

## BANDHA IN YOGA

*K*undalini yoga offers a great way to train the body for better compliance of muscles including those that are used in the act of sex. The path of kundalini yoga gets tough along the way as more and more is demanded of your body after the *pranayamas* and the *asanas* of the *hathayoga*. You are required to do the *bhandas* or the locks. These locks are nothing but special *asanas* that literally lock the body into certain postures. Of course they are specific for certain pathways and they ensure that your ability to perform sexually is strengthened.

The Bandhas regulate changes in the intra abdominal and intra thoracic pressures that affect abdominal and thoracic organs to a great extent.

The various types of Bandh have been described in Yoga. However none of them defines the term "Bandh" as such. The three types of bandhas, viz Jalandhar Bandh, Uddiyan Bandh and Mula Bandh have been described in many of the ancient texts. With the help of these descriptions, an attempt may be made to define the Bandh's. Bandh may be defined as a particular action involving pressure or strain on the muscles. It is expected in Yoga to retain a controlled firm pose in Bandh as it is retained in the asanas. The Bandh's are studied while studying Pranayama.

Bandhas are nuero- muscular locks, which prevent the outward flow of energy by directing energy inward thus activating the nadis and the energy body. Bandhas not only affect the body and energy, but also builds the mind and spiritual centers. Bandhas when mastered is believed to accelerate, progress in asana, pranayama, mudra, and meditation. Bandhas increase secretions in the body and are tools that restore hormonal balance in the body making you happy and relaxed throughout the day.

Bandhs have been described in Hathapradeepika in the chapter relating to Mudras. In all, 10 mudras have been described in it. The chapter describes all the three Bandhs as Mudras.

The three basic types of Bandha's :-

- Jalandhar Bandh
- Uddiyan Bandh
- Mula Bandh

## JALANDHAR BANDHA

### Introduction :

It is difficult to explain why this bandh is known as Jalandhar Bandh. However, one may guess that Rishi Jalandhar might have defined the act of this Bandh for the first time, and the same was named after him. (In Yoga, sometimes the actions are known by the name of the Rishis, such as Matsyendrasan, Gorakshasan etc.)

If we try to trace the meaning of the word Jalandhar, " Jal " means " Net ", in this case, net of Nadis (energy channels) and the word " Dhar " means to stop or to hold the flow of the fluid (Amrut), flowing through the nadis. However, let us understand the action behind this bandh instead of discussing its name or origin.

### Action : Pre-position :



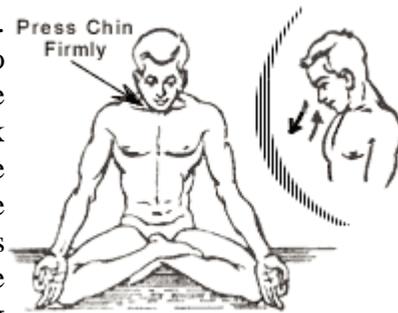
This bandh can be achieved without getting into any asana pose. But generally, it is studied in Padmasan or any other asana specified for Dhyana Process. Padmasan or Siddhasan are considered as the best positions to practise this bandh.

### To perform the Bandh :

In this bandh, it is expected to contract the muscles of the neck and to press the chin firmly on to the depression at the end of the throat (jugular notch).

### SIDDHASANA

The neck is to be bent a little for achieving this bandh. But it should not be bent much. It is to be pressed onto the depression just as a spring is pressed with a little force. The release of the force brings the spring back into normal position. The same principle is to be applied in this bandh. Since all the muscles of the neck and the throat are contracted totally, a force is exerted onto the seven paths in the throat. The presence of the force interferes with the breathing process. Hence, this bandh is to be attained after Pooraka and is to be released before Rechaka. The bandh is necessary in Kumbhaka.



### JALANDHAR BANDHA

### Physical Effects :

Nowhere, the effects of this bandh on the body have been clearly defined. However, effects can be enumerated on the basis of experiments carried out at Kaivalyadham, Lonavala and other observations while teaching and studying this bandh.

