

Chakra 3: Manipura- The Navel Chakra

Our third chakra is called Manipura in Sanskrit. It is located 2-3 inches out of the physical body at the level of the navel. Some sources list this chakra to be located at the solar plexus. Manipura attunes with fire energy and electric power. It corresponds to influence with the sun. It controls ambition, ego, will power, dynamism, expansion and violence. It is known as Hara in eastern traditions. Manipura is in control of the spleen, liver, pancreas, adrenals and smaller glands of the bowels and stomach. The subtle fire force within the body maintains life and enlivens the body system producing the acids necessary for life. Through our acids food is digested, then transformed into blood and other vital fluids which contribute to formation of the entire body. A person with a prevalent arousing of manipura are characterized by an enormous willpower, be filled with optimism and seem tireless. They have an admirable capacity for leadership and have an almost hypnotic influence on the masses. These people are great political leaders, military heads, famous hypnotists and others with unusual charismatic powers. As manipura also relates to violence it is also the great leaders that lead without compassion killing all who get in their way. The insatiable greed for power often leads these leaders to the destruction of everyone who supports them and their own demise. Hitler, Ghangis Khan as two examples.

Physical asanas that attune to manipura have positive benefits to the stomach and the glands associated with it. If you are having digestive issues, low energy, poor self-discipline, weak willed, physically or emotionally cold, like to blame, are unreliable and are passive- working on attuning to manipura is what you need. On the psychology end, deficiencies in this chakra typically are due to shame and domination of will by those who have control over us. Refer to the attached summary chart from the book Eastern Body, Western Minds: Psychology and the Chakra system by Anodea Judith for the list of signs of excess and deficiencies.

From the original texts of yoga, the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali, there are 8 stages of yoga. First, yama - a set of restrictions in behaviour to attain a deep condition of harmony with all other beings. Second, niyama - a general directives of behaviour to attain a deep condition of balance within oneself. Third, asana -body position to gain resonance with the macrocosm (energies of the Universe). Fourth, pranayama- the special breath techniques of yoga. Fifth, pratyahara- withdrawal of attention within oneself. Sixth, Dharana- concentration. Seventh, Dhyana- meditation. Finally the eighth, Samadhi- realization of the essential self, knowing all there is within yourself therefore everything in the universe. The Yamas are Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing, or non-cheating), Brahmacharya (continence, involving self-restraint and moderation in all you do), and Aparigraha (non-possesiveness, including no envy, jealousy, unhealthy competitiveness or materialistic hoarding).

The niyamas are Sauca (purity, physical cleansing, clean diet), Santosha (contentment; the key to happiness), Tapas (discipline, austerity) and Svadhyaya (study of the Self, observing own feelings as well as study of material that enable you to evolve).

Given that manipura chakra is the seat of willpower I wanted to expand more on tapas. Tapas is having austerity and discipline within your life -which is more difficult for some than others. Tapas can also be seen as fanaticism, never stopping until the deed is completed and putting nothing ahead of it. I learned tapas to be an unbreakable vow you make to yourself. Somewhat like a new years resolution it is decision for discipline in something. The difference is you cannot let yourself fail. For if you fail it is much easier to fail the next time. With a tapas you start small, vowing to finish a small task without being distracted and once you successfully do it you build up confidence in your ability to follow through. Make a tapas on small things again and again, not letting anything to fail and building up to bigger things. I will practice at least 10 minutes of yoga each day Monday to Friday this month... be SMART. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and have a Time frame. Stop at nothing to succeed. If you take a tapas to fast every Monday for a year then Thanksgiving Monday counts too, if you give in one week it will be easy to make excuses again and again. Which is why making a tapas is a serious matter and must be held to that level of seriousness. Good luck, start small, be SMART.

ELEMENT	DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS	DEFICIENCY	PHYSICAL MALFUNCTIONS
Fire	Realization of separateness	Low energy	Eating disorders
NAME	Establishment of autonomy	Weak will, easily manipulated	Digestive disorders, ulcers
PURPOSE	BASIC RIGHTS	Poor self-discipline and follow-through	Hypoglycemia, diabetes
Transformation	To act and be an individual	Low self-esteem	Muscle spasms, muscular disorders
ISSUES	BALANCED CHARACTERISTICS	Cold, emotionally and/or physically	Chronic fatigue
Energy	Responsible, reliable	Poor digestion	Hypertension
Activity	Balanced, effective will	Collapsed middle	Disorders of stomach, pancreas, gall bladder, liver
Autonomy	Good self-esteem, balanced ego-strength	Attraction to stimulants	HEALING PRACTICES
Individuation	Warmth in personality	Victim mentality, blaming of others	Risk taking (deficiency)
Will	Confidence	Passive	Grounding and emotional contact
Self-esteem	Spontaneity, playfulness, sense of humor	Unreliable	Deep relaxation, stress control (excess)
Proactivity	Appropriate self-discipline	EXCESS	Vigorous exercise (running, aerobics, etc.)
Power	Sense of one's personal power	Overly aggressive, dominating, controlling	Martial arts
COLOR	Able to meet challenges	Need to be right, have last word	Sit-ups
Yellow	TRAUMAS AND ABUSES	Manipulative, power hungry, deceitful	Psychotherapy: Build ego strength; release or contain anger; work on shame issues; strengthen the will; encourage autonomy
LOCATION	Shaming	Attraction to sedatives	AFFIRMATIONS
Solar plexus	Authoritarianism	Temper tantrums, violent outbursts	I honor the power within me.
IDENTITY	Volatile situations	Stubbornness	I accomplish tasks easily and effortlessly.
Ego identity	Domination of will	Driving ambition (type A personality)	The fire within me burns through all blocks and fears.
ORIENTATION	Physical abuse, dangerous environment, fear of punishment	Competitive	I can do whatever I will to do.
Self-definition	Enmeshment	Arrogant	
DEMON	Age inappropriate responsibilities (parentified child)	Hyperactive	
Shame	Inherited shame from parent		
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE			
18 months to 4 years			

Trikonasana- Triangle pose

There are many variations of this asana and the specific effects listed are for the variation taught here. Differences in body position will have very different effects.

