

## MUDRAS & BANDHAS – A SUMMARY

A progressive teaching method to achieve Maha Mudra  
as described in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

Rieker (1972) - Allan and Unwin Satyananda (1985) - Bihar

*The following sections need to be read:*

Rieker (2 - 45,46,47) (3 - 1-31) (3 - 1-54) (3- 55-83)

Satyananda pages 305-507 in this version more specific instructions are given in the commentary.

### 1. JALANDHARA BANDHA

Chin lock. Breath held in.

**jal - throat, jalam - water, dhara - supporting**

**Method** - Sit straight, cross-legged or kneeling, hands on knees, arms straight. Breathe in, hold in, push the chin forward and down onto the jugular notch.

*Do x 5 holding the breath in, not more than 10 beats. Raise the head before breathing out.*

*Do x 2 holding the breath out, not more than 10 beats. Raise the head before breathing in.*

**Purpose** - The pressure brought to bear on the carotid sinus nerve, alerts the brain which sends a message for the heart to slow down. In yoga terms, prana is forced down to unite with apana which is drawn up by Mula Bandha at the solar plexus.

**Precautions** - Very few. Don't hold for more than 5 beats without Mula Bandha.

Don't build up counts if H.B.P. is present. No pain should be felt in the neck. If short-necked, roll a scarf to place under the chin, to supply the pressure.

### 2. MULA BANDHA

Root lock. Breath held in.

**Method** - General practices to strengthen the pelvic floor first. Contract the rectal muscles repeatedly (Aswini Mudra). Contract the muscles around the pubis repeatedly (Yoni Mudra).

Aim to isolate one movement from the other then finally when some control is experienced, practice the muscle lift into Mula Bandha focusing on the central point, not the front or back. The cat or shoulder stand can help you to locate this point.

**Purpose** - To draw apana up towards prana and to prevent too much pressure on the pelvic floor during retention in pranayama. To strengthen the pelvic floor and prevent prolapse.

**Precautions** - Only for H.B.P. so use the slightest of retention. An excellent practice for the elderly without the retention. Everyone can lie down with the knees bent to practice pelvis rolling, to locate the central point in the perineum.

### 3. MAHA BANDHA

Great lock. Breath held in.

**Method** - Sit in half lotus. Hands on knees. Breathe in and hold in whilst going into Jalandhara Bandha. Then pull up into Mula Bandha. Release smoothly, Mula, Jalandhara, then breathe out through the nose with control. Do the same counts as at Jalandhara with this addition of Mula Bandha.

**Purpose** - Physical control of muscles and breath. In yoga terms “defeats death, effects the unification of the 3 nadis, acquires ‘siddhis’ (powers).

**Precautions** - Only for the fit if necessary. Use a block under the buttocks to let the knees touch the floor.

### 4. UDDIYANA BANDHA

Flying upward. Breath held out.

**Method** - Easier to learn standing first. For pranayama purposes it is done in a cross-legged asana. Breathe, in swoosh out forcefully through the mouth. Keep the breath out, put on Jalandhara Bandha, pull up into Uddiyana which will - in effect - pull the pelvic floor up into Mula Bandha. Slowly, release, Uddiyana, Jalandhara, then breathe in. Find your own level for retention.

**Purpose** - Strengths the abdominal muscles, A preparatory practice for vasti and vajroli as it creates a vacuum within. Counteracts prolapse and piles by reversing the pull of gravity on the pelvic floor muscles. Useful for post natal, probably about 9 - 12 months after birth. It is beneficial for prostate. In yoga terms, prana rises through the sushumna, it is known as ‘the bird flying upwards’.

**Precautions** - Very many, the same as for Nauli.

**Prohibited** – ear and eye complaints, high and low blood pressure, hiatus hernia and inguinal hernia, pregnancy, colitis or stomach ulcer, menstruation, fibroids etc, young adolescent girls, wearers of coils or prolapse rings, surgery in the thorax or abdomen in the last twelve months and smokers.

To locate where the effect is felt, lie on the floor, breathe in raising the arms behind, swoosh the air out and there will be an involuntary deep hollow experienced at the edge of the lower front ribs. This would be safe for most, except those with hiatus hernia.

#### 5. MAHA MUDRA

Great seal. Breath held in.

**Method** - Sit in Janusirsana, but alter the position by having the torso erect and then angle forward, keeping the back lengthened. Hold the right foot or loop it with a strap. Arms are straight. Breathe in, hold in with Jalandhara and Mula. Release Mula and Jalandhara, then breathe out. Practice 3 times on each side.

#### 6. MAHA MUDRA

Breath held out.

**Only practice if confident in everything that has gone before.**

Breathe in, swoosh the air out, then Jalandhara, Uddiyana and Mula. Focus on energy coming up the sushumna, then finally on the brow centre - it can be done with eyes closed or open - (shambavi mudra). **Keep the head neck and spine in a straight line, as the idea is to create a straight line for energy to rise. Retract the head, rather than drop it down.** Then release Uddiyana, Mula, Jalandhara and breathe in. Practice twice on both sides.

**Purpose** Brings awareness inward. Gives a feeling of strength and being positive. In yoga terms it stimulates the shakti and draws up powerfully.

**Precautions** Only for the healthy and experienced in its full practice. However, it is self limiting and can be sometimes practiced in a very moderate way for the physical benefits. There are some variations shown in books but stay with the positions given above for this practice.



**Be disciplined in working through each stage slowly.**

**These instructions are the 'bare bones'.  
You will build on them through the years, unless you go for intensive  
'Ashram' training.**