Due to the particular action of the neck required to achieve this bandh, it is pressed forward and the spinal cord gets a little bit lifted upwards. The force of this action is felt on the spinal cord. Spinal cord has the utmost importance in the control of the body. With this force, the circulation of blood increases thereby increasing the efficiency of the spinal cord.

The bandh also affects " Vidyan Nadi " which passes through the neck. It is the only blood vessel passing below the neck. It is divided into two parts, which move towards the brain. These are known as Carotid Arteries. These arteries pass from both the sides of the neck to the brain. The beats of the heart can be easily felt if the neck is bent backwards, the pulse is felt on both the sides below the jaw. The area where the blood vessel is divided into two parts is a little bit flat and is known as Carotid Sinus. The wall covering Carotid Sinus is thin and can easily get affected by inner or outside pressure. The nerve passing from here to the brain is known as Carotid Nerve. It goes high up into the skull and then down into the brain. This nerve is related to internal carotid, external carotid and carotid sinus. The pressure exerted on this nerve is transmitted to the brain. The pressure can be exerted from outside too. This process is attempted in the Jalandhar Bandh. Due to the peculiar position of the neck, the pressure is exerted on carotid sinus and the nerves are activated to send a signal to the brain. The brain activates its machinery to lower the blood pressure, so that the muscles of the heart start functioning slowly. The heart beats are reduced. The reason why this happens is that the position of the bandh lessens the blood supply to the carotid artery. The reduction in the blood supply to the brain slows down the body activities and the practitioner can observe the complete stillness of body and mind. But to achieve this position, the bandh has to be practised for a number of years. After putting in enough practice, the yogasadhaka can achieve such elated state of mind wherein he can forget the outside world and even the awareness of his own body. Most of the functions of the body are stopped and the sadhaka can progress towards samadhi. However, with even a little bit of study and practice of this bandh, sadhaka can achieve calm and quiet mind devoid of any thoughts and the nearly lifeless body. The state is pleasurable.

The messages are passed on from carotid sinus to that centre in the brain which regulates the blood pressure. The pressure on the carotid sinus is transmitted to the brain in the form of messages and accordingly the blood pressure is reduced. This is the plan of the nature to reduce the increased blood pressure. In pranayam, there is a possibility of increasing the blood pressure while performing Kumbhaka. Hence, achieving Jalandhar Bandh before Kumbhaka automatically results in controlling the bloodpressure. This is a major benefit of Jalandhar Bandh.

There is another important benefit of this bandh. The bandh is advised in Pranayam after Pooraka. Kumbhaka is observed after Pooraka. At the time of observing Kumbhaka , the increased pressure on the inhaled air, results in air trying to find out an escape route. Since the usual path of escape i.e. the nostrils are closed, the air tries to enter eustachian tube and finds a way behind the ear drums. The increased pressure on the eardrums is not advisable and can cause a lot of complaints. However, the position of the pressed neck in

Jalandhar Bandh stops this inhaled air from entering into these routes and the eardrums are saved from the ill effects.

**Duration :**

This bandh is to be observed after Pooraka and before Kumbhaka. After Kumbhka, the bandh is to be released before practising Rechaka. Hence, the duration of Kumbhaka is the duration for this bandh too. Instead of practising this bandh independently, it is to be practised while practising Pranayam.

**Precaution :**

The bandh is not to be practised by persons suffering from breath related problems or high or low bloodpressure, unless advised by the experts in the field. During Pranayam, the bandh is to be observed after Pooraka. Rechaka is to be practised after Kumbhaka, after releasing the bandh. Rechaka should not be observed while being in this bandh.

**References in the ancient texts :**

The bandh has been described in **Hathapradeepika** in the third chapter as under :

Kanthamakunchya hridaye sthapayechhibukam dridham |  
Bandho jalandharakhyoyam jaramrituvinashakah || H P 3-70  
Badhnani hi shirajalam adhogami nabhojalam |  
Tato jalandharo badhah kanthadukkhahoghanashanah || H P 3-71

**Meaning :** The chin is to be pressed on the chest after contracting the throat. This bandh eliminates old age and death. The contracted veins in the throat ensure that the liquid from the skies is received here. Hence, the bandh has been appropriately known as Jalandhar Bandh, which means that it destroys any pain in the throat.

