones which span the full spectrum of man's being from the gross to the subtle. These main chakras are:

1. *Mooladhara*
2. *Swadhisthana*
3. *Manipura*
4. *Anahata*
5. ***Vishuddhi***
6. *Ajna*
7. *Sahasrara*

Though we have included sahasrara in this list, it is not really a chakra; it transcends them all and includes all of the chakras and sahasrara together because they are the basic centres common to many mind awakening systems throughout the world, including yoga. Together with another focal point called the bindu they are the fundamental centres used in kriya yoga techniques. Some mind expanding systems bring in other chakras, such as the suna and chandra chakras above the navel. These are perfectly acceptable, but in yoga and tantra they are not used.

These chakras are both real and symbolic. That is, they imply two things. They represent:

1. Centres of subtle energies (prana) within the pranic body of man, each chakra being associated with pranic energy at specific frequency levels and subtlety. Each chakra is a switch which turns on or opens up specific levels of the mind.
2. Progressively higher states of awareness. That is, the chakras symbolize different levels of awareness in man from the more instinctive realms associated with mooladhara chakra to the more intuitive realms associated with ajna chakra. They symbolize the spiritual path.

These two aspects are really two different ways of saying the same thing, for manipulation

and control of prana in any of the centres will induce a corresponding state of awareness. Conversely, a specific state of awareness will induce prana to predominate at the corresponding chakra. Each is directly related to the other.

The internalized awareness aspect is symbolized by the ida nadi and the prana aspect by the pingala nadi. These two nadis will be fully discussed later in the book¹; it will suffice to say here that the ida and pingala are nadis that cross each other at each of the six main chakras. This implies that the awakening of each chakra is inseparably related to both prana and consciousness. There are many other implications which will not be discussed here.

Physical or mental stimulation of the psychic centres can lead to changes of consciousness. This awakens the psychic potential in man and gives him a greater vision and realization of his own reality. This is the purpose of kriya yoga. It is to give you a basic understanding of chakras and the physical location in the body in preparation for kriya yoga, that we have introduced the subject of chakras at this stage in the course.

Definition

The word *chakra* literally means 'wheel' or 'circle'. A better translation in the context of yoga is 'vortex' or 'whirlpool'. The chakras are vortices or whirlpools of pranic energy at specific areas in the body which control the circulation of prana permeating the entire human structure. They are beyond the realms of normal perception. Chakra is also widely known as *padma* - 'lotus'.

Meaning of the chakras

The chakras are an indication of the fullest potential of each and every person. They indicate that man can transcend his individual limitations. Science has generally accepted that man uses very little of his potential and the

chakras are clear indicators of this fact. The lowest of the human chakras, the mooladhara, represents the level of man where there are severe limitations both in knowledge and the ability to act. The higher chakras show how man can progressively transcend current limitations and go beyond himself, or rather, go beyond present conceptions of himself. The higher chakras represent higher levels in the range of understanding, harmony, bliss, identification and knowledge.

The chakras represent the powers of consciousness that lie within the range and reach of every human being. They show that the reality of the macrocosm exists within the microcosm of man according to the well-known maxim from *Vishwasara Tantra*: "That which is here is there; that which is not here does not exist."

The chakras depict the expansion of the 'I'. At first the word symbol T is severely limited to body identification. This is the level of the mooladhara chakra. As one becomes more conscious, that is, as the higher chakras are awakened, so the understanding of T expands. One's ego identification begins to encompass more and more. The ultimate expansion of T occurs in the void of totality of sahasrara, which is beyond the chakras.

The chakras define the path that each person must tread to realize his or her fullest potential. They are, in a sense, a blueprint or guideline for the opening up of the mind at all stratas.

It is impossible to explain man's progressive flight into higher consciousness in terms of logic or the intellect. The process is alogical. That is, it is neither logical or illogical; it transcends both of these terms. Therefore, the ancient rishis, saints, yogis, sages, tantrics, seers, wise men, whatever name you wish to use to describe these illumined people, formulated the ascent into higher and higher states of consciousness in the form of symbolic diagrams of the chakras and sahasrara. Though still severely limited, these diagrams convey much more than words. And moreover, in this form they are less likely to cause confusion and useless intellectual speculations. Added to this, the symbols themselves can be used as points for focussing one's attention during yogic practices. That is, the symbols can be utilized to help awaken the actual chakras that they represent and raise the level of conscious-

ness. This is the case with kundalini and kriya yoga.

The path of yoga is a series of stages. The progressive awakening of the chakras corresponds to these stages. In the *Shiva Satra* it says: "... the successive stages of yoga are full of wonders." The opening of the chakras is indeed full of wonders.

The chakras symbolized

The chakras have been known in all parts of the world and throughout history by illumined and psychic people. They are not confined to one system, for they constitute the fundamental makeup of man. Sensitive people in the so-called primitive tribes and societies knew the chakras from their own experiences. They tuned in with the chakras when they tuned in with the more subtle aspects of their pranic body. They did not need to formulate a system or symbolize them, for the system existed already within their own being.

As more complex societies began to develop, organized systems simultaneously arose to unfold the potential of the mind and raise levels of consciousness. The chakras were symbolized according to social codes of language, art and convention. The chakras were depicted in different ways, though always referring to the same aspect of man's being. Because of these differing symbols, many people regard the chakras as mere fanciful concepts and figments of the imagination. But this misses the whole point which is that the experience of the chakras cannot be represented in concrete words and diagrams. Words and symbols can only indicate the existence of the chakras. You must experience the chakras for yourself; you must awaken the potential of the mind for yourself. No one can ever experience them for you. They can tell you about them, but any description will be entirely inadequate.

So don't be discouraged by the different symbols of the chakras; they are only pointers. They are not the reality of the chakras. All symbolic systems of the chakras are only a means, a convenient and scientific means of guiding and assisting you towards your own experience.

We will now discuss the chakras according to different religions and mind exploring systems.

Jewish and Christian chakra symbolism

The chakras are widely mentioned in the *Bible*, especially in the Old Testament. However, the descriptions are highly coloured, being hidden in allegorical and acrostical terms. Many of the -tones of the Old Testament are really allusions to the different chakra levels. Here we will confine ourselves to a few of the more obvious quotations.

In Genesis (28:12) it says: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached the heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Here the ladder is the chakras, one above the other. The lower end rests on the earth, that is, mooladhara chakra, the lowest of the human chakras representing the plane of everyday material life. The top of the ladder reaches the heavens. This means that ascent through the chakras leads to liberation in sahasrara. The angels moving up and down the ladder refer to the paths of pravritti and nivritti widely mentioned in the Indian scriptures. The *pravritti* path is the outward path of creation, greater limitation and individuality, together with lowering of consciousness. The path of *nivritti* is the path back to the source, associated with the breaking down of individual barriers, limitations and the raising of levels of consciousness. This biblical verse uses few words but conveys a wealth of ideas and implications.

