

Svadhithana Chakra

Svadhithana Chakra is generally represented as an orange, six-petalled lotus situated in the pelvis. 'Sva' means 'self' and 'sthan' implies a territory (think of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Rajasthan, Uzbekistan ...). Thus 'Svadhithana' could be interpreted as 'the place of the self.' The text which first lists the chakras as we recognise them today (the 9/10th century Kubjikamatantra) describes it as being situated 'at the base of the penis', but over time this chakra has come to be associated with the whole of the pelvic area. It is from the womb that we all originate, in the pelvis that we were all cradled before birth. If we tune into the pelvic region, we find stability and serenity awaiting us – like a home-coming.

Svadhithana Chakra is associated with the element of water, and again – before birth, we were all immersed in water. The human body is largely made up of water: according to the Journal of Biological Chemistry, the brain and heart are 73% water and the lungs themselves 83 % water¹. All the fluids in the body have Svadhithana as their Alma Mater: the urogenital system, the blood, the lymph, the lubricant in our joints, the mucous membranes – all these serve to keep the body supple and mobile. We owe our flexibility to water. With water we flush out toxins and sweat. And in water we bathe ourselves.

Water is associated with emotions. There is a difference between the warm eruption of water from a mountain spring and the natural hydraulic power of water under pressure. Water can be gentle and kind, warm and cleansing ... a cool drink of



spring water imbibed while taking a lovely warm bath for example. On the other hand – a sailor tossed overboard from the treacherous deck of his ship in a storm-tossed sea to suffer a watery grave will not be having the same relationship with water. Water changes shape, according to its circumstances – a natural

¹ https://www.usgs.gov/special-topic/water-science-school/science/water-you-water-and-human-body?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects (accessed 22.5.'20)

traitor. If we identify with our emotions, and if we are unable to stabilise them – we – and all the people around us - are in for a stormy ride.

This chakra is connected with polarity: it took a male and female to create each of us. Our very existence denotes duality, and from this duality can arise tension. Just as the water in our bodies requires structure to function, so it is healthy to seek emotional balance. It can be tempting to be drawn into the dramas which feast upon unbalanced emotions – but, by working creatively with postures which activate and stabilise the Svadhithana Chakra, we can withdraw from drama and find peace – even in a world beset by conflict and opposites.

The (thirteenth century) text of the Samgitaratnakara describes the emotional states which arise when one imagines situating oneself in the petals of each of the chakras. It states that in the Svadhithana chakra we may experience ‘modesty, cruelty, loss of pride, swooning, scorn and mistrust.’² It also states: ‘It is the home of the power of love (kamashakti).’³ Some say that ‘love conquers all’. Nobody would deny that the forgiveness and acceptance involved in allowing love to have its way are very difficult.

Svadhithana chakra is associated with the sense of taste, denoting a direct relationship with the tongue. The tongue can be an unruly organ, prone to gossip and acting as a gateway to gluttony. This is why some yogic practices involve ‘mouna’ – complete silence, in order to control the tongue. The Hare Krishnas like to divert the tongue with delicious food prepared in a sattvic (balanced) manner and by encouraging people to chant ‘Hare Krishna’ without cease.

Finally, of course, this chakra is associated with sexuality. There are a zillion new age books out there to tell us that an imbalanced sacral chakra will result in nymphomania, sex addiction, dissolution, drug addiction or frigidity – but essentially, Svadhithana is connected with creativity. Sexual energy is energy, to do with as we will – though ‘life’s longing for itself’⁴ can sometimes be almost irresistible, especially in youth. The yama Brahmacharya may not necessarily mean ‘celibacy’, (though it can –

² Mallinson, James & Singleton, Mark (2017) Roots of Yoga, Penguin Books

³ Ibid

⁴ Ghibran, Khalil, The Prophet

with occasional unfortunate results as repression generally leads to expression ...) but certainly balance is a key feature of working with this chakra.

Practice

Physically, the pelvic region reflects the dilemmas presented by the Svadhithana chakra: the sacro-iliac is a joint which combines stability and flexibility. We can take its composite powers for granted as we stand, walk or sit in imbalanced ways, unconsciously placing undue pressure on one side or the other. It is the junction between the spine and the legs, the right and the left sides of the body. When working with this area it is helpful to pay attention to the part other regions of the spine play: poking the head forwards, clenching the jaw, stiffening the shoulders, relaxing the abdominals - the pelvis collects the results of this motley crew of unconscious behaviours and must somehow deliver the body's weight to the earth. By allowing the pelvis to take the lead we can create a beautiful internal sensitivity to our asana practice.

How can we balance the Svadhithana Chakra?

Simply rolling around in Apanasana and variations thereof can be incredibly useful in releasing the tensions that the sacro-iliac region has had placed upon it. We are each the expert in how we feel and we need follow no guide-book but that of inner sensations.

The following postures – all of which are pelvic openers - are generally cited as being useful for 'activating' this chakra:

- Baddha Konasana
- Upavista Konasana
- Janu Sirsasana
- Padottanasana
- Parsvakonasana

Indeed they are all extremely helpful in addressing reproductive health – especially menstrual pain. On the other hand – maybe this chakra is already active and we need to calm it down? The following postures – all of which involve medial flexion - can be very beneficial for creating balance in Svadhithana chakra:

Svadhithana

- Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (commonly known as 'Pigeon')
- Garudasana
- Gomukhasana
- Ardha Matsyendrasana

How we balance the external and internal rotations of the hip joints is very individual, and an area where we really need to take the lead (rather than doing what a teacher tells you to do even if you find it uncomfortable...).

All standing balancing postures – especially Vrksasana and Natarajasana - are useful in helping us develop self-knowledge: one hip may rotate more than the other, one may flex more than the other, the other may extend more than the other ... but it is in standing postures we find our own balance.