

Traditional Yoga- 8 week session

Introduction to Chakras: 1- Muladhara the root chakra

We are practising Hatha yoga, which just means a physical asana practice. 'Ha' means sun, positive solar energy, 'tha' means moon, negative lunar energy. Hatha is the yoga of the balancing of the sun and the moon. Too much lunar negative charged energy leads to lack of control and mental insanity, and too much solar leads to a lack of sensitivity and tyranny. The lunar negative charge is also known as 'Yin' which is receptive, feminine aspect whereas the solar 'Yang' is the dynamic, controlling, masculine aspect. Women should have a predominance of lunar and men, solar. So when performing an asana it is important to have symmetry between the right and left. In asanas the left side should be performed first to receive energy and then on the right to emit energy. There is polarity in everything including our chakras. The telluric energy is the subtle vitality of the earth and holds a negative charge, cosmic energy counter balances with positive charge. As long as there is balance of Yin and Yang a living cell is healthy and protected from disease. Once an imbalance or deficiency occurs illness occurs.

What is a Chakra?

A chakra is believed to be a center of activity that receives, assimilates, and expresses life force energy. The word chakra literally translates as wheel or disk and refers to a spinning sphere of bioenergetic activity emanating from the major nerve ganglia branching forward from the spinal column. Generally, six of these wheels are described, stacked in a column of energy that spans from the base of the spine to the middle of the forehead. And the seventh which is beyond the physical region above the head. Each chakra rooted in your spinal column is believed to influence or even govern bodily functions near its region of the spine. Because autopsies do not reveal chakras, people are skeptical. Yet their existence is well documented in the traditions of the far east. We all know our bodies have electrical energy and that balance of the current is important. Chakras are considered to be a point of biophysical energy or 'prana' of the human body. Prana is the basic component of your subtle body- the energy field around you, and the entire chakra system. The chakras are interconnected balls of energy with vibratory frequencies- resonance. Resonance is slower in the lower chakras and faster in the higher chakras. The lower chakras deal with survival and more primitive elements and the upper chakras deal with more intellectual and spiritual elements.

Spiritual attainment:

Yoga traditionally was practiced to reach Samadhi (enlightenment or nirvana). Yoga brought in energy and forced it to "rise" upward, piercing the various energy centres until reaching the crown of the head, resulting in union with the Divine. In yoga there is a power called Kundalini. Kundalini means 'coiled up' and is thought to be coil of energy located at the base of the spine. When that Kundalini awakes, it tries to force a passage through this hollow canal, and as it rises step by step, as it were, layer after layer of the mind becomes open and all the different visions and wonderful powers come to the Yogi. When it reaches the brain, the Yogi is perfectly detached from the body and mind; the soul finds itself free. This is union with the Divine, Nirvana, Enlightenment or Samadhi.

Physical/Psychological implications

In this class we are setting ourselves in positions (asanas) and concentrating on a specific chakras and flow of energy to create resonance and union with the energies. Bringing in energy to relieve blockages in the chakra, creating balance, to have health and harmony within our system. Each chakra is said to be linked to a gland of the endocrine system and has a huge affect on our physical health. Each chakra also has aspects of our consciousness and mental state involved with it. As well as a level of our psychological development and our ability to be emotionally, socially balanced, functional beings. We will look at the physical benefits of particular asanas as well as the mental states involved with the chakra it is acting upon. We will take a deeper look at the developmental psychology associated with each chakra. We all have traumas or conditioning from earlier in life that affect our ability to function as a person in all aspects of our life now. We will learn to recognize the relationship of our ineffective behaviour or coping strategies to its chakra and will learn the tools to overcome them.

The first chakra- Muladhara, the root chakra

Muladhara or root chakra is located lowest and has slowest vibratory resonance. This centre is located in the region between the genitals and the anus. 2-3 cm out of the body in our 'subtle' body, the energy field surrounding us. Although no endocrine organ is placed here, it is said to relate to the gonads and the adrenal medulla, responsible for the fight-or-flight response when survival is under threat. Muladhara is symbolized by a lotus with four petals and the colour red. Key issues involve security, self preservation and connection to the physical world. Our ancient primal instincts of survival. Also our ability to be grounded, in the philosophical and energetic meaning of the word. Fear is the aspect which is most related to causing imbalance. Muladhara is known to be the location of the kundalini energy and the battery of our life energy. It is related to earth, the sense of smell, the nose of the lunar side and the anus on the solar side. People typically have a dominant chakra, muladhara if not born prevalent it can become so by living a chaotic life of indulgence, ignorance and animal like behaviour. Physical practice of asanas focusing on muladhara typically benefit the pelvis; the colon, urinary tract, reproductive organs, digestive problems and the lower spine.

