

Mudra Therapy and Its Classification

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ABSTRACT

Mudra therapy is an age-old effective therapy propounded by ancient sages. Mudra means hand gestures which are made for the betterment of physical body. This therapy is as old as culture given and practiced; it prevents specific physical and mental problems. Mudras can be classified into the five basic categories. The categories are yogic, spiritual, curative, religious, and customary. The Yoga and Ayurveda philosophy believes that the human body is composed of five elements- fire, air, water, space and earth. As long as these elements remain in balance, a person enjoys a healthy, disease free life. Under yogic mudras we have different types of mudra which divulge mystical powers to the practitioner are maha mudra, nabho mudra, and under spiritual mudras it has classified into gayan mudra, brahm Anjali mudra, chin mudra, Chinmaya mudra. And next category is curative mudras it has different types, Aakash mudra, prithvi mudra, varun mudra, vayu mudra etc. And religious mudras have different types like pranayama mudra, namaskaar mudra. Here in this article we are going to discuss about the classification of mudra therapy and how to do the procedure and its benefits of mudra.

Key words: mudra, gayan mudra, Dhyana mudra, Brahm Anjali mudra, prana mudra, Apana mudra, Vayu mudra, gyati mudras, Maha mudra, nabho mudra, prithvi mudra, apna Vayu mudra, Surya mudra, pranayama mudra, namaskar mudra.

INTRODUCTION

Mudra science is an ancient science that which connects certain energy-flows in mind body system. The literal meaning of mudra is the expression of internal feelings by way of different postures of fingers, palms, hands feet and or body.³This is an integral part of yoga and a scientific knowledge of spirituality and physical well. Mudra involve the entire body, by doing mudras, subtle hand and finger movements make important connections in the nervous system and stimulate specific energy pathways. These mudras (hand postures) have potential benefits for physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.⁴ There are mudras to address headaches, pain, anxiety, depression, stress, the health of lungs and heart, cholesterol, pain in any body part and almost every system of the body.⁵

SCIENCE OF MUDRA

The principle of mudras is that the transfer of energy takes place from higher level to the lower level. This law is applicable in thermodynamics, electricity, electrostatics, magnetism, atomic and nuclear bonding. According to Ayurveda, human body is made up of five elements: Agni (fire), Vayu (Air), Aakash (space), Pruthvi (Earth) and Jal (water). Under healthy conditions, our body has an optimum balance of all these elements. However, imbalance in any one of them affects the body in a negative way. This ultimately leads to illnesses. When specific mudras are performed, any imbalance in the above stated five elements is restored and the person recovers.⁶

These 5 elements are well represented by the fingers of our hands as below:



Five fingers represent five elements

- Thumb Fire
- Index finger Air
- Middle finger Space (ether)
- Ring finger Earth
- Little (pinky) finger Water

The yoga mudras are hand gesture yoga exercises that aim to bring back the elemental balance by guiding the flow of life energy within the body. Depending upon the elements to be balanced, specific yoga mudras are practiced by manipulating the fingers. For example, to increase the water element in the body, varun mudra is practiced. Similarly, to reduce the air element in the body, Vayu mudra is practiced.⁷



SCIENCE BEHIND THESE YOGA MUDRAS

The fingers of our hands are just like live wires of electric current. During a mudra formation, one or more of the fingers touch the thumb to complete an electric circuit and the life energy flows through that

circuit to balance the elements represented by those particular fingers.⁸

IMPORTANCE OF MUDRA

- Mudras act as catalysts and switches in the body to improve body functions.
- Concentration of mind is accomplished by mudras and regain lost energy.
- Mudras tell us the state of mind such as physical, mental and spiritual.⁹
- Deadly diseases like cancer, dementia, insomnia, diabetes, depression and minor diseases of cough and cold, vomiting, deficiency of vitamins and minerals are cured permanently.
- Mudras help to link the brain to the body, soothe pain, stimulate endorphins, change the mood and increase our vitality.¹⁰
- It also stimulates the brain, works on the nervous system, helps in relieving stress, improves concentration and lastly, it gives you a peaceful mind.¹¹