Standing with the feet as wide apart as possible, minimum of 60 degrees, 90 degrees is ideal. Stretch the arms out sideways at shoulder height, palms down. Bend the trunk sideways so the left arm reaches up and the right arm reaches down the right leg. If necessary weight can be rested with the right arm on the right leg but it is best performed with the lower hand floating giving no support. The raised left palm should be relaxed and the torso so not lean forward or back, in line like between two panes of glass. Repeat with the right hand raised.

Concentrate on the streams of telluric (earth) energies rising up the legs to manipura while also feeling the cosmic energies coming the arm. With the left arm raised note the feminine - charge and the activation of the secondary chakra to the left of manipura. With the right arm raised note the masculine + charge and the activation of secondary surya chakra to the right of manipura. Note a deep abdominal massage, an amplified mood of inner balance, self confidence and inner harmony.

Benefits:

Due to the increased lateral range of movement of the spine we have improved ability to sit for long periods and youthfulness. Strengthens the muscles of the spine, abdominals and neck. Removing backache, sciatica, neck sprains if practiced carefully. Relieved stiffness in the legs and hips. Acts beneficially on the thorax, developing the chest improving lung ailments. Benefits to the abdominal organs and digestion. With scoliosis this asana should be practiced on the one side to lessen the curve. This is one asana recommended into the late months of pregnancy. Trikonasana should not be performed abruptly and only by holding the asana for some time can benefits be obtained. Activating manipura you can also note an increase in courage, willpower and self confidence. It also grants improved ability to control spontaneous reactions, anger, fear, anxiety and other tensions.

Dhanurasana- Bow pose

Lying face down, bend the knees and arch the back to grasp the ankles. Arch the spine as much as possible, pushing to extend the legs. In the final stages perform an ample rocking movement forward and back with each inhalation and exhalation.

Forbiddance: Those with abdominal hernia, pregnant women. If menstruating, static bow without the rocking is recommended.

Concentrate on manipura chakra and the flow of energy through the limbs and notably in the superior part of the trunk. Notice the activation on manipura chakra, energising of the lower limbs, dynamism in the upper body and a secondary arousal of anahata the heart chakra.

Benefits:

A combination of bhujangasana (cobra) and salabhasana (locust) which act on the upper spine and lower spine, Dhanurasana acts mostly on the middle spine. It makes the vertebral column resilient and elastic, prevents early ossification of the bones. Relieving hunchback, slipped discs and other displacements of the spine. Acting powerfully on the abdominal organs activating digestion and curing defects on the intestines. A must of diabetics as it helps normalize the functions of the pancreas and a healthy effect on the thyroid. Better kidney and liver function and expulsion of toxins. This asana gives feelings of release and elation, bestows energy and vitality.

Swastikasana- pose of the whirling cross

Events of history have given the swastika symbol a poor image. The swastika is one of the oldest symbols of mankind, from the Incas, Hindus, ancient Japan and Scandinavians it has been used throughout history and is still used as a symbol of Buddhism in Asia and is prevalent in India.

A symbol for the sun in which everything orbits. Moving in a counter-clockwise direction, the yang, masculine form relates to manipura chakra. Also known as a symbol of the 4 corners of the world and the 4 elements meeting at the middle the 5th element ether. Ether is the symbol of spiritualism and consciousness. It is also a symbol of the pole in which the universe orbits. Swastika is a symbol of centering, righteousness and auspiciousness.

Swastikasana is a seated posture in which the leg position determines the polarity.

To perform we sit with the legs extended, bend the left leg so that the left foot touches the inner side of the right thigh. Then bend the right knee so the right foot touches the inner thigh of the opposite leg. The edges of the feet fit in between the thigh and the calf of the opposite leg. A cushion can be used under the buttocks to help in getting in position. Hands are placed in the lap either holding the other, palm up or performing a finger mudra. Tucking the middle finger in is correlated to manipura chakra.

Concentrate on manipura chakra. Note the arousal of manipura chakra and secondarily ajna the 6th chakra.

Benefits:

Great effects in preparing the body for pranayama, the breath techniques. Some masters claim extensive practice you can become immune to disease and may obtain levitation. It is also recommended for gaining advances in the other limbs of yoga, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and reaching samadhi. Swastikasana is a suitable asana for sitting in meditation and is much easier than the other more demanding postures. Tailor pose, the general cross legged seated position of the west is problematic in the sense of polarity. Swastikasana or vajrasana (diamond kneeling pose covered with Chakra 4) is recommended for beginners in meditation. There is also belief that other mysterious and esoteric effects can be realized through its practice given the power of its name.

Of course this asana helps to open the hips, increase flexibility of the ankles and improve seated posture. Concentration is improved, abdominal muscles are toned and strain on the heart is reduced. This asana also helps to maintain normal body temperature and prepare for learning padmasana, the lotus pose.