

Chapter 3: Energy Locks



The third chapter of the book discusses mudras, which are energy locks. By trapping prana (life force energy) in the body, the theory goes, it grows. This chapter also includes self abuse and bizarre sexual rituals. They aren't going to show up at your typical yoga class, even at the brew pub or winery, so I'm going to stick with the ones that might.

The illustration above is a modern pose called Janusirasana, or Head to Knee pose. The alignment for the first mudra is the same, but the goal is more about the locks than the depth, and it is very active, so when you practice it, you will sit up higher and keep a straighter spine. In this position, you will engage 3 energy locks: in your pelvis, abdomen and throat, called Bandhas.

Jalandhara Bandha, The Chin or Throat Lock: Bring your awareness to the hinge of your jaw. Gently draw it up and back just a bit, so you feel the front of your throat tighten. Then, draw the back of your head up and chin down, so the whole front of your throat is “locked.”

Mulabandha, The Root Lock: The modern human has dysfunctional muscles all around the pelvis, so finding the root lock can take a bit of practice. Many teachers talk about engaging the muscles of the perineum, but the book is clear: “Contract the anus. Draw the Apana upward.” Apana is energy. Bandhas are muscular contractions. Focus on your sacrum, that triangle shaped part of your spine that sits between your hip bones. By squeezing your anus and drawing the energy toward the front of the sacrum, mulabandha is engaged. Then, hold the energy at the front of the sacrum, and let go of the anus a bit.

Uddiyana Bandha, The Abdominal Lock: When Mulabandha is engaged, Uddiyana automatically rises. Add in. Pull your whole belly in and up and hold.

*This Uddiyanabandha is surely the lion that kills
the elephant of death.*

Svatmarama tells us that if we practice this Bandha correctly, we will become young, even if old, and after 6 months of diligent practice, conquer death. So it makes sense in the next verse when he says Uddiyana is the best of all the bandhas. On the other hand, he's been dead for 600 years.

I can't promise immortality, but there is no question that learning to engage the muscles that support the front of your spine is useful, and so I agree with the author when he advises us to practice Mulabandha, the root lock, every day.

*This triad of bandhas is the best.
It is practiced by the great masters.
Yogis know it accomplishes all Hatha practices.*

Although they show up late in chapter 3, the three locks are required to create the three "maha" mudras that open the chapter. They are:

Mahamudra: Mahamudra uses the seated Janusirasa posture. Engage the three locks. Hold the breath high in the throat, and when ready, slowly exhale. Practice evenly on both sides.

Mahabandha: Sit in Half Lotus pose, with your right foot on your left thigh and left heel tucked in to the perineum. Inhale and engage the bandhas. Hold as long as possible. Exhale slowly. Practice on the other side.

Mahaveda: From Mahabandha, put your hands or fists on the floor, or blocks, and push your bottom off the ground. Hold, and then lower, and Svatomarama says "slowly strike the buttocks on the ground." Wait another moment while the breath "quivers in the body," and then slowly exhale.

Pradipika Challenge? Work all three, 8 times a day, every 3 hours.