Each chakra has a related period of physical development. As muladhara is related to survival and physical grounding with the world, it is connected to two similar periods of development. First is prenatal until the first year of life where an infant learns if he or she can trust or mistrust the physical world to provide safety, security and necessary nurturing. Development continues through the stages and chakras and reaches muladhara again in early adulthood. The stage in which the young adult is developing independence and survival skills to make it on their own as they move out from the shelter of their parents. The development of early life and muladhara is complex. If you make it through with proper safety, security and nurturing and come through with a balanced first chakra you will have a sense of inner security, good self care, feel present and grounded with the world, feel you have the right to exist and the right to have happiness, love and prosperity. Unfortunately basically all of us has had some degree of trauma or negative conditioning that has led to a blockage in this chakra to some degree. Chakras can be blocked by having excess energy, a traffic jam so cluttered it doesn't function. Or it can be blocked by deficient energy, not enough power to run, deflated. It is possible to have both deficient and excess in the same chakra.

Traits of blockage in the muladhara chakra

Excess	Deficient
Dense body	Doubts right to exist
Thick/fat or hard/rigid muscles	Depression, suicidal
Stiff, sluggish	Body loose joints or flabby
Heavy feeling	Poor muscle tone, circulation, colour
Hard character, cynical about spiritualism	Feels separate from body
Afraid of change, clingy	Poor grooming
Likes routine, security	Distrusts body
Is meticulous, compulsive	Paranoia, restless
Obsession of body/health	Difficulty concentrating
Driven to materialism	Energy scattered over numerous tasks
Overcharged energy visible as muscle tension and anxiety	Energy in upper chakras
Unable to get off the ground, feels stuck	Fantasies, spirituality more important than physical world
	Ungrounded, lost

Joanne Yanke 2009. joannefitness@gmail.com Referencing Eastern body, western minds; the psychology of the chakra system by Anodea Judith and Agama yoga course materials

There are numerous factors that result in muladhara blockage. Here is a basic outline of the common factors:

1. In-utero- If the mother suffers excessive stress the fetus will have an increase in baseline energy, being born with excess energy and anxiety.
2. Birth- Technological birth where infant is instantly separated from mother is a huge shock to sense of security resulting in fear, helplessness and anxiety. Trauma in birth leads to increased crying and neediness, poor health and can result in stressing parents which in turn causes poor bonding and more neglect.
3. Separation/abandonment- Abandonment gives doubt for child's right to exist, right to have love, happiness and prosperity. Results in depression, suicidal tendencies, no development of security, hope or confidence. If deficient, tendency is to abandon self, poor hygiene, abandon opinion or projects, fear of speaking up in relationships or acceptance of abandonment too easily. If excess, tendency is to cling to relationships, food and routines. Even longer periods away from parents (work trips, holidays, hospital stays etc) threatens a child's sense of being wanted, right to exist and survival.
4. Neglect- Neglect of physical care or emotional nurturing results in forcing a child into independence that is impossible for them, which results in overwhelming feelings of helplessness, fear, mistrust of physical world and shame. Similar effects for children forced to be caregiver of ill or drunk parent or to take care of siblings. Too much independence and responsibility causing anxiety and helplessness.
5. Physical/sexual abuse- Abuse can cause either obsession of the physical body or a disassociation with the body, being unaware of physical senses. Not knowing feelings, when hungry (eating disorders), placement of body (accident prone) and increased levels of hormones (addiction to crisis/stress).
6. Severe accidents, illness or surgeries- Trauma can result in unconscious fears, phobias, difficulty sleeping, nervousness and difficulty concentrating. Physical damage to the subtle energy field (aura).
7. Inherited stress- Family and surroundings can pass down fears. Parents from war zone, poverty, death of other child or other survival issue passes that fear down. More likely to affect attitude/beliefs than physical manifestations from the increased fear and mistrust of world.