The story of Enoch is not included in the present day form of the *Bible*, which is a great pity for the story belongs in the *Bible* and is one of the clearest symbolic descriptions of the ascent through the chakras. One of the best manuscripts on this subject has recently been discovered in Russia. It is called *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*. Little is known of its origin except that its present form was written around the beginning of the Christian era.

The story tells of a sage called Enoch (sometimes identified with the Egyptian mystic Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus) who raises his consciousness through the different chakras. He ascends through ten heavens, not seven. This is not really a contradiction to the Indian system for there are a number of other chakras widely mentioned in the tantric scriptures, but which are not commonly utilized in practices. For example, above the ajna chakra there are a number of additional chakras, such

as the soma chakra and the manas chakra. They are not used in the practical application of yogic techniques such as kriya yoga. Eventually Enoch ascends to 'the throne of the Lord', the sahasrara chakra, located at the tenth heaven.

It is a beautiful symbolic story, which also throws much light on the meaning of part of the present *Bible*. For example, it gives a much fuller explanation of Adam and Eve which makes the Genesis account more comprehensible.

In the New Testament (Revelation 1:20) there is a well-known verse: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are seven churches." The meaning is clear. The seven candlesticks and the seven churches are chakras. The seven stars are the presiding deities (angels) of each chakra, that is, the powers and aspects which are represented by each chakra.

In Judaism the symbol of the seven chakras is the menorah, which is indeed composed of seven candlesticks. In Christianity the chakras are represented by the Christmas tree, which also has great pagan significance for the same reason. It is believed that the tree was traditionally decorated with seven lights, each one higher than the other. It is only in recent times that the significance and symbolism of the Christmas tree has been forgotten.

It is said that the road (via Dolorosa) which Christ struggled along to reach the place of crucifixion (Golgotha) on the cross symbolizes the ascent through the chakras. It is not really a sad affair, for though Christ suffers, it is so that he purifies himself in order to awaken the chakras. The staggering walk of Christ is the successive progress through different stages of initiation. The crucifixion at Golgotha means the loss of his limited ego and his merging with sahasrara. He is then reborn (resurrected) into divine life.

There is a wealth of symbolic stories in the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments are ingeniously disguised and symbolized expositions of the process of self-awakening. For example, the tabernacle is a symbol of enlightenment which requires seven months to make, that is, enlightenment comes after

passing through the chakras. Stories of prophets and apparently historical people personify processes concerned with spiritual awakening. They represent the changes that occur in the being of man or woman when he or she seeks release from the bondage of ignorance.

Islam and the chakras

In Islam there is a story that relates directly to the progressive awakening of the chakras. It tells of Mohammed's night journey to heaven in which he passes through the seven heavens into the presence of Allah. It is very similar to the story of Enoch. Mohammed was awakened one night by the angel Gabriel, who purified the prophet's being by removing and washing his heart. Then Mohammed was conveyed to Jerusalem by a strange creature called an *alborak*, a white animal the same size and shape as a mule, with the head of a woman and the tail of a peacock. At Jerusalem, Mohammed dismounted on Mount Moriah where he started to ascend a golden ladder lowered from heaven. Accompanied by Gabriel, he then proceeded to pass through the seven heavenly realms (chakras). The gate to each heaven was guarded by one of the patriarchs, to whom Mohammed paid due respect. These correspond to the presiding deity representing the nature of each chakra. At the gate of the first heaven (mooladhara) stood Adam, at the second gate (swadhisthana) stood John, at the third gate (manipura) Joseph, at the fourth gate (anahata) Enoch, at the fifth (vishuddhi) Aaron, at the sixth (ajna) Moses, and at the seventh Abraham (or according to other accounts Jesus). At this heaven Mohammed entered the throne of Allah, the sahasrara. Behind this story, there is much symbology associated with the different guardians of the chakras. But the story is an allegory for the awakening of the chakras.

The well-known Sufis were also fully acquainted with the chakras and used them in some of their practices.

Ancient Egyptian chakra symbolism

The ancient Egyptians were fully aware of the chakras. Most of their scriptures were destroyed; one of the few remaining manuscripts is called the *Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus*. It contains the teachings of Hermes, the great mystic of Egypt. The

sahasrara is referred to as the eighth sphere - the source. From this, in descending order, come the seven rings upon which sit seven governors. These are the chakras with their corresponding residing deities. They represent progressively lower levels of consciousness from the eighth sphere downwards. Each of the rings is associated with a planet of the zodiac which has a specific attribute corresponding to that level of consciousness. The book makes it clear that the path to highest consciousness, called the 'white light', lies in climbing or ascending through these spheres.

The book tells the story of how Hermes meets the great dragon Poimandres, the lord of the word, who gives him spiritual instructions. Afterwards, Hermes is so inspired that he declares: "O people of the earth, men born and made of the elements, but with the essence of the divine within you, rise from your sleep, rise from your ignorance. Be thoughtful and understanding. Know that your home is not the earth but the light. . . prepare yourself to climb through the seven rings (chakras) and blend with the eternal light." It is an interesting manuscript, well worth reading.

Basilides, a great Egyptian Gnostic, is said to have coined the word *abraxas*. This seven lettered word signifies the creative power and the seven corresponding planetary angels. That is, the word represents the chakras and their presiding deities.

There is much more relevant symbolism in ancient Egyptian mysticism, even in the little that is known about it.

The chakras in European mystical societies

Many of the ancient mystical systems of Europe referred to man as the microcosmos - the miniature universe. Consciousness was called the macrocosmos - the greater universe. The microcosmos is a reflection of the macrocosmos. To show man's relationship with consciousness the macrocosmos is often shown as being contained within the microcosmos of man's body. That is, the wise mystics depicted the chakras within the human framework. The essence of all the practices of these mystical and pagan societies was to merge with the macrocosm and the microcosm. The keys were the chakras.

There is a beautiful symbol used by the ancient Kabbalists. It is the double triangle of

Solomon, where two triangles are interlaced to form a hexagon (this is, incidentally, one of the symbols of the anahata chakra). The upper facing triangle (apex upwards) represents the macrocosmos, the white Jehovah, or the lord of the light. The downward facing triangle (apex downwards) represents the microcosmos, the black Jehovah, the lord of reflections, or man. This symbolizes the inter-relationship and identification of man with consciousness. It is said that seven creative powers or rays emanate from the upper white Jehovah (consciousness). These are the different levels of awareness associated with the chakras arising from the fountainhead, the sahasrara. These seven rays diverge from the source, giving rise to the universe of multitudinous names and forms. Then these divergent rays are converged and brought to focus in man. We leave you to work out the meaning and implications behind this symbolism.

The number seven was always regarded as a very important number in mystical societies. The Pythagoreans regarded it as the number of spiritual life because man is controlled by the seven celestial spirits. These are the chakras. The Pythagoreans represented the number seven by a geometrical cube, that is, the six surfaces and the mystical seventh point in the centre. The six faces are the chakras and central point is sahasrara, the core of them all. It is said that the number one lies in the centre of the cube and that it represents the real nature of man. This one is the realization of sahasrara, unity or the totality of all things. Reflect on this and try to understand what it means. If you get a logical answer then discard it, for the meaning is beyond the realm of logic.