**Gherandsamhita** has also described the bandh as under :

Kanthatankochanam krutva chibukam hridaye nyaset |  
Jalandharakrute bandhe shodashadharbandhanam |  
Jalandharam mahamudra mrityoeach kshayakarini || G S 3-12

**Meaning :** The chin is to be pressed onto the heart after contracting the throat. This Jalandhar Bandh supports sixteen types of bandhas and destroys death.

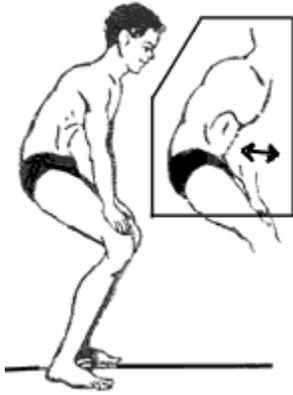
Siddham jalandharam bandham yoginam siddhidayakam |  
Shanmasmabyaset yo hi sa siddho natra samshayah || G S 3-13

**Meaning :** Jalandhar Bandh is Swayamsiddha and the sadhaka who practises this bandh for six months will, no doubt, achieve siddha status.

In both the texts, the description as well as the effects of the bandh is more or less the same. Both the texts have assured that the bandh causes destruction of old age and death. Observing this bandh gives peace and calmness to both, the heart and the mind. This in turn increases the lifetime of the sadhaka.

**Benefits:** Jalandhara Bandha regulates the flow of blood to the cephalic region of the head, actually accelerating blood drainage from the vital organs of the head and the neck. Without this Bandha, blood normally stagnates in the organs of the head causing tension of the eyes and producing such conditions as migraine headaches and the general sense of woolliness of the brain. The venous drainage, from the head and neck area is clearly indicated to be of great value in correcting tension problems of the face, nasal passages, throat and neck areas.

## UDDIYAN BANDHA



### Introduction :

This bandh involves movement of the muscles of the stomach and especially the muscles of the diaphragm. The movement is important and characteristic. Hathayoga assigns a special importance to Uddiyana Bandh. The study of Pranayam is not complete without studying this bandh. While performing this bandh, the muscle of the diaphragm is stretched in upward direction; hence this bandh is termed as Uddiyana Bandh. Also, this bandh is useful for awakening of Kundalini Shakti while making spiritual progress, hence it may have been termed as Uddiyana Bandh.

### Pre-position :

The bandh involves action of muscles of the stomach and hence it may be performed while being in Standing Pose or Sitting Pose. The bandh can also be performed while being in Padmasana, Siddhasana, Vajrasana and while practising pranayam. Or it may be performed independently while being in these asanas too. However, for the new entrants in the field, it is advisable to study the bandh, while being in standing pose. It is easier to learn this bandh while in standing pose and it can be performed effectively too. Hence, here the bandh has been explained while being in standing pose.

### To perform the bandh :

- Stand up with distance of 1 to 1.5 feet between the legs
- Bend a little in the knees and place left palm on the left knee and right palm on the right knee.
- Bend the shoulders a little towards the front and the neck also towards the front so that the weight of the body is shifted onto the knees through the hands. This reduces the strain on the stomach and the muscles of the stomach can be relaxed.
- Inhale deeply and then exhale gradually.

While exhaling, try to shift the muscles of the stomach towards inner side. Lift up the ribs a little bit and push the muscles from within with a gentle push towards the upward direction. The muscles of the stomach must be relaxed at this time, so that they can be pushed up. This results in muscles of diaphragm being pushed upwards. This is the final stage of Uddiyana Bandh. Try to remain firmly in this pose. This pose is to be retained when the breath is fully exhaled. When there is an urgent need to inhale, the bandh must be released gradually as under.

### **Releasing the bandh pose :**

- Relax the muscles of the stomach so that they are slowly released back to the normal position. Diaphragm will also be released to the normal pose.
- Relax the pressure in the shoulders and neck area and start inhaling gradually.
- After inhaling completely, bring back the hands into the normal pose and straighten out the bent knees.
- Join both the legs together and come back into the standing pose.

