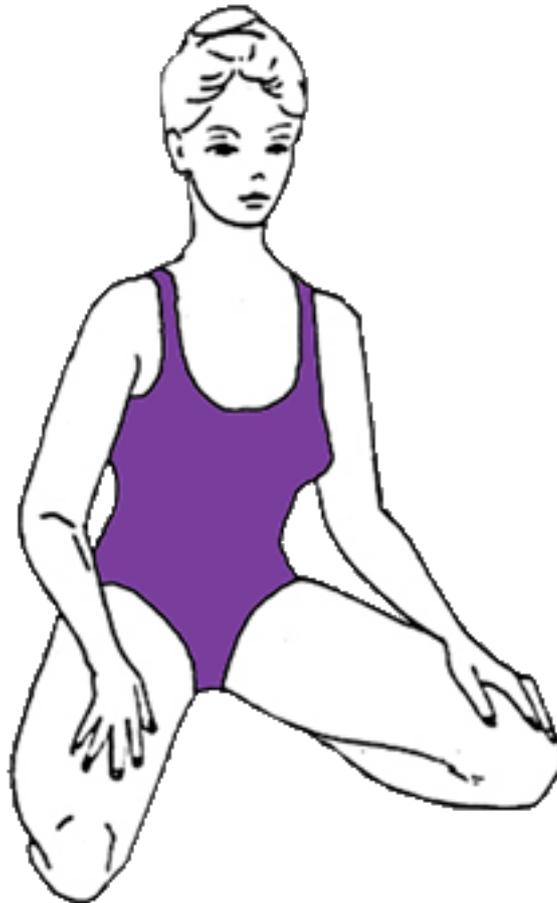


Locks or *Bhandas*

Locks or *Bhandas* create an internal posture that facilitates the activation and flow of the Kundalini. The slight movements in the muscles align the body so the energy in the spine can flow upward, not downward. Lock refers to the action performed by the locks before a dam, which prevent water, or in this case energy, from being released in a backward or downward direction. The term locks should not be interpreted as a forceful constriction. The idea is not to block the energy but to open up the spine so that the energy can flow easier and be released upward. A more gentle way to relate to the locks is to view them as ways to open up the flowers or the pedals of the lotuses along the spine.

When to Apply the Locks

Relaxing while holding a posture (after the exercise is completed), creates a dynamic space for movement of energy. In general, the locks are applied while holding the posture after completing a yoga exercise. This direction is not always specified. It is assumed that the student will gently apply the appropriate locks to anchor in the internal effects of the asana.



Rootlock or Mulband

Practicing Rootlock grounds our attention in the lower chakras, expands our sensory awareness, and creates a sense of warmth, fullness, aliveness, and vitality. It seals the effect of an exercise and helps us contain our energy in the body.

Rootlock engages the first, second, and third chakras. Because each chakra embodies a different element, we work with them separately at first to feel how to empower that element. At the first chakra, we pulse the anus to establish our relationship with Mother Earth and to feel a stable grounded base. At the second chakra, we relax so that the fluid water energy can move and flow. At the third chakra, we stimulate the awakening of the fire energy.

Full Rootlock, or Mulband, engages the anus and perineum, the sex organs, and the navel point. Although not always specified, it is understood that we apply the root lock on the suspended inhale and/or the suspended exhale after an exercise. The goal of root lock is to direct subtle energies produced by the various Kundalini Yoga exercises. Root lock focuses our energy, moves it up the spine to feed our brain, and circulates the energy produced by the exercise throughout the body.

Rootlock can be applied with a variety of intensities. However, its goal is to move and direct energy, not to block it. Therefore, everyone is invited to experiment with how to use this internal positioning to create enjoyable and sensual awakenings in the spine and body.

Rootlock can be done at any time in your practice or during the day to activate the spine and third eye, to feed the brain, release tension, to dissipate depression, to become vitally alive, and to change any mood or behavior. Practice generating and releasing energy with Breath of Fire and other lower chakra exercises and then experiment with the locks. Focus at your third eye to awaken the sixth chakra.

The complete Rootlock is performed in three steps, which become almost simultaneous when each part is understood. The three aspects of Rootlock correspond to the first three chakras:

1. *First Chakra - Earth Element.* Lightly contracting the muscles of the rectum or anal sphincter, drawing it in and up (as if trying to hold back a bowel movement).
2. *Second Chakra - Water Element.* Drawing up the sex organ (so that the urethral tract is contracted, like trying to hold back urination).
3. *Third Chakra - Fire Element.* Pull the navel point in by drawing the lower abdomen back towards the spine. This is applied with breath held (in or out), and helps unite the two major energy flows, prana and apana, generating psychic heat which triggers the release of Kundalini energy, and often ends an asana or exercise.

To identify and work with the muscles of each of the chakras, practice working with them separately.

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