Is it merely a coincidence that the *Bible* (Genesis) says that creation took place in seven days? Or that there are arbitrarily seven days in a week? Or that Shakespeare mentions the seven ages through which man must pass (*As You Like It* - act 2, scene 7)? These could have originally been direct or symbolic references to the chakras. Also seven is the number of man in numerology. There are many reasons for this, but one of them could be that the essence of man is represented by the six chakras and sahasrara.

In the middle ages, Johan Gitchel, a disciple of the great mystic Jacob Boehme, drew and

circulated various charts in his *Theosophical Practice* illustrating the different chakras. Hell is depicted as being in the region of the mooladhara chakra; that is the normal low awareness level. The charts depict that man has to gradually solve and overcome his problems in order to progressively open up the chakras.

Similar symbolism was used by Ptolemy in his so-called concept of the solar system. In modern times the ptolemaic scheme of the planetary system has been ridiculed by modern astronomers, for it shows the earth as the centre of the solar system around which all the other planets, including the sun, rotate. But this misses the whole point. Ptolemy was not referring to the material universe. He was interested in the levels of awareness of man and used his planetary scheme as a convenient symbol. His seven planets are the chakras and the centre of his universe, the earth, is the sahasrara. The ptolemaic scheme is really an indication or map of levels of awareness. One has to pass through the different spheres of chakras (planets) to reach the centre of one's being. The earth represents this centre. It is sahasrara. The ancients called it the 'crystalinum primum', the crystal heaven.

All the systems depict divinity in human form. In the context of the chakras, it implies that man has the potential to transcend individual limitations. Each and every man and woman is a symbol of something much more. The physical framework is that which is visible, the chakras depict that which is invisible. They are the junction between 'that' and 'this', between the limited and the unlimited.

The chakras of acupuncture

Now we turn to China and Japan. The widely practised system of healing called acupuncture is actually based on the control and manipulation of the chakras. The chakras utilized, however, are not confined to the principal ones used in yogic practices, but include about seven hundred chakras located throughout the entire body. These chakra points are stimulated by needles on specific areas of the skin surface. This physical stimulation induces changes in the more subtle chakras, which in turn bring about positive changes in the state of health of specific internal organs to which they are connected by subtle pathways. These

pathways are called nadis in yoga, *keiraku* in Japanese terminology and *meridians* in the context of acupuncture.

Stimulation of these chakra points can also bring about psychological changes within an individual. Incorrect stimulation can also produce the opposite effect to that given by acupuncture, that is, ill health of the body and negative psychological states.

In Russia, they have photographed these chakra points using the special high frequency Kirlian photographic technique. Flows of piana (bioplasmic energy) have been clearly seen to flow along specific pathways throughout the entire body structure. These are the meridians of acupuncture. It has been found that these pathways become concentrated at specific points. These points were found to correspond exactly to the acupuncture points discovered by the ancient Chinese seers thousands of years ago through intuition and highly developed sensitivity. The Russians have designed an instrument called a tobiscope which locates all the acupuncture points.

The chakras are the subtle underlying centres. The physical points at which they can be stimulated are called *keiketsu* (or *seiketsu*). Besides acupuncture, these *keiketsu* or pressure points are utilized by various other Chinese and Japanese systems, including judo where they are called *kyushos*. For your interest, we have drawn up the following chart which compares the main yogic chakras with the corresponding chakras of acupuncture and judo.

Yoga (<i>Chakra</i>)	Acupuncture (<i>Keiketsu</i>)	Judo (<i>Kyusho</i>)
Vishuddhi	Diatsui	Hichu
Anahata	Danchu	Kyototsu
Manipura	Chukan	Suigetsu
Swadhisthana	Kangen	Myojo
Mooladhara	Chugyohn	Tsurigane

Incidentally, the term used for prana in acupuncture is *ki*. This is regarded as having its centre in the *chukan* (manipura), which is exactly the same as yoga. These correlations should not really surprise us, for the human body is basically the same no matter what colour, race or size. It is only the system that differs.

Tantric and yogic chakra symbolism

The use of chakras as a means to spiritual awakening is widely recognized by most religious and mind expansion sects of India. It is particularly popular in tantra, yoga and Buddhism.

Various different methods of symbolizing the chakras can be used. We don't intend to describe all these different systems for this will involve a lot of time; furthermore you are likely to become mentally constipated with facts and figures, which will tend to confuse rather than clarify. Instead we will adopt one system and describe each chakra in turn, together with an illustration, over the forthcoming lessons. This will allow us to give a full treatment of each chakra and for you to become fully conversant with its location, implications and, perhaps in the future, to realize the meaning of each chakra from your own experience.

In yoga and, in fact, in most Indian systems, the chakras are symbolized by lotus flowers. Other systems use different symbols; for example, the Rosicrucians symbolize the chakras by roses. The choice is arbitrary, but for the purposes of kriya yoga we will use lotus flowers. Each of the main chakras is represented by a lotus with a specific colour and number of petals as follows:

1. *Mooladhara* - four-petalled deep red lotus
2. *Swadhisthana* - six-petalled vermilion lotus
3. *Manipura* - ten-petalled bright yellow lotus
4. *Anahata* - twelve-petalled blue lotus
5. *Vishuddhi* - sixteen-petalled violet lotus
6. *Ajna* - two-petalled silver-blue lotus
7. *Sahasrara* - thousand-petalled lotus of all colours.

Again we emphasize that the sahasrara is not really a chakra, but that it transcends and contains them all within itself. The one thousand petals indicate that it contains infinite petals. It is limitless.

The use of the lotus as a symbol is very significant. Man must pass through three stages in spiritual life:

1. Ignorance
2. Aspiration and endeavour (*sadhana*)
3. Illumination

The lotus also exists on three different levels: mud, water and air. It first of all starts to grow in the mud (ignorance), grows up through the water in an effort to reach the surface (endeavour and aspiration) and eventually reaches

the air and the direct light of the sun (illumination). Thus the lotus symbolizes man's growth from low states of awareness and lack of knowledge through the chakras to higher states of consciousness. The culmination of the growth of the lotus is a beautiful flower. In the same way, the culmination of man's spiritual quest is the awakening and blossoming of human potential. Incidentally, the lotus was also widely used in ancient Egyptian architecture, especially on pillars and columns. Possibly these represent the ascent through the chakras.

For source information on the chakras, we suggest you read *The Serpent Power* by John Woodroffe or the texts such as *Yoga Sikha*, *Yoga Kundalini*, *Amritanada*, *Hamsa*, *Brahma*, *DhyanaBindu*, *Sandilya*, *Yoga Tattva*, *Varaha Upanishads*, the *Devi Bhagavata* and *Linga Puranas*. But we warn you that it is often very difficult to understand the original scripture.