### **Important aspects of the bandh :**

The pose involves pressure on the knees with the help of both the hands and retaining a firm pose with a particular pressure on the neck and shoulder muscles. The weight of the body is shifted onto the knees due to the pose. This relaxes the muscles of the stomach and the diaphragm. In this position, the muscles of the stomach are pushed inwards and the muscles of the diaphragm are pushed upwards. The ribs are lifted up a little bit and the chest is broadened. All these actions are performed simultaneously. However, the pose is to be attained after exhaling the breath completely. An attempt is made to inhale without actually inhaling the air into the lungs. This attempt results in expanding the ribs but as the air is not inhaled, the diaphragm is pushed upwards. This is the main part to be achieved while in this bandh. The stomach is pulled in and the navel pushed upwards. Further the muscles of the stomach must be relaxed while in this bandh. The more the relaxation, the better the performance of the bandh.

During this bandh, the stomach is taken considerably inside and a vacuum is created in it. A little bit bending of the shoulders in forward direction will prove useful for this bandh. Once the pose is achieved, it is essential to be in that pose for some time. However, all this time, the breath must be exhaled. The pose is to be retained after exhalation of the breath and till the time an urge is felt for inhalation. When the urge is felt, all the muscles should be gradually relaxed and brought back to the original position and then the breath should be inhaled. Inhalation should not take place before bringing the muscles to the original state.

### **Physical Effects :**

The diaphragm is moved to a great extent in this bandh, hence the muscles of the diaphragm get well exercised and this movement also helps in the regular breathing. When the strength and the efficiency of diaphragm is improved, the breathing system also works more efficiently. Also, it is discovered after research that the organs in the stomach develop a negative pressure in this Uddiyan bandh. Due to such negative pressure, the blood supply to these organs is improved. The difference between the negative pressure during this bandh and the normal pressures resumed after relaxation, increases friction on the internal organs such as stomach, small intestines, liver etc. thereby improving their efficiency. This also results in improving the secretion of the digestive juices. The bandh involves movement, as if one is inhaling, however actual air is not inhaled, hence this creates negative pressure on the lungs and the heart. This also results in affimproving

their efficiency. Due to this negative pressure, the blood circulation in the heart is increased. The bandh also helps in improving the digestive system. It may also be affecting several other organs of the body. However, further research is necessary to find out all such effects.

It is stated in various ancient texts that apart from these benefits, the bandh is also useful for spiritual progress and awakening of Kundalini power. The bandh is indispensable for the study of pranayama. The air pressure resulting in pranayama is regulated in proper direction due to the position of this bandh. Otherwise, such pressures can create harmful effects on the body. Hence, this bandh is indispensable in pranayama.

### **Duration :**

The bandh action is to be performed after exhaling completely. The proper duration for the bandh is the time for which it can be retained comfortably but firmly after exhalation and without inhaling. Inhalation should not be immediate after releasing the bandh pose. The inhalation i.e. pooraka after releasing the bandh has to be in a controlled manner. Hence, the bandh is to be retained till the time it can be easily retained after complete rechaka. After releasing the bandh, the pooraka should be performed gradually. In the initial stages, the bandh cannot be maintained even for 10 to 15 seconds. However, after proper practice, it can be firmly maintained for 1 to 2 minutes. If after achieving bandh pose, all the other muscles of the body are relaxed, the bandh can be maintained for a little more duration. Because in a relaxed state of the body, the need for oxygen is reduced and the oxygen present in the body can be used up for a little more time. Hence, the bandh duration can also be increased.

### **Precaution :**

Persons suffering from stomach ailments, heart troubles or defective blood circulation should not attempt to perform the bandh. Persons suffering from diseases like hernia too should not perform this bandh.

While performing Uddiyan bandh, it is to be performed after exhalation. This is the proper method while studying this bandh independently. However, while practising this bandh during pranayama, the pose of the bandh is to be taken while being in kumbhaka.