If you are ungrounded you are typically plagued with the sense something is wrong. Your body is seen as an object rather than a living statement of the soul. You tend to have a dominance of the upper chakras, be physically numb, have little desire for physical pleasure, fail to remember to eat/sleep or do so in excess (unable to tell when to stop), prone to illness because unable to read body's subtle warnings, insecure, unable to say no. You develop coping strategies that effect the other chakras. Chakra 2- difficulty surrendering to feelings, 3- poor power/self esteem, 4- difficulty in relationships, 5- difficulty communicating, 6- difficulty in mental clarity and 7- difficulty in thought clarity. So we see that blockages in the first chakra that restrict the flow of energy up to the higher chakras can have a huge impact on our ability to be grounded, functional, happy adults. Therefore work needs to happen from the ground up.

Unblocking a chakra is simple in theory. If it is excess you must release it, if it deficient you must channel energy to it. Here are the basic steps to balancing the chakras:

1. Understand the dynamics of each chakra, use chart given 1st class to classify excess and deficiencies given your characteristics
2. Assess your history (any traumas?) in relationship to the developmental period of the chakra
3. Check your state of ground by your relationship with the physical world. (eating, grooming, physical awareness)
4. Determine the exercises and asanas most beneficial for you.
5. Working on chakras from the ground up unless something in an upper chakra is dominant.

Unblocking muladhara

We will cover two asanas that channels energy to muladhara. Also beneficial for the first chakra is creating a better relationship with the physical body and physical world. For the physical body, a general practice of yoga or other physical exercise is beneficial. As well as massage or other body work. While active or being touched focus on the physical sensations involved. Meditation on the breath or other physical motion of the body and journal writing to note awareness of the body can also be highly advantageous. As muladhara is located just off the bottom of the spine, chiropractic adjustment releasing a block in energy flow can be beneficial. Especially if there has been an injury to the sacrum. In developing a better relationship to the physical world you can work on balancing the related habits, if you neglect grooming spend more time at it, if you are clingy, work on letting go. For better grounding, standing is powerful (Tadasana!), positions that require power in the legs (squat, lunge), and focus on the feet (massage) is encouraged. If you have safety in the fetal position, working on opening up helps and pushing through the feet.

There is a tendency for 'afterflow', a surge of energy after the exercise. So it is important to take a moment of awareness after the exercise.

Another technique is music meditation, getting lost in the beat of music that has the same resonance as muladhara chakra.

One can never work on grounding too much! Reclaim your right to exist and your right to have what you need to survive and thrive.

Our asanas this week, padahasthasana (standing forward fold) and paschimottasana (seated forward fold) both act on muladhara chakra and attune with telluric(earth) energy but the polarity is different. Padahasthasana with the buttocks in the air receives a more positive cosmic charge whereas in the seated posture it is predominately all negative telluric charge.

Padahasthasana- Standing forward fold.

Simple posture of bending forward, feet shoulder width apart. Legs must be straight. Ideally hands should be grounded so if you can't reach to floor then a cushion or chair seat can be used otherwise let them hang. Notice the telluric energies rising up the legs and concentrate on muladhara. Notice the stale excess energy releasing through the hands. Alternatives to hands on the floor is fingers locked on the big toes or placed palm up under the feet creating an energy circuit. Perceive pleasant sensations in the limbs, arousal of muladhara and purification of the energies of the trunk.

Benefits:

Improved circulation, should be practiced little by little if anemic.

Improved digestion, relief of bloating, constipation and indigestion

Creates strong resilient spine, adjusting forward displaced discs, curing sciatica.

Strengthens shoulders and back, slims waist and reduces thigh and belly fat.

Paschimottanasana- Seated forward fold.

Simple seated forward bend. Legs stay straight hands reaching to feet. If possible grasp big toes or hold the feet. In perfection, the forehead, chin, chest and abdomen would rest on thighs. Concentration on the arousing of muladhara chakra with telluric energies. Perceive energizing of the legs and increased vitality in the torso.