The important thing to remember is that the chakras are subtle in nature and that any picture of them is merely symbolic. Don't take any pictorial representation too seriously or literally. It is a means to an end, nothing more. The symbolic form and physical location of the chakras is an integral part of kriya yoga.

Attributes of the chakras

Although the meaning of each chakra can never be explained in words, especially the higher chakras, there are general attributes associated with each one. These don't represent the experience of the chakras, only the expression and feelings of a person at any particular chakra level.

Different texts list differing attributes to the chakras. Don't be confused by this, for as we have already explained, the meaning of the chakras is beyond words. Therefore, the characteristics belonging to the chakra levels are only subjective descriptions of what an individual considers to be the attributes. These are bound to be greatly coloured by one's individual nature, language and interpretation. These qualities are only guidelines. The following are very basic attributes that we associate with the main chakras.

1. *Mooladhara*. This is the centre where one is almost totally concerned with obtaining personal security. That is, one's main motive in life is directed towards obtaining food, a place to live and so forth. It is the centre where

the individual fights the world, which is regarded as being totally alien.

2. *Swadhisthana*. This centre is associated with the predominant motive of seeking personal pleasures and sensations through food, drink, sex, etc.

3. *Manipura*. This is the centre of self-assertion. One attempts to dominate situations and other people. One seeks to manipulate the world according to personal wishes. This is expressed in the predominant motive of gaining wealth, respect, etc.

4. *Anahata*. This is the centre where one begins to love and understand people for what they are, regardless of faults, idiosyncrasies, etc. One begins to accept other people.

5. *Vishuddhi*. This is the centre where one begins to understand and experience the world as a place of harmony and perfection. It is the centre where Shiva consumes the poison and the nectar, meaning that all experiences, good or bad are seen as part of an integrated whole, all of which help to remove one's personal problems and conditioning and thereby raise the level of consciousness. The world becomes a veritable Garden of Eden.

6. *Ajna*. This is the centre where one becomes an actor on the stage of the world, seeing everything as almost a dream. All actions, thoughts and objects, including one's own body and mind, are observed from the centre of one's being. This is the witnessing centre.

The chakras can also be divided into three approximate classes as follows:

1. *Mooladhara and swadhisthana*, the two lower chakras, are predominantly negative or tamasic in nature. That is, one's actions tend to be adharmic, disharmonious and not in accordance with one's individual nature.

2. *Manipura and anahata*, the two middle chakras, are a mixture of both negative and positive qualities. This is the level where rajas predominates; where actions and thoughts are a combination of dharma and adharma.

3. *Vishuddhi and ajna*, the two higher chakras, are predominantly positive (sattwic). One tends to follow dharma, where one's actions and thoughts are in accordance with one's individual nature.

This transformation from a predominance of *tamas* to *rajas*, then from *rajas* to *sattwa*, indicates progress in spiritual life. It indicates progressively more illumined states of mind.

The attributes that we have assigned to each chakra level are very, very rough. Do not take them too seriously, otherwise you may build up too many preconceptions without personal experience of the actual chakras. Remember also that the actual individual expression at a particular level will depend on personal dharma. For example, the anahata chakra is associated with love and devotion, but the actual expression and direction of these traits will depend on the nature of the individual. Some people will direct their devotion to a deity such as Rama or Christ. Others will direct it towards humanity as a whole, others to their gum, some to all things. The trait is the same, but the individual expression will be different. This applies to all the chakras.

Another point to remember is that all actions can be done at all levels. For example, one can enjoy food or be angry and unhappy on all chakra levels. It is the inner attitude and understanding that is different. Thus, anger at the mooladhara level will be expressed with total personal identification; it will easily bring mental imbalance. Anger at the ajna level will be done by the body and the mind. It will be witnessed; there will be no identification. This applies to all other actions, thoughts and emotions. They can occur at all levels. It is the identification and the inner attitude that characterizes each chakra and it is this that transforms one's entire life.

The chakra level of an individual can vary throughout the day. The purpose of yoga is to raise one's level of awareness so that one predominantly functions at higher chakra levels. The meaning and implications of the chakras is far beyond the characteristics that we have given, so don't accept them too seriously. Leave your mind open to the higher experiences that come from the awakening of the chakras. And you will perhaps have noticed that we have not even considered classifying anything above the ajna chakra. This realm, especially, is in the realm of no words - the realm of answers and no questions².

Notes

¹ For full details on ida and pingala nadis refer to The Balance of Life: Part 1 - Book II, Lesson 22, Topic 1; Part 2 - Book II, Lesson 23, Topic 1

² For the second part of this discussion refer to Book II, Lesson 20, Topic 2

Mooladhara Chakra

This is the level of awareness that is symbolized by the Biblical story of Adam and Eve after they ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. That is, their 'fall' occurred when they lost contact with the deeper core of their being, when they became selfish and totally lost in the world of objects. The Garden of Eden represents the world. It can either be experienced as a heaven or hell; it depends entirely on the level of harmony, understanding and awareness. Before Adam and Eve ate the first fruit of the tree of good and evil, they were in a heavenly state, in the higher chakras or sahasrara; after taking the forbidden fruit, they descended to the level of mundane experience and perception. The Garden of Eden did not change - the world remained the same - but their relationship, their understanding and their identification completely changed. And this story is trying to tell each and every person something very important: that the world can either be a place of bliss or a place of dissatisfaction depending entirely on your level of awareness. Either one lives at the insipid, semi-conscious and joyless level of the mooladhara chakra, or one ascends to the exalted, meaningful and blissful level of the higher chakras by harmonizing the mind. This is the way to transform a veritable hell on earth to a heaven on earth. The starting point to bring about this transformation through yogic practices is the mooladhara chakra.

Definition

The Sanskrit word *moola* means 'root' or 'base'; the word *adhara* means 'substratum' or 'support'. Therefore, the word mooladhara means 'the basic substratum'; this chakra is the fundamental root or framework of individual human existence. It is the platform from which each person can express himself or herself as an individualized centre of being. It is the springboard to more elevated levels of understanding. This centre is also widely

known as the *adhara chakra* - 'the support centre'.

The seat of the kundalini

The kundalini represents the latent potential in man and is generally regarded as residing in the mooladhara chakra. This implies that man has a unique faculty of self-awareness and understanding that normally remains untapped and unused. Man rarely uses even a fraction of his potential. This is the realized meaning behind the symbolism of the kundalini residing at the mooladhara chakra.

There are also lower chakras below mooladhara, called atala, vitala, sutala, talatala, rasatala, mahatala and patala. These relate to less developed forms of life in the animal and insect kingdoms, in plant life and in inanimate objects such as rocks and minerals. All lack self-awareness, or even the potential. But in man this potential exists . . . kundalini sleeps in mooladhara chakra. When it wakes up, then bliss and understanding increase as it ascends through the higher chakras.