BASIC RULES TO PERFORM MUDRAS

- All persons of any age, sex, religion
- Normal time to perform a specific mudra in 15-30 minutes.
- Stop as soon as one feels pain or extra stress during performance of mudras.
- Mudras can be performed while standing, sitting, walking, praying, studying, reading, TV viewing etc.⁴
- Elemental mudras should be done with both hands. Doing on left side benefits right portion and vice versa.
- For elemental mudras, the basic principle is that bringing together the tip of any finger with the thumb, brings in equanimity, pressing finger with thumb reduces the element, touching the base of finger increases the element of that finger.⁷
- It can be done with any undergoing treatment also.
- Mudras can be lifesaving, if performed at the time of emergency e.g. Apna Vayu Mudra can immediately cure heart

attack or stroke. Vayu Mudra can immediately cure cardiac arrest and gastro entities spell.¹¹

CLASSIFICATION OF MUDRA

Mudras can be classified into the five basic categories

- ✚ **Yogic**-according to gherand sanhita there are 25 mudras which give yogic accomplishments.
- ✚ **Spiritual**-these are beneficial for concentration, knowledge, peace, generate love for humanity and so on. These are gayan mudra, Dhyana mudra and Brahm Anjali mudra.⁴
- ✚ **Curative**-the mudras which are practiced curing diseases, to ward off the foreign elements from the body, to keep balance of elements in the body fall under this category. These are prana mudra, Apana mudra, Vayu mudra etc.⁶
- ✚ **Religious**-the mudras which are practiced during performance of sacred and religious offerings are religious mudras. These are gyati mudras.
- ✚ **Customary**-when practiced these are beneficial for self and others. These are namaskar mudra, pranayama mudra.⁷

I.YOGIC MUDRA

According to gherand sanhita, there are 25 mudras which impart accomplishments to yogic, Twenty-five mudras which divulge mystical powers to the practitioner are Maha mudra, nabho mudra, mandvi mudra etc.

1. MAHA MUDRA

Maha Mudra or the Great Gesture it is the first Mudra. In Sanskrit, *Maha* means great and *Mudra* means a gesture, attitude or seal. *Maha Mudra* is a technique to raise the human consciousness to higher levels and for improving health.⁶

❖ PROCEDURE

- Sit on the floor with legs stretched out. Fold the left leg and press the perineum with the left heel.
- The right leg remains stretched out in front throughout the practice.

- Bend forward and hold the big toe of the right leg with the hands. Exhale while bending forward.
- Raise the head slightly upwards and let the gaze be on the eyebrow center. Inhale slowly and deeply while tilting the head.
- Hold the breath inside and perform Moola Bandha.
- Contract the throat so that air does not escape from the lungs.
- Maintain this position with breath inside for as long as you are comfortable.
- This is one round. One can practice from 3 rounds to 12 rounds depending on time and convenience.⁶
- To release the pose, exhale slowly and bring the head to normal position. Stretch out the legs, relax the body and breathe normally.
- The attention is maintained at the eyebrow center throughout the practice.



❖ BENEFITS

- It improves digestion and cures the disorders of the stomach.
- It neutralizes the effect of toxins in the body.
- It removes Kapha disorders, tuberculosis, constipation, enlarged spleen, prolonged fever and other diseases and the body attains good health.
- It balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. It generates peace. The sensory excitements are reduced, thus inducing a tranquil state of mind.

- This practice makes the spine straight and enables the pranic energy to clearly go between Mooladhara and the Vishuddhi chakra. The body gets charged with pranic energy. Since the throat is also contracted during the practice of holding the breath, the Prana gets pushed down towards Apana and the two merges at the Navel center or Manipuraka Chakra. This awakens the Prana Shakti.
- Since this mudra is done along with eyebrow gazing or Shambhavi Mudra, it calms down the mind. Hence it is an excellent practice before the start of meditation.⁷

2. NABHO MUDRA

Nabho Mudra or the sky mudra involves the tongue touching the upper palate and is similar to *Kechari mudra*. In Sanskrit, the word '*Nabha*' indicates sky and *mudra* means a gesture.