### **References in the ancient texts :**

The third chapter in **Hathapradeepika** describes ten mudras. Uddiyan bandh has been described as one of the mudras. The writer of Hathapradeepika explains why this mudra is termed as Uddiyan bandh as follows :

Badhho yen sushumnyam pranastuddiyate yatah |  
Tasmaduddiyanakhyoyam yogibhihi samudahrutah || 3-55

**Meaning:** The prana (Zeal) in the body is raised due to the performance of this bandh, hence this bandh is termed as Uddiyan bandh.

The action of this bandh is described as under :

Udare paschimam tanam nabherudhwaram cha karayet |  
Uddiyano hyasou bandho mrityumatang kesari || 3-57

**Meaning :** The stomach is to be pressed inwards and the navel upwards. This process is known as Uddiyan bandh. This action is like lion killing elephant which represents death. Nowhere in the process, it is described that the bandh is to be performed after exhalation. This part was taught as a matter of master-disciple tradition and hence perhaps not explained in detail in the shloka.

The effects of this bandh have been described as under :

Uddiyanam tu sahajam gurunam kathitam sada |  
Abhyasatata yastu vrudhohi tarunayate || 3-58

**Meaning :** If the bandh is practised constantly and regularly as taught by the Guru, even an old man can be transformed into a young one.

The effects have been a bit exaggerated over here, however the hidden meaning is to be understood. The bandh causes certain beneficial effects on the body, which in turn result in youth like state of the body full of enthusiasm.

**The next shloka describes as under :**

Nabherurdhwamadhaschapi tanam kuryatprayatnatah |  
Shanmasbhyasenmrutyum jayatyeva na samshayah || 3-59

**Meaning :** If a sadhaka practices stretching the navel, the portion below the navel and the upper part of the stomach towards back and upward direction, regularly for a period of six months, there is no doubt that he can win over the death.

This description is also a bit exaggerated. However the logic behind it must be understood. We should not blindly believe that practising this bandh for six months will win over the death, but still we should study the bandh regularly so that its beneficial effects on the body will result in increasing our life span. A shloka after this describes that the study of this bandh results in leading the sadhaka easily onto the path of mukti.

**Benefits:** Uddiyana Bandha has been shown to aid in the strengthening of the diaphragm. It cures dyspepsia and is recommended for diabetics. Uddiyana Bandha aids in draining a clogged up liver, as well as hardens and tones up the pancreas and spleen. Uddiyana Bandha and its companion practice of Nauli Kriya totally eliminate constipation by encouraging the natural peristalsis of the bowel.

## MULBANDHA

### **Introduction :**

This bandh relates mainly to the muscles of the anus, penis and the muscles located nearby. The muladhar chakra is supposed to be located near penis. Hence this bandh relates to muladhar chakra and is termed as mulbandh. Also it relates to the base of the spine, this may be the other reason for naming it as such because 'mul' means root or base.

### **Preposition :**

If the bandh is to be performed ideally it should be performed in Siddhasan. Otherwise it may also be performed in Padmasan. But Siddhasan is supposed to be the ideal preposition.

### **Action of the bandh :**

After sitting in Siddhasan, the left heel is properly placed under the penis. The weight of the body creates pressure on that part. After achieving a firm pose, the anal muscles and the other surrounding muscles should be contracted and moved upwards. This is the pose of the mulbandh.

The anus has two muscles. One inside and the other outside. Both these muscles are round. It is expected in this bandh to contract these muscles and to lift them upwards. However, these muscles alone are not to be contracted and lifted but the other surrounding muscles should also be similarly contracted and lifted. The muscles of the penis are also to be lifted in this bandh. Achieving pose in this bandh is easier, however it is important to be in the same pose for a while. This is difficult and requires quite a bit of practice.

### **Physical Effects :**

The muscles which are not generally used, are contracted in this bandh. This results in more blood supply to these muscles thereby improving their efficiency. This is the obvious benefit of this bandh. Also, the muscles surrounding Muladhar Chakra are contracted and the pressure of such contraction is definitely felt on the Muladhar Chakra. Kundalini power, which is supposed to be residing at the chakra, is awakened due to the practice of this bandh. However, it cannot be definitely stated as to the duration for which the bandh is to be practised for such awakening of the Kundalini power. The beneficial effect of this bandh is also felt on the nerves attached to the muscles involved in the bandh. It is stated that the bandh is to be practised while doing Pranayam. While performing pranayam, the blood is accumulated around the waist. Practice of this bandh results in circulation of this accumulated blood.