Some mind awakening systems consider that the kundalini resides elsewhere. For example, Buddhists regard the kundalini as abiding in manipura chakra and that it should be awakened there. There is really no contradiction. It only means that Buddhists don't regard an individual as being on the spiritual path until he has reached the manipura chakra level. Below this level, at the mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras, man is considered to be predominantly instinctive, with little awareness and discrimination. And this is essentially true, in which case the kundalini, associated with awakening, can indeed be said to abide in the manipura chakra. It does at that particular level of understanding. The location of the kundalini depends only on definition. If you wish you can regard the spiritual path as beginning in animals and stones; in this case kundalini can be considered as abiding in the

chakras below mooladhara, in patala, for example. However, in yoga-tantra and most other systems, the kundalini is arbitrarily defined as abiding in mooladhara chakra, for it is at this level of being that life, in this case man, begins to become aware of itself and to unfold understanding even if it is very ego-centred and rudimentary. There are even many yoga-tantra texts that state that the kundalini really resides in sahasrara and this is true in a higher sense. So don't become confused by seemingly contradictory statements about the seat of kundalini. In the context of the practical application of yoga-tantra techniques, the seat of kundalini is mooladhara chakra. This is clearly stated as follows: "The power of consciousness resides in the form of the kundalini at the mooladhara chakra. It is in the shape of a serpent with three-and-a-half coils. While this serpent power lies dormant in the human body, then men and women lead an instinctive life." (*Gherand Samhita* 3:44-45)

The coiled snake indicates that the power or potential of man is latent and unmanifested. Through yoga practices, the kundalini is transformed from a static to a dynamic form; it starts to express its innate power. It triggers the potential contained in sahasrara.

This has been a brief introduction to kundalini in relation to the mooladhara chakra. The subject of kundalini will be fully discussed in the next lesson¹.

Sushumna nadi

Sushumna is the symbolic passage through which kundalini rises through the chakras. It is generally regarded as starting at mooladhara chakra and ascending in turn through the other higher chakras to sahasrara. However, some scriptures give apparently contradictory information. For example, in the *Nigam Tattvasara*, a tantric text, it says categorically: "The bony rod (sushumna) goes from the feet to the brahma randhra (entrance to the sahasrara); it is known as the merudanda (literally spine, but meaning sushumna) of the fourteen spheres of being (the fourteen chakras from the patala to the ajna)."

This verse states that sushumna does not start at the mooladhara, but the lowest of the lower chakras, the patala. And this is acceptable for the same reason that the kundalini can abide in patala, mooladhara, manipura or in

any other chakra. It depends on definition. The sushumna starts wherever the kundalini is regarded as having its seat. In the Buddhist system, therefore, sushumna can be considered to begin at manipura chakra. In the case of a piece of rock, the sushumna, in a wide sense, can be regarded as beginning at the patala chakra. For the purposes of man in relation to yoga-tantra practices, however, sushumna is considered as starting at the mooladhara chakra¹.

Attributes

This is the centre where people are almost entirely self-centred, where the predominant drives, thoughts and actions are directed towards attaining some measure of security in the world. Even children are produced often with a strong motive of ensuring security by continuing one's family line in the future. People surround themselves with material objects, money, friends, etc. in order to feel secure. All things and all people are regarded as a means to obtaining the desperately sought after security.

There are many other aspects, but this is sufficient to indicate the general trends associated with mooladhara chakra.

Symbolism

There are many different ways of symbolizing the mooladhara chakra. The symbol in the diagram that we have adopted speaks for itself, though it is worthwhile explaining a few points.

In the middle of the diagram is a lingam called the *swayambhu lingam* (self-existent lingam). It is sometimes called the *dhumra lingam* (smoky coloured lingam). A serpent is wrapped three-and-a-half times around the lingam; this indicates the kundalini. The three coils have many meanings, the most obvious being the three aspects of nature: sattwa (harmony), rajas (action) and tamas (inertia and darkness). The half coil represents the potential of transcendence - the fourth state turiya. In many diagrams, the serpent is depicted with its head pointing downwards. This indicates that kundalini is asleep and that the individual is not treading the path of higher awareness. In our depiction, the kundalini is shown with its head pointing upwards, indicating that the kundalini has begun to wake up; the individual is beginning to awaken his potential.

to awaken his potential. Until the serpent begins to look upwards, until one has aspiration, then one will never begin to unleash the great inner potential. And you, the reader, must be at this point for otherwise you would not have the interest in yoga. Therefore, we feel the upward facing serpent is more meaningful than the downward serpent for those who are following the path of yoga and who intend to practise kriya yoga in the future.

The mooladhara chakra is the centre of the earth element, therefore, the bija mantra *lam* is shown coloured yellow. Some symbolic forms

The mooladhara depicts a square, this being the symbol of the earth element. We leave you to interpret the rest of the symbol for yourself, for little is to be gained by over verbose explanations.

Location

The location of the mooladhara chakra is in the region of the perineum. It is slightly different in man and woman as follows:

For males: midway between the anus and the sexual organ, a centimetre or so above the skin surface.

For females: at the cervix, where the vagina and the uterus join.

The location is important for the purpose of yoga practices, including kriya yoga. Therefore, you should familiarize yourself with the area by practising the following technique.

MOOLADHARA CHAKRA LOCATION

The main purpose of this practice is to develop the ability to locate the trigger point of the mooladhara chakra, both physically and mentally.

Technique

Sit in a comfortable position.
Close the eyes. Hold the spine erect.
For a short time be aware of breathing.

Stage 1

Do moola bandha².

Makesure that the contraction is concentrated at the mooladhara chakra trigger point (though there will be some degree of contraction at the anus). Continue this for as long as you have time available, at least for a few minutes.

It shows that the individual has the aspiration

Stage 2

Leave moola bandha.

Merely release and contract the trigger point rhythmically.

About one contraction per second is reasonable; or if you wish you can synchronize the contraction with the heartbeat.

Again, ensure that the contraction is focused at the exact trigger point and not at the anus. Direct all your attention to the point of contraction. Do this for a few minutes.

Stage 3

Leave all physical contraction.

Try to feel the pulse beat at the trigger point; or try to mentally contract the point.

Direct your attention to the mooladhara chakra area.

The practice is the same as stage 2, but without physical contraction.

Continue for as long as you have time to spare.

Awareness

The awareness should be on the physical trigger point of the mooladhara chakra.

Duration

Try to spend about live minutes on each stage, giving a total of fifteen minutes for the entire practice.

Rationale

With practice you will be able to pinpoint the trigger point exactly. Mere thought of the point will immediately induce a clear location of it. This level of sensitivity is necessary before beginning kriya yoga.

Notes

¹ Book II, Lesson 20, Topic 2

² Topic 4 of this lesson

Topic 4

Asanas: Practice

The first obstacle to be overcome in meditative practice is physical discomfort. That is, one must be able to relax and make the body perfectly comfortable and forget it. This is very⁷ difficult for many people, especially beginners, because general physical stiffness, aches and pains, are a continual reminder of the presence of the body. Under these conditions, it is impossible to introspect and direct perception into the mind. Until the body is made more flexible, it is very difficult to make headway in meditative practices, for one's attention is continually drawn outside.