❖ PROCEDURE

- Firstly, Sit in padamasana or sidhasana.
- Fold the tongue and reverse it to touch on the top inside pallet
- Concentrate the eyes between the eyebrows
- Go on inhaling and exhaling keeping full concentration



❖ BENEFITS

- It brings profound sense of calmness and peace by activating the 'rest and digest' mode (as opposed to the 'fight or flight' which is activated during stress or strain). This 'rest and digest' mode is a direct result of the activation of

Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) where the energy of the body is conserved.

- It influences the heart, lungs, and brain. The central nervous system and the endocrine glands work together and protects the body from certain conditions like blood pressure, controls the anxiety and stress levels, slows down the heart rate, increases the metabolic activity, overcomes insomnia etc.⁹

II SPIRITUAL MUDRA

These mudras can be performed for as long as desired and are blissful.

1. GAYAN MUDRA

Gyan Mudra is a powerful mudra (or hand position) practiced for thousands of years by yogis that brings peace, calm, and spiritual progress. Artistic depictions of great spiritual masters such as Guru Nanak, Christ, Buddha, and Mahavir are all shown regularly with this hand position.

❖ PROCEDURE

It Connect the thumb and the forefinger (tip to tip, not tip to nail, which is another "active" variation of Gyan Mudra). The other fingers are straight but relaxed. Pressure between the thumb and forefinger is light.

❖ BENEFITS

- It stimulates the third eye pineal gland, pituitary gland, and memory as well as balances the nervous system.
- This is probably the best mudra to sharpen your memory and heal your internal organs by helping with stress, anxiety, depression, and insomnia.
- This will sharpen your memory and enhance your inner spiritual qualities.
- It brings in metabolically changes in our body which increases flow of blood to brain.¹¹



2. ANJALI MUDRA

Anjali mudra, one of the hand gestures of yoga *Anjali*, in Sanskrit word which means "salutation" or "to offer," Therefore, Anjali mudra translates as "salutation seal".

❖ PROCEDURE

- Bringing the hands together, the palms are placed gently against one another in front of the *anahata* (heart) chakra.
- The fingers point upward. The spine is lengthened while sitting comfortably straight. Bringing the hands together in such a way while saying "*Namaste*" is a respectful greeting.



❖ BENEFITS

- It improves focus during meditation.
- It promotes mindfulness, inner awareness and calms the mind
- It relieves stress
- It connects the brain's right and left hemispheres.⁵

3. CHIN MUDRA

The Chin Mudra, also known as Gyan Mudra, can be described as a yogic gesture that represents the unified nature of

human consciousness. Yogis also state that this mudra is the gesture of knowledge. It is one of the most used gestures with those who meditate or practice yoga regularly.

❖ PROCEDURE

- First Form a circle by joining your thumb and your forefinger.
- Place the nail of your index finger against the soft pad of the thumb
- Extend the last three fingers of your hands, the palm-side facing upwards
- It is important that the palm-side of your hands should face upwards in the receiving pose.



❖ BENEFITS

- It Creates the Pranic circuit, which maintains and redirects the "Prana" or the flow of energy within your body.
- It increases the concentration, even during meditation and also it also increases energy and stamina.
- It improves the better sleep patterns.
- It reduces the common ailments like lower back pain.
- It relieves stress and any unnecessary tension in the body.⁵

III CURATIVE MUDRA

The description of a few curative mudras is given here

1. AKASH MUDRA

Akash, this Sanskrit term means 'view or recognizes' and mudra means 'gesture or seal'. It is also known as the Shuni mudra, which means the gesture of patience.