**Duration :**

The real study and practice of this bandh is to retain it for maximum period. A duration of 5 to 120 seconds may not generate beneficial effects of this bandh. The bandh has to be retained for at least 3 to 4 minutes. With further practice, the duration can be increased to 5 minutes.

**Precaution :**

If the bandh is not performed properly, it can affect the digestive system in a bad way. This results in indigestion or similar other ailments of the digestive system. Hence, the bandh should be practised under expert guidance.

Persons suffering from hernia, piles etc should not as far as possible perform this bandh. If such a person wants to perform this bandh, onset of any symptoms described above should be immediately reported to experts and the bandh performed under their guidance.

**References in the ancient texts :**

The bandh has been described thoroughly in the third chapter of **Hathapradeepika**.

Parshnibhagen sampeedya yonimakunchayet gudam |  
Apanmurdhwamakrushya mulbandhobhidhiyate || 3-61

**Meaning :** The heel should press the penis, the muscles of the anus should be contracted and the gas (*apan vayu*) should be lifted upwards. This results in mulbandh pose. Further it is described as :

Adhogatimapan va urdhwargam kurushalat |  
Aakunchanen tam prahurmulbandham hi yoginah || 3-62

Parnapanou nadbindu mulbandhen chaikatam |  
Gatva yogasya samsiddhidam gachshato natra samshayah || 3-63

**Meaning :** Apan vayu is generally in the downward direction. With deliberate contraction of the anal muscles, the apan vayu is lifted upwards. This is known as mulbandh. The bandh is to be performed till the time the gas is forced upwards. Hathapradeepika in further shlokas describe this bandh as, when the pran and apan and the sound and the point (nad and bindu) will merge with each other due to this bandh, then one can be said to succeed in yoga.

The effects of this bandh are described as under :

Apanpranayoraikyam kshayo mutrapurishayoh |  
Yuva bhavati vrudhopi satatam mulbandhanat || 3-65

**Meaning:** The regular study of the mulbandh results in merging apan and prana. The excretions are minimised and an old person is transformed into a young one.

Though, as a matter of practice, an old person may not be transformed into a youth, the general meaning can be guessed as disappearance of the signs of old age with return of the enthusiasm associated with youth.

The next four shlokas in Hathapradeepika describe how the bandh is related to awakening of Kundalini power. Hathapradeepika says that when the apan vayu is forced upwards, it enters the vanhimandal. The pressure of this vayu results in increasing the fire. Apan vayu and this fire heats the prana. This results in precipitating the fire in the stomach. The kundalini power, which is supposed to be asleep, awakens like a snake hit by a stick. It then enters the sushumna nadi ( brahma nadi ) as if snake entering its hole. Hence, every sadhaka must study this mulbandh daily.

The thirteenth shloka in the third chapter of Gherandsamhita describes this bandh. The description is as given above as in Hathapradeepika. However, the effects of this bandh are described as under:

Mulbandhah paro bandho jaramarannashanah |  
Prasadadasya bandhasya sadhayetsarvavanchitam || 3-18

**Meaning:** This is a superior type of bandh, which results in destruction of old age and the death. The study of this bandh results in satisfying any desire.

This description too is a bit exaggerated. However, the real meaning behind it is to be guessed and the bandh must be studied.

**Benefits:** Moola Bandha affects the central and sympathetic nervous system reducing tension, therefore affecting subsequent inflammation at the uro-genital region. The ovaries in the female and the prostate gland in the male receive an increased blood circulation. Increased muscular tone is to be noted relative to the varicocele and hemorrhoids in those suffering such conditions, suggesting that the practice of Moola Bandha should be used as a prevention of these conditions. Phlebitis and blood clotting thrombosis is eliminated. Moola Bandha has been shown to be beneficial for toning up the kidneys and bladder and it generally tones up the musculature of the female sex organs. There is some possibility that Moola Bandha is of aid in dissolving or passing soft kidney and bladder stones.

<http://www.yoga-teacher-training.org/index.html>