There are two major aspects of body discomfort associated with meditative asanas:

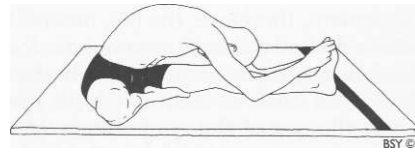
1. Stiffness of the legs: this prevents one sitting in a comfortable position for a prolonged period of time.
2. Stiffness and weakness of the back muscles: under this condition, one tends to slump forwards, giving rise to backache and interference with breathing.

The two forward bending asanas we will discuss in this topic, *janu sirshasana* (head to knee pose) and *ardha padma paschimottanasana* (half lotus back stretching pose), help directly to overcome these two hindrances. Firstly, they loosen up the leg joints and muscles, so that one eventually can sit in any one or more of the meditative asanas without the slightest physical discomfort. Secondly, they stretch, loosen and strengthen the back muscles, making it easier to hold the spine upright. These are two good reasons for practising both of these asanas.

JANU SIRSHASANA (HEAD TO KNEE POSE)

In Sanskrit, the word *janu* means 'knee' and *sirsha* means 'head'. Therefore, *janu sirshasana* can be translated as the 'head to knee pose'. Sometimes it is also called *ardha paschimottanasana* - the 'half lotus back stretching pose' -

because of its resemblance to *paschimottanasana*¹.



Technique

Stage 1

Sit on the floor with both legs stretched out in front of the body.

Bend the left leg and place the sole of the foot against the inside surface of the right thigh. Adjust the left foot so that the heel presses as near as possible to the region of the perineum (between the sexual organ and anus).

The bent left knee should be in contact with the ground.

Hold the spine straight.

Place both hands on the right thigh.

Relax the back muscles.

This is the starting position.

Stage 2

Throughout this stage and the following stages, the right leg should not be bent: that is, the right knee should not be raised.

Breathe in deeply.

Then breathe out while slowly leaning forwards and simultaneously sliding the hands along the top of the right leg stretching towards the right foot.

The aim is to bend forwards as far as comfortable; this will depend on the flexibility of your back.

You should adopt any one of the following positions depending on your capacity:

- If your back is very stiff, then you will only be able to touch the top of your calf. Grasp your leg at this point.
- If your back is more flexible, then you will be able to grasp your right ankle.

- If your back muscles are very supple, then you should be able to grasp the back of your right heel or toes. For the purposes of the asana, we prefer that you hold your toes as follows: grasp the big toe of the right foot with the index (second) and middle fingers, and the thumb of the left hand; the right hand should grasp the right foot just below the toes. If this is uncomfortable then you can grasp the back of the right heel with both hands.

Don't strain under any circumstances; only bend forwards as far as the flexibility of your back will comfortably allow.

At the end of the forward bend, try to touch the forehead on the right knee (only people who can do position 3 above will be able to do this). Then relax the whole body, especially the back.

Breathe normally a few times and then proceed to stage 3.

Stage 3

Keep the right leg straight throughout this stage.

Breathe in deeply.

Then while breathing out, gently but firmly pull your head further towards the right foot by using the arms. Those people who cannot touch the right knee with their head should look directly at the right foot; while those who can touch the forehead to the right knee should merely pull their head towards the foot keeping their forehead or chin in contact with the leg.

Don't strain.

Try to let the back muscles relax totally, letting the pull come only from the arms.

The forward movement does not need to be great. At the end of the forward pull, remain in a stationary position and breathe in deeply.

During the next exhalation try to pull the head a little further forwards and again maintain a static position while inhaling.

Repeat 3 or 4 times.

In all cases, the arms have to be bent; in the case of

people who can touch their head on the right knee,

the elbows should be bent downwards so that they

touch the floor on both sides of the right leg.

The final position for those people with a flexible spine is as shown.

Other people, through daily practice, will be

able to attain this final pose in the future when they loosen up their spine.

Breathe slowly and deeply in the final pose.

Stay in the final pose for a minute or so.

Then breathe in, while raising the head and trunk to the starting position.

Repeat the same stages 1, 2 and 3 with the right leg bent and the left leg straight.

Breathing

Inhale deeply in the starting position. Exhale as you bend forwards (stage 2). Breathe normally a number of times after the forward bend. Inhale deeply then exhale deeply as you pull yourself slightly forwards. Breathe slowly and deeply in the final pose. Inhale as you raise the body back to the starting position.

Mistakes to avoid

This asana gives many benefits if it is done correctly. Make sure you avoid the following common mistakes:

- Bending the knee of the straight leg upwards during the practice. If you do this then the asana becomes very easy; so easy that even a person with the stiffest back will be able to touch his head to his knee. But the benefits will be almost nil. Keep the leg straight so that the muscles at the rear of the legs (hamstring muscles) and the spinal muscles are stretched and become flexible through practice.
- Using the back muscles to bend the body forward. This defeats the purpose of the asana, for the contraction of the back muscles implies that the back is tensed, which prevents the fullest possible forward bend. Try to relax the spinal muscles throughout the entire practice. Let them be passively stretched. In this manner the spinal muscles will become progressively elongated and the vertebrae loosened.
- Excessive strain which can cause injury. Be careful not to apply force to the back when bending forwards. Apply a little tension by pulling on the arms, but not too much. You must use your discretion in this respect.

Other details

Janu sirshasana is similar to paschimottan-asana. As such, details on awareness, sequence, duration, limitations and benefits are all the same¹.

Leg loosening

The greatest advantage of *janu sirshasana* over *paschimottanasana* is that it simultaneously loosens the legs in preparation for meditative asanas. It gives basically the same benefits plus this extra one. This is the reason that we have introduced it at this stage. Earlier in the book we emphasized the importance of loosening up the legs for meditative asanas and *kriya yoga*². We described a number of specific leg loosening exercises to be practised every day. Because of lack of time you have probably not practised them. If this is the case then you should definitely include *janu sirshasana* (or *ardha paschimottanasana*) in your daily practice program. In this way you will loosen up the legs and the back, as well as obtain the benefits associated with forward bending asanas. If necessary you can replace *paschimottanasana* with either of the two asanas described in this topic.

Advanced practices from the final pose

In the description we gave of *paschimottanasana* we explained two advanced practices. These can also be integrated with *janu sirshasana* (and *ardha padma paschimottanasana*). These two refinements will intensify the benefits that can be obtained.

ARDHA PADMA PASCHIMOTTANASANA (HALF LOTUS BACK STRETCHING POSE)

In Sanskrit *ardha* means 'half', *padma* means 'lotus', *paschima* means 'back' and *attan* means 'to stretch'. Therefore, *ardha padma paschimottanasana* can be translated as the 'half lotus back stretching pose'¹.

