

## Seventh Heaven

### A prescription of asanas to help balance the subtle energies of the chakra system.

By Barbara Kaplan Herring

#### (Second) Svadisthana Chakra (Hips, Sacrum, Genitals)

In Sanskrit, the second chakra is called *Svadisthana*, which translates as "one's own place or base," indicating just how crucial this chakra is in our lives. A student who is facing second chakra issues would experience very different concerns than Anne. Getting things in order was the work of the first chakra. The tasks of the second chakra include allowing for emotional and sensual movement in our life, opening to pleasure, and learning how to "go with the flow."

Associated with the hips, sacrum, lower back, genitals, womb, bladder, and kidneys, this chakra is involved with sensuality, sexuality, emotions, intimacy, and desire. All watery things about us have to do with this chakra: circulation, urination, menstruation, orgasm, tears. Water flows, moves, and changes, and a healthy second chakra allows us to do so too.

Trying to influence the outer world is not the province of the second chakra. Instead of demanding that our body or a relationship be different, the second chakra encourages us to feel the feelings that arise as we open to life just as it is. As we allow ourselves to accept what is, we taste the sweetness (and bittersweetness) of life. When we relax our resistance to life, our hips let go, our reproductive organs become less tense, and we're open to experiencing our sensuality and sexuality.

Along with the second chakra at the pelvis, the other even-numbered chakras (the fourth, at the heart, and the sixth, at the third eye) are concerned with the "feminine" qualities of relaxation and openness. These chakras exercise our rights to feel, to love, and to see. Odd-numbered chakras, found in the legs and feet, solar plexus, throat, and crown of the head, are concerned with the "masculine" endeavor of applying our will in the world, asserting our rights to have, to ask, to speak, and to know. The odd-numbered, masculine chakras tend to move energy through our systems, pushing it out into the world and creating warmth and heat. The even-numbered, feminine chakras cool things down, attracting energy inward.

In the modern world, the masculine and feminine principles of life are out of balance: The masculine energy of action and expression too often overrules the feminine energy of wisdom and acceptance, causing increased stress in our lives. So many people have taken on an imbalanced work ethic that scoffs at pleasure and affords little time for enjoyment or relaxation. After focusing on her second chakra in a recent workshop, a student confided to me how hard it was to allow pleasure in her workaholic life. We created a plan for her to give herself 20

minutes each day devoted just to the healing power of pleasure: listening to music, doing gentle yoga, getting a massage. Our lives give us plenty of opportunities to express ourselves and be active; in our yoga practice and elsewhere, we need to make sure we complement this with relaxation and receptivity. Harmony requires balance. In yoga, that means creating a practice that combines strength and flexibility, effort and surrender. Any imbalance in your yoga practice will be mirrored in your chakras.

In a culture as confused as ours is about sexuality, pleasure, and emotional expression, there are an infinite number of pathways to an imbalanced second chakra. For example, people who were raised in an environment where emotions were repressed or pleasure denied will be more likely to lack energy in the second chakra. Symptoms of a second chakra deficiency include fear of pleasure, being out of touch with feelings, and resistance to change. Sexual problems and discomfort in the lower back, hips, and reproductive organs can also signify that this chakra needs some kind attention. Sexual abuse during childhood can lead to feeling closed down in this chakra or may result in making sexual energy the most dominant part of the personality. An excessively charged second chakra may reveal itself through overly emotional behavior, sexual addiction, or poor boundaries. Excessiveness may also result from a family environment where there's a constant need for pleasurable stimulation (entertainment, partying) or frequent emotional drama.

Second chakra asanas help us with adaptability and receptivity. The leg position in Gomukhasana (Cow Face Pose), forward bending with the legs in the first stage of Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (Pigeon Pose), Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose), Upavistha Konasana (Open Angle Pose), and other hip and groin openers all provide freedom of movement in the pelvis. These hip and groin openers should never be forced, for they require the subtle feminine touch of sensitivity and surrender.