❖ **PROCEDURE**

- First, sit into any comfortable posture.
- By straightening of the head, neck and back in a straight line, proceed for deep breathing, this increases your awareness required for the practice.
- Next place your back of the palms on both knees. Gradually, fold the middle finger and touch it firmly against the thumb.
- Now, by maintaining the contact of the middle & thumb finger, extend the rest of your fingers as much as possible.



❖ **BENEFITS**

- It relieves the Condition of Migraine
- It reduces Sinusitis Pain
- It induces the centers of concerned nerve cells in the nervous system. Therefore, improves the functioning and ultimately affects the hearing ability of an individual.
- Practicing Akash mudra stimulates the other side of those pressure points. Further, the interaction of calcium, vitamin D and PTH regulates the blood calcium level. Therefore, it cures the calcium deficiency.⁸

2. PRITHVI MUDRA

In Sanskrit ‘prithvi,’ refers to the ‘earth,’ and ‘mudra,’ refers to ‘gesture of the hands.’ Earth is considered as one of the elements within the body and with the

practice of Prithvi Mudra helps to awaken the earth element.

❖ **PROCEDURE**

- It is a pretty simple yogic hand gesture that is performed by the ring finger and thumb. Firstly, you must bring the ring finger and the thumb closer.
- Sit in comfortable Posture
- Now, place the hands with the palms facing upwards on the thighs or above the knees.
- Now slowly fold your ring finger and tap the tip of the ring finger or Anamika finger to the tip of the thumb with little pressure. And try to keep the rest of the three fingers extended and straight as much as possible.



❖ **BENEFITS**

- It helps *Prana* to flow better through our spine to the other parts of the body. This flow of prana encourages energy distribution in all parts of our body. Thus, the regular practice of this mudra keeps us energetic and prevents fatigue, weakness, and laziness
- It heals the body tissues and boosts the growth of tissues.
- Prithvi mudra heals cuts and wounds, dry and cracked skin, fracture in bones, the density of bones and brittle nails.⁷

3. APANA VAYU MUDRA

Apana Vayu mudra is a therapeutic mudra, mainly helps in healing heart-related diseases.

❖ **PROCEDURE**

- Firstly, join the tip of the middle finger and ring finger, with the tip of the thumb.
- Secondly, bend the index finger towards the thumb and touch the base of the thumb with the tip of the index finger.
- Leave the little (pinky) finger extended as much as possible.
- Do the same arrangement with both hands simultaneously.
- Now, without disturbing the finger arrangement, place both hands on your upper thighs.



❖ **BENEFITS**

- It Prevents Heart Disorders
- It Cures Shrinking of Heart Arteries
- It Beneficial in Reducing the Effect of Heart Attacks.
- It reduces air element in the body which improves digestion in the body.
- It improves lung function, thus, helps to cure such problems.¹⁰

4. SURYA MUDRA

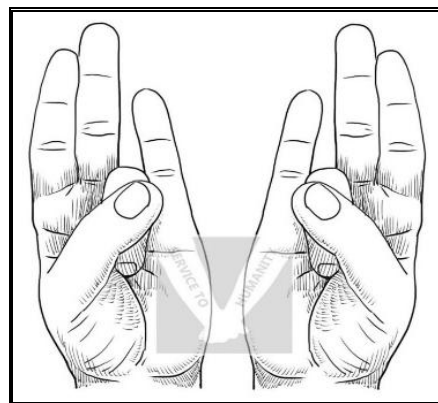
“Surya” means sun and here “mudra” means hand gesture. Surya mudra is basically finger arrangement (gesture) that represents energy our body gain through sunlight.

❖ **PROCEDURE**

- Sit in a comfortable yoga Sana on a mat, not directly on the floor.
- Now arrange the finger in the same way Bend the ring fingers of your

both hands in such a way that tips of the finger touch the base of your thumb and thumb pressing the top of the second phalanx (of the ring finger).

- Arrange another hand finger in the same manner.
- After aligning the body & hand comfortably, hold your hands over the kneecap.
- While pressing down the ring fingers, make sure that other fingers are lightly stretched.