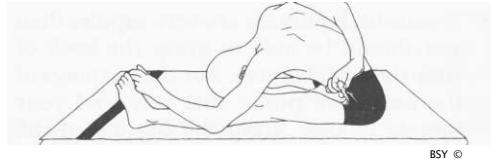
This asana is very similar to *janu sirshasana*. The main difference is that one leg is folded on top of the opposite thigh. It is therefore a little more difficult and applies a greater flexion on the bent leg. This asana should be practised by those people who find *janu sirshasana* reasonably easy and who want to further loosen up the legs beyond that obtainable from *janu sirshasana*. People with very stiff legs should not attempt this asana.

Technique

Stage 1 (advanced form)

Sit on the floor with both legs straight.

Fold the left leg and place the left foot on the



right thigh; this is called the half lotus position. Try to place the left foot as high as possible so that in the final pose it will firmly massage the abdominal organs. But don't strain.

If you are able, fold your left arm behind your back and try to grasp the toes of the left foot; to do this exhale deeply and bend slightly forwards.

Most people will find this difficult, in which case you should try the simplified form to be described shortly.

Sit upright. Breathe normally.

Relax the whole body, especially the back muscles.

This is the starting position.

Stage 2

This is the same as stage 2 for *janu sirshasana* except that the straight leg is grasped only by the right hand, the left hand remaining behind the back holding the toes of the left foot.

Also, unlike *janu sirshasana*, those who have supple spinal muscles should hold the big toe of the right foot with the index finger, middle finger and thumb of the right hand, instead of the left hand.

Stage 3

This stage is exactly the same as given for *janu sirshasana*. The final pose is shown above. One should return to the starting position while breathing in.

The procedure should then be repeated with the right leg folded on the left thigh.

Simplified form

Most people will find it difficult if not totally impossible to grasp the toes of the folded leg with the arm held behind the back. In this case, you should keep both arms in front of the body and grasp the straight leg with the two hands as described for *janu sirshasana*.

Other details

All other details - breathing, mistakes to avoid, leg loosening and advanced practices in the final pose - are as given for *janu sirshasana*.

Details on awareness, sequence, duration, limitations and benefits are as given for paschimottanasana¹.

Massage of the abdominal organs

Though the benefits obtainable from ardha padma paschimottanasana are almost identical to janusirshasana and paschimottanasana, it has one distinctive characteristic: the foot of the folded leg applies an intense massage to the abdominal organs. Each leg is folded in turn; this massages each side of the abdomen, which helps to stimulate intestinal peristalsis and thereby alleviate constipation. In this context, one should remember that faecal matter in the bowels first of all moves up the ascending colon on the right side of the abdomen and then down the descending colon on the left side of the body before being pushed out of the anus. Therefore, it is important that the left leg is folded first (the left foot pressing and massaging the right side of the abdomen) so that the influence of the asana is in accordance with the movement of faeces within the colon.

All the other abdominal organs are also given an intense massage; the liver mostly when the left leg is folded and the spleen mostly when the right leg is folded; the kidneys each receive an equal massage alternatively; and the pancreas receives approximately an equal massage from each foot in turn. The other organs, such as the bladder, adrenal glands, etc. are also massaged.

To obtain the best possible massage of the internal organs, the foot of the folded leg should be firmly pressed into the abdomen. If you do the advanced technique where the toes of the folded leg are held by the arm behind the back, then this will happen automatically. If you do the simplified form of this asana, then you should take care that the foot presses as firmly as possible into the abdomen before bending forwards.

This intense massage of the spine will only be obtainable if you can bend forwards sufficiently to press the foot into the abdomen. Until this stage you must slowly loosen up the back and leg muscles and not worry too much about the benefits obtainable from the massage of the abdomen.

For fuller details of benefits refer to the topic on paschimottanasana¹.

Notes

¹ Book II, Lesson 13, Topic 2

² Book I, Lesson 6, Topic 4

Topic 4

Bandhas: Moola Bandha

In this lesson we introduced the first of the human chakras, mooladhara¹. In kriya yoga, it is essential to be able to easily and exactly locate the physical trigger point of this chakra. A good method is to utilize the practice of moola bandha.

Definition

The Sanskrit word *moola* means 'root' and the word *bandha* means 'lock'. Here the word moola means various things, it refers to the mooladhara chakra, the seat of kundalini and it also refers to the root of the spine or the trunk of the body, the perineum. In English, moola bandha can be translated by the cumbersome name 'the perineum contraction lock'.

Scriptural references

This is an important yoga-tantra practice and is widely mentioned in the scriptures. One of the fullest descriptions is given in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* Chapter 4: "Press the heels against the perineum and contract it firmly. Draw the apana upwards. This is known as moola bandha." (61) Here, the word apana refers to the function of the body, at all levels, gross and subtle, which expels energy and waste materials from the body. In the context of pranayama, apana refers to exhalation. "The downward action of apana should be directed upwards by contraction of the perineum." (62)

"Moola bandha brings about the union of prana and apana, and nada and bindu. This will bestow perfection in yoga. Of this there is no doubt." (64) Here, prana refers to the specific functions of the body which supply energy into the body to maintain the upkeep. This prana is contained in food, air that is breathed, as well as subtle prana in the environment. In the context of pranayama, prana refers to inhalation.

Balance of prana and apana implies that there is equilibrium between the incoming and outgoing energies of the body. In the case of

pranayama, balance of inhalation and exhalation signifies the retention of breath (kumbhaka).

Bindu and nada will be explained when we discuss the centre called bindu².

"The apana moves upwards and when it reaches the circle of fire (manipura chakra) the flame lengthens and reaches the anahata chakra." (65) "When the apana and the fire meet (at manipura) the prana is heated. This increases the digestive fire." (67) "Due to this kindling of the fire, apana and prana, the sleeping kundalini is awakened; it becomes straight like a snake beaten by a stick." (68) "The kundalini enters the brahma nadi in the same way that a snake enters a hole. The yogi should therefore practise moola bandha daily." (69)

The *brahma nadi* is the central core of sushumna³. Though the text that we have quoted may seem a bit vague, it nevertheless gives a clear indication of the role of moola bandha in kundalini yoga.

Moola bandha is also clearly described in the *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* and the *Gherand Samhita*. The latter text sums up by saying: "Those who wish to swim across the ocean of samsara (world of delusion) should practise this bandha in a lonely place. Practice brings about control of the prana residing in the body. Do it in silence, with care and determination. All lethargy will vanish." (3:15)

Place of contraction

The area to be contracted is the physical trigger point of the mooladhara chakra. This has a slightly different location in men and women.

For males: in the perineum, between the anus and the sexual organ.

For females: at the cervix, where the vagina and the uterus meet. Moola bandha is often done incorrectly by contraction of the anus. Try to find the exact location that we have described and apply the contraction at that point during moola bandha.

Sitting position

The best asanas for moola bandha are siddhasana for men and siddha yoni asana for women⁴. While sitting in either of these asanas, one heel applies firm pressure in the region of the mooladhara chakra, which improves the physical contraction.