Benefits:

All the benefits to abdominal organs, digestion and circulation of padahasthasana. Plus relief of diarrhea, urinary disorders and removal of worms in digestive tract. Great benefit to the spine relieving arthritis, sciatica, backache, lordosis, lumbago as well as pain in the knees and legs.

Cures diabetes, piles, dermatological diseases, tones heart, empties stomach preventing ulcers. Increased ability to control sexual energy, great effects for prostate, cures impotency and wet dreams.

Increases longevity by great spinal health and decreased respiratory cycles.

Specific asana in relieving obesity, expelling fat from the belly, thighs and buttocks.

Uddiyana bandha- the path of upward flight

Uddiyana bandha is the contraction that 'elevates' the inferior energy, subliming it to the higher chakras. A set of abdominal exercises that has a few steps but is quite easy to perform. 1. Standing position feet 30-40 cm apart, bend the knees, supporting weight with hands on the thighs. 2.

Forcefully crouch down to empty all the air from the lungs. 2. False inhalation, suction of the stomach.

3. Holding suction. 4. Release stomach then inhale. 5. Hold inhale. 6. Relax and take a few normal breaths then repeat (12 is recommended). Concentrate on the transmutation (rising) of energy from the pelvic area up, note arousing of manipura 3rd chakra.

A fundamental practice in hatha yoga as a steady practice secures health, unusual inner strength, super-normal powers and longevity.

Benefits:

Tones ALL abdominal organs and eliminates toxins from digestive tract.

Cures constipation, indigestion, colic, bile problems, hernia, appendicitis, duodenal ulcer, abscesses and prevents formation of stones. Even chronic diseases of stomach. Great benefits to testes and ovaries. Diaphragm is exercised, lungs strengthened

Disease like cholera, smallpox and others are not allowed into system.

Dysmenorrhea, leucorrhea and uterine abnormalities are relieved for women, nocturnal emissions and sexual continence improved in men.

Arousing of kundalini sakti, a dormant coil of energy at muladhara. Transmutation and sublimation of kundalini and sexual energies to higher chakras.

Use of the heavy lower energies brings vitality, health, vigor and strength.

ELEMENT

Earth

NAME

Muladhara (root)

PURPOSE

Foundation

ISSUES

Roots
Grounding
Nourishment
Trust
Health
Home
Family
Prosperity
Appropriate boundaries

COLOR

Red

LOCATION

Base of spine
Coccygeal plexus

IDENTITY

Physical

ORIENTATION

Self-preservation

DEMON

Fear

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

2nd trimester to 12 months

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

Physical growth
Motor skills
Object permanence

BASIC RIGHTS

To be here and have

BALANCED CHARACTERISTICS

Good health
Vitality
Well grounded
Comfortable in body
Sense of trust in the world
Feeling of safety and security
Ability to relax and be still
Stability
Prosperity
Right livelihood

TRAUMAS AND ABUSES

Birth trauma
Abandonment, physical neglect
Poor physical bonding with mother
Malnourishment, feeding difficulties

TRAUMAS AND ABUSES (CONT'D)

Major illness or surgery
Physical abuse or violent environment
Enema abuse
Inherited traumas—parents' survival fears (i.e., holocaust survivors, war veterans, poverty conditions)

DEFICIENCY

Disconnection from body
Notably underweight
Fearful, anxious, restless, can't settle
Poor focus and discipline
Financial difficulty
Poor boundaries
Chronic disorganization

EXCESS

Obesity, overeating
Hoarding, material fixation, greed
Sluggish, lazy, tired
Fear of change, addiction to security
Rigid boundaries

PHYSICAL MALFUNCTIONS

Disorders of the bowel, anus, large intestine
Disorders of solid parts of the body: bones, teeth
Issues with legs, feet, knees, base of spine, buttocks
Eating disorders
Frequent illness (can be deficient and/or excessive)

HEALING PRACTICES

Reconnect with body
Physical activity (aerobics, weights, running, dance)
Lots of touch, massage
Bioenergetic grounding
Hatha yoga
Look at earliest childhood relationship to mother
Reclaim right to be here

AFFIRMATIONS

It is safe for me to be here.
The earth supports me and meets my needs.
I love my body and trust its wisdom.
I am immersed in abundance.
I'm here and I'm real.