

## Muladhara Chakra

`Mula' translates as `root' and `dhara' as `foundation'. Its element is earth and it relates to our conditions on earth: where we live, where we stand, what we eat, where we source our food, our general situation, our back-ground, our means of survival (self-sufficient or dependent upon others), who we are responsible for, our sense of belonging – and, as a result of all these, our security and confidence - or lack thereof.

In these interesting times (writing on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020), our security is being threatened. Apart from the very real fear of contagion there is, for many of us, the fact that our livelihood has been taken away by the government advice to stay at home and self-isolate against the corona virus (Covid 19). Because of the government advice that all schools and leisure centres are to be closed, we are now being advised by the British Wheel of Yoga that we are not insured to teach students face-to-face. Of course we have to adapt to survive, and in time there will be solutions: the government is promising subsidies, there is the possibility of teaching via the Zoom platform and we may find we have other skills we can fall back on. The fact remains however that everyone is anxious about the future and therefore a bit more reluctant than usual to part with their money.

There is a general air of uncertainty and insecurity and people become more selfish. The newspapers seize upon the collectively conscious mood of dissatisfaction by highlighting cases of injustice for people to become indignant about, and social media is awash with rumours to fuel the awakened and apparently insatiable appetite. The irrational lack of toilet paper on supermarket shelves could be directly related to the fact that many people are scared s\*\*\*less. Some people are hoarding food, others are going without: both are symptoms of distrust in the ability of our society to deliver.

This is not to deny we are living through a time which is most harmful to the most vulnerable of our population. Our usual parameters are being realigned. Nonetheless, scare-mongering, stock-piling, rumour-fuelling and indignation are not helpful to anyone's state of mind. Fear directly affects the breath: short, shallow breaths activate anxiety, allow the viruses (not only Covid 19!) to nestle in the base of the lungs and severely impact the immune system in a negative way. The rumours may be true but there is truth in the power of Yoga. Yoga practice and teaching are not only a matter of holding a class and taking money for it: Yoga is vocational, and based upon non-materialistic and even ascetic foundations. We can continue to practise Yoga in myriad ways, and we could look upon the situation as a challenge to maintain stability in an uncertain world. According to the principles of Ayurveda, the

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practice of altruism helps boost our immune system and promotes longevity. There are people in need of help at the moment – what can we do?

### Practice

We can continue our own practice, for we will be no good to anyone else if we are unhealthy ourselves. Practices which honour and strengthen the root chakra are particularly helpful right now:

- Pelvic tilts to bridge – with emphasis on the role of the feet, legs and pelvic floor muscles on the exhalation, and that of the diaphragm, ribs and shoulders on the inhalation
- Focus on the exhalation (Rechaka) and the brief pause at the end of each exhalation (Bahya Kumbhaka)
- Sitting postures – and the connection of the sitting bones to the earth
- Standing postures – and the connection between the feet, legs and pelvic floor to the earth
- Svadhyaya: observing our own bodies, our own breath, our own minds - with objectivity