If you cannot sit in one of the above asanas then you can sit in any other meditative asana where the knees rest on the ground. These include padmasana, swastikasana, vajrasana or ardha padmasana⁴.

MOOLA BANDHA (PERINEUM CONTRACTION LOCK)

Sit in a comfortable position. Place the palms on the knees.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

Inhale deeply.

Then hold the breath and practise jalandhara bandha⁵.

Contract the muscles at the mooladhara chakra region.

Draw the muscles upwards as much as you are able without excessive strain.

Keep your attention fixed on the point of contraction.

Hold this contraction for as long as possible.

Then release the contraction.

Release jalandhara bandha.

Raise the head and breathe out.

This is 1 round.

If necessary, allow the breathing to return to normal. Then do some more rounds.

Maintain awareness.

Don't strain.

Note: if you wish you can do the practice with the breath held externally (bahir kumbhaka); that is, one can breathe out initially and then do jalandhara bandha. However, this alternative method has the disadvantage that one is not able to retain the breath for such a long duration as internal retention.

Awareness and duration

While taking the final position and doing jalandhara bandha, awareness should be directed to the breath. In the final pose, the awareness should be fixed at the place of contraction in the perineum.

The final position can be held for as long as you can hold your breath. Practise as many

rounds as you wish, providing there is no strain or discomfort.

Limitations

As given for jalandhara bandha⁵.

Benefits

All the benefits of jalandhara bandha are obtained. The blood supply to the pelvic region is improved and the nerves stimulated. This helps to revitalize the organs in the region.

It helps to awaken mooladhara chakra and arouse the kundalini, by directing prana in the lower regions (called apana) upwards. It also helps to transmute sexual energy.

Preparatory practice

Those people who find moola bandha too difficult, perhaps through lack of control over the perineum muscles, should regularly practise ashwini mudra instead¹, utilizing either method 1 or 2. When you develop more control over the perineum muscles, then you should leave ashwini mudra and perform moola bandha instead.

Preparation for kriya yoga

If you are serious about learning and practising kriya yoga, then we strongly urge you to practise moola bandha regularly. It is absolutely necessary in order to develop sensitivity in the region of the perineum and to exactly locate the mooladhara chakra trigger point. Without this sensitivity, you will not be able to gain the most out of kriya yoga practices.

Notes

¹ Topic 2 of this lesson

² Book III, Lesson 25, Topic 5

³ Book II, Lesson 20, Topic 2

⁴ Book I, Lesson 7, Topic 2; Vajrasana - Book I, Lesson 2, Topic 5

⁵ Book II, Lesson 14, Topic 3

⁶ Book II, Lesson 16, Topic 3

Pranayama: Practice

There is a direct link between tension, nervousness and neurosis and the breathing pattern. Modern science and psychology are especially clear on this fact. Anxiety tends to relate directly to breathing malfunctions; mental tension and shallow, rapid breathing go hand in hand. It has also been found that inhibition or suppression of emotions and feelings causes a corresponding inhibition of breathing. That which is non-emotionally expressed because of suppression is instead reflected physically in the form of inhibited respiration. The most common manifestation is irregular and shallow breathing, though often it results in more drastic illness such as asthma.

Pranayama, therefore, has a direct influence on reducing tension. This does not mean that deep and controlled breathing will instantaneously remove all your problems, but that it will help to induce relaxation; this will, in turn, help you to face and understand your deeper problems. It is worthwhile pointing out that mental tension tends to cause tightness in the muscles of the abdomen, chest and stomach. Pranayama practices accentuate the movements of these parts of the body and loosen them up. This, in turn, induces a degree of physical and mental relaxation.

The most direct influence of pranayama is feedback into the mind. Correction of bad and insufficient breathing will reflect backwards into the mind. If the emotional aspects of one's being manifest in the physical body, then there must also be an opposite effect. Correct breathing through pranayama, will help to release pent-up emotional blocks and tensions. A rhythmical breathing process leads to a harmonized peaceful mind.

NADI SHODHANA - STAGE 4 WITH UDDIYANA BANDHA

The technique of nadi shodhana combined with uddiyana bandha is quite advanced for most people, therefore, we suggest that you continue to practise it in the manner that we previously explained¹. Please be careful not to strain.

Moola Bandha contraction

Moola bandha can also be combined with uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha. This is called maha bandha, and in association with nadi shodhana pranayama, it is a very powerful technique. But this combination should not be attempted at this early stage, but later on when the body-mind is more prepared.

In this lesson we have described a technique for locating the mooladhara chakra, through the use of moola bandha². This technique in itself will require you to practise pranayama with breath retention. We suggest that you practise this technique after your daily practice of nadi shodhana pranayama.

Notes

¹ Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 4

² Topic 4 of this lesson

Daily Practice Program

If you seriously intend to practise kriya yoga in the future then it is important that you develop sensitivity to the location of the trigger point of the mooladhara chakra. You should begin to practise the technique that we have described utilizing moola bandha.

Nada yoga¹ is a wonderful practice. **TIT** to find the time to do it regularly as part of your daily practices.

Continue to practise pranayama as described making sure that you practise within the limits of your body capacity.

Practice	Rounds	Minutes
Program 1: duration 2 hours		
Surya Namaskara	—	10
Shavasana	—	4
Shalabhasana	—	4
Shashankasana	—	4
Janu Sirshasana or		
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	—	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	—	4
Garudasana	1 each leg	4
Yoga Mudrasana	—	4
Sarvangasana	—	4
Bhujangasana	—	4
Shavasana	—	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	—	15
Mooladhara Chakra location	—	15
Nada Yoga	—	25
Chidakasha Dharana	—	16
		<hr/> 120

Program 2: duration 1 1/2 hours		
Surya Namaskara	–	10
Shavasana	–	3
Shalabhasana	–	4
Shashankasana	–	4
Janu Sirshasana or		
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	–	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	–	4
Garudasana	1 each leg	4
Sarvangasana	–	4
Bhujangasana	–	4
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	–	10
Mooladhara Chakra location	–	15
Nada Yoga	–	15
Chidakasha Dharana	–	9
		<hr/> 90

Program 3: duration 1 hour		
Surya Namaskara	–	5
Shavasana	–	3
Shashankasana	–	3
Janu Sirshasana or		
Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana	–	4
Ardha Matsyendrasana	–	3
Garudasana	1 each leg	3
Sarvangasana	–	4
Bhujangasana	–	3
Nadi Shodhana Pranayama	–	10
Mooladhara Chakra location	–	10
Nada Yoga	–	12
		<hr/> 60

Program 4: duration 1/2 hour for general health		
The same as for Lesson 18, but include Janu Sirshasana or Ardha Padma Paschimottanasana		

Notes

- ¹ Nada Yoga: Stage 1 - Book II, Lesson 17, Topic 4; Stage 2 - Book II, Lesson 18, Topic 5