❖ **BENEFITS**

- It helps in maintaining the metabolism of the body.
- As Surya mudra increases body temperature, it relieves from the problem caused by cold weather like Dry skin, Sore throat, Painful joints & Flu.
- This mudra works for removing extra cholesterol accumulated in the blood vessels and hence reduces the risk of heart attacks and indirectly helps in curing diabetes also.
- It tackles coldness of limbs-Surya mudra helps in problems like shivering, cold, coldness of body parts.

5. PRANA MUDRA

The Prana Mudra means “the energy or else spirit of life” in its own self. The Prana Mudra is single of the most vital mudras as it helps to turn on the inactive energy in the body. This energizes the body

and awakens all the organs. This mudra links to the heart and soul of the person.

❖ PROCEDURE

- It is done with the help of both the hands.
- Tips of ring plus little finger have to be joined by the lean of thumb.
- All other fingers must be extended straight.
- Prana mudra alters the energy in the body, making you fit in conscious breathing by your hand mudra practice.
- Take profound and regular breath.
- Breathe in and exhale for same duration.



❖ BENEFITS

- This mudra assist eliminates any kind of A, B, C, D, E, K vitamin deficiencies.
- It improves the regulatory power of the mind. This mudra might help in tackling the unregulated habits, for example eating and sleeping disorders.
- It decreases nervousness, thereby improving self-confidence.
- It fights against chronic fatigue, general weakness.
- It helps to manage emotions for example anger, mental tension, envy, tetchiness, pride, restlessness, revive happiness, delight, enjoyment, wish, energy & enthusiasm.
- It also has the power to enhance your immune system.
- It treats eye irritation like burning red dry eyes, and cataract.

- Others curative mudras are: samaan mudra, Udaan mudra, shakti mudrera, thyroid mudra, linga mudra.⁶

IV RELIGIOUS MUDRAS

These are twenty-four in number which are performed by yogis of highest penance, some of them are sumukh, samput, dwimukh, trimukh, shakat, and singhakrant.

V CUSTOMARY MUDRAS

1. **Pranayama mudra:** by folding first two fingers and pressing the base of thumb pranayama mudra is formed.
2. **Namaskar mudra:** joining both hands together with all the fingers put together and keeping the base of thumbs on the heart cave makes namaskar mudra. It is exercised for offering prayers, for concentration, to give respect to anyone or to greet someone.⁸

DISCUSSION

Kuldeep Singh (2015) indicated that the hand and finger positions of mudras or hand gestures make important connections in the nervous system and stimulate specific energy pathways. It is also said that mudras increase energy and blood circulation to different parts of the brain, to important nerve junctions and glands. Early yogis mapped out the hand areas and their associated reflexes which relate to the different areas of the body and brain.³

Balaji P.V Deekshitulu (2016) reviewed that the Mudhratherapy can be control of stress, depression, anxiety, fear and promotion of mental health and happiness. Studies have shown that mantras can have beneficial effects on the health of the body as well as positive results in mental & physical levels.⁷

Deepti Tripathi et al., (2016) studied that the yoga hand mudra was found to be effective in normalizing high blood pressure in a novel way. This mudra is helpful in emergency situations where medical help is not available immediately. It can also

reduce further medical deterioration of patient's clinical condition.⁹

CONCLUSION

The various types of yoga mudra may be practiced anytime, anyplace – in the bus, train, car, office or at home. It is suggested by experts that the yoga mudras should be practiced for 24 minutes incessantly for good results. It can also be done for five minutes at a time as well. To believe it, you must try it. There is nothing to lose and much to gain. Thus, the above mention mudras applied tension to the nerves or the neural which form the psycho-neural circuits and it helps in balancing the five basic elements and reduce cough, cold, and bronchial infections. It also balancing the tension, and redirection of the internal energy effects the changes in veins, tendons, glands and sensory organs, to bring the body back to a healthy state.¹⁰

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