

Week 3, part 1

Theory

Bandhas

The word bandha means to bind. Bandha is a gateway, portal or valve.

Like using locks on your luggage, we use bandhas to keep the content in, the energy in, prevent it from leaking, getting lost. These locks create a concentration of energy and eventually helps awareness to rise and expand from 1st to 7th chakra. Bandha's unlocking the door to your inner/subtle body.

Usually bandha's are used firstly in the practice of pranayama's. Once mastered in pranayama, one can start using bandha's in the asana practice.

The 4 important bandhas in pranayama.

1. Mula bandha: root lock, a lift of the pelvic floor: Lift of perineum, area between anus and genitals. Applying Mula bandha (root lock): not loosing /leaking prana, prevents prana from moving down/out, keeps the energy in and moves energy back to the navel,

Practicing Mula bandha: Holding up your pee or placing a block high up in between the legs.

Naturally when riding a bike, carrying your shopping bags, climbing stairs.

2. Jalandhara bandha : chin lock or throat lock: Applying Jalandhara bandha: lengthen the neck, bringing the chin back and towards the chest, closing off the throat.

Making a double chin 😊

Practice: by placing a tennis ball between your chin and neck

Applying Jalandhara bandha protect us from releasing too much energy to the brain, prevents prana from moving up.

Regulates the metabolism

Calms the mind
Regulates the thyroid

Mula bandha and Jalandhara bandha seal the upper + lower end of the spinal column

3. Uddiyana bandha : flying up lock: abdominal lock: Lift of the diaphragm.

Helps energy to rise up through the center of the core and intensifies the upward energy from the Mula Bandha and downward energy from Jalandhara Bandha. Helps digestion. Soft massage for lower back

Practicing Uddiyana bandha:

Feet hip width, hands on knees.

Exhale, with false inhalation (=action of taking breath in without taking the air in), bring the abdomen and organs in and up to the spine. Now you can feel your lower ribs. Hold breath for a few counts.

Release Uddiyana bandha and inhale

4. Maha Bandha: using the 3 bandhas together

Practice:

Stand hip width, exhale

Apply Mula bandha (gentle lift of the perineum)

Apply Jalandhara bandha

Bend forward, hands on thighs, elbows straight

Apply Uddiyana bandha

Hold the breath for 5-10 counts

Release first Muhla bandha, then Jalandhara bandha, then Uddiyana bandha

Inhale, come up to stand straight.

Why do we use locks if yoga is all about opening?

First they hold the blood flow, when released there is an increased flow of fresh blood.

Old, dead cells are flushed away, activating the organs to strengthen and renew as circulation is stimulated.

Energetically, Bandhas stimulate the brain-centres, nadis and chakras.

They purify and remove blockages and harmonizes and balances the Self.

Kumbhaka: Retention of the breath

Puraka= inhalation

Rechaka= exhalation

Kumbhaka = retention of the breath.

Antar Kumbhaka: breath retention after inhalation using Muhla bandha and Jalandhara bandha.

Bahir Kumbhaka: breath retention after exhalation done with Mula Bhandha, Uddhiyana Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha and Maha bandha

Kevala Kumbhaka: the natural retention/pause between in -and ex- and ex- and inhalation

Kumbhakas: not with high blood pressure.

Antar Kumbhaka is okay with low blood pressure

Bahir Kumbhaka not okay with low blood pressure

Kapalabhati

Kapalabhati: one of the 6 shatkarmas (kriyas)

Kapala=skull, Bhati=to shine: shining skull

This invigorating practice detoxifies the frontal lobe, which tends to accumulate toxins.

It brings clarity in the mind and awakens the centers for subtle perception.

It strengthens the immune system.

Purifies the blood and the respiratory system.

The Practice:

Kapalabhati: while exhale forcefully, the abdomen contract.

There is naturally a subtle Mula Bandha: the perineum slightly lifts.

The focus is on the **exhale**, the inhale happens by itself.

Short retention (Antar Kumbhaka) after the inhale and short retention (Bahir Kumbhaka) after the exhale.

How to do

Do 3 rounds

Mild=50 exhalations, medium=75, intense=100

1 round:

- Sit in a steady comfortable position, spine elongated, eyes closed
- Take one deep inhalation and exhalation
- Inhale half way, start with strong exhalations through the nose
- Focus is on the exhalation, inhalation happens by itself
- At the end of a round, exhale completely and applying Bahir Kumbhaka (retention), applying Maha bandha

- Sit for 10 seconds
- Release the bandhas
- Inhale deeply and exhale completely.
- Coming back to your natural breath
- Sitting still, and watch the natural breath, sensations, feelings and thoughts.

Continue 2nd and 3d round

After the last round , sit still or lay down in Shavasana for 5 min or more.

You could also finish with a balancing or a cooling breath and then sit still or lay down in Shavasana

Contra-indications: Menstruation, pregnancy, high blood pressure, low blood pressure, glaucoma, heart diseases, hernia, migraine, panic attacks, epilepsy, an unstable mind

Build your practice:

You can do more or less rounds.

Do not overdo (rajas) especially when you are a beginner: Start with 50 Exhalations

Neither give up too fast (tamas). Give yourself the chance to get an experience. Even if it feels a bit awkward in the beginning.

Through practice you will get the neck of it and the benefits.

Time of practice

In the mornings or when you need to wake up, energizing yourself.

Not doing before going to sleep.

Have an empty stomach.

Week 3, part 2

When the breath wanders the mind also is unsteady. But when the breath is calmed the mind too will be still, and the yogi achieves long life. Therefore, one should learn to control the breath.”

—Svatmarama, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*

Agnisara

Fire breath: Agni =fire Sara= energy, essence.

Massaging the abdominal organs,

A heating practice: detoxing , purifying, energizing,
stimulating digestion, clear mind.

How to do:

Do 3 rounds of each 30 in and out -breaths

1 round:

Sit comfortable.

Applying Mula bandha Applying

Jalandhara bandha

Place your hand on your lower belly

Exhale

Inhale pull navel forward

Exhale pull navel back to the spine

Last exhale, exhale completely

Release Mula bandha, release Jalandhara bandha.

Inhale, exhale

Come back to your natural breath

Sit still for a minute or so

Watch the natural breath, body sensation, thoughts and feelings.

Continue for 2 more rounds

Sit still or come into Shavasana for 5 min or as long as you wish

Contra-indications: Menstruation, pregnancy, high blood pressure, low blood pressure, glaucoma, heart diseases, hernia, migraine, panic attacks, epilepsy, an unstable mind

Build your practice:

You can do more or less rounds.

Do not overdo (rajas) neither give up too fast (tamas). Through practice you will get the neck of it and the benefits.

Time of practice

In the mornings or when you need to wake up, energizing yourself.

Not doing before going to sleep.

Have an empty stomach.