

**Opinion**

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# Using Yoga Mudras in Yoga Sessions Increases the Efficacy of The Yoga Practice

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Yoga Mudras are hand gestures which were originally described by Sage Gheranda in the Gheranda Samhita. This late 17th century text is an important classic text of Yoga. Gheranda Samhita is the original source for most of the Asanas, Mudras, Pranayama, and Shatkarma practiced now in Yoga. Mudras means gestures, these can be Hand gestures (Hasta Mudra), or gestures made by head (Mana mudra) or the whole body (Kaya mudra) as in the yoga poses or gestures made in dance forms like Bharatnatyam dance form of India (Natya Mudra). Bandhas or locks which are practised in Yoga can also be considered as Mudras.

Mudras should be made an integral part of a yoga practice session. As described in the Natya Shastra\*which is an ancient text of art form compiled in the 500 BCE by Sage Bharata, it reinforces the importance of Mudras by quoting - "Where the hand is, eyes follow, where the eyes go, mind follows, where the mind is, there is the feeling, where there is feeling, there is rasa (mood or taste or flavor)". This powerful quote emphasizes the efficacy of holding a certain mudra while performing pranayama and yoga asanas.

When we hold a certain mudra, it sets the intention or Sankalpa (determined intention) to the yoga practise. This in turn helps to steady the mind and focus on the intention and perform the whole sequence of yoga session. Steadying the mind in a yoga session is of prime importance to get the ultimate value of a proper yoga routine. When a certain mudra is held while doing a yoga pose, the pranic energy during the flow of the pose is directed towards the intention of the mudra and this enhances the focus of the pranic energy towards that particular function of the body or mind which is being addressed by the mudra. It is as if the mudra or the hand seal or gesture establishes a circuit or channel for the pranic energy to flow in an organized way and awaken all the chakras, koshas and

the kundalini. The positive outcome of that yoga pose is therefore intensified due to the proper usage of mudra while performing the pose with the proper breathing technique or pranayama.

Mudras have direct correlation with acupuncture meridians of some of the vital organs of the body viz heart, small intestines, brain and lungs, which are described in the Traditional Chinese Medicine. From the perspective of Vedic Astrology, each finger represents one element of the Universe. The thumb represents Fire elements, Index finger represents the Air element, Middle finger represents Space element, Ring finger represents the Earth element, and the Little finger represents the Water element. So, in certain Mudras, depending on which meridian is stimulated and which element is stimulated the Pranic Energy flows along those channels and builds the health of the respective organs and builds the health of the respective elements in the body.

For the purpose of our article, we can discuss a few mudras which can be easily used by everyone while doing their yoga routines.

**Gyan mudra**

When we touch the tips of the Index Finger with tips of our thumb, we are holding the Gyan Mudra. Gyan means knowledge. This mudra enables proper concentration and sharpens our memory and deepens our insight into a particular focus we have towards a part or function of the body or the mind. Holding this Mudra during Meditation thus enables expanding our consciousness infinitely.

**Dhyana mudra**

When the right-hand rests on the palm of the left hand, with tips of the thumbs touching each other, we call it Dhyana mudra. Very commonly used mudra for mindful meditation. It improves the

focus or attention to obtain a balance in all the energies in the body and the mind. Buddha statue is usually found holding this mudra while in meditation.

### **Surya mudra**

Surya means the Sun. This mudra has the power to increase the fire element in our body and mind. Place the thumb on the bent ring finger and stretch the other fingers upward. This removes the obstacles in the path of concentration and focus and enables the prana to flow through sharply in all channels.

### **Prana mudra**

This mudra is done by touching the tips of the Thumb to tips of the ring finger and the little finger, while the rest two fingers are stretched upwards. This mudra awakens the dormant pranic energy in the body and mind and propels it to move towards awakening. It therefore enlivens and energises us.

### **Apana mudra**

This is done by bending the thumb, middle and ring fingers and bringing their tips together, while the index and little finger are stretched upwards. This mudra is called Apana or cleansing mudra. It removes the negative energy from our body and mind and

cleanses the channels, thus improving more focus of prana into the positive direction.

Thus, you see mudras are simple gestures of hand which can be easily combined into a yoga practice session, provided proper pranayama technique and proper yoga asana is learnt and practiced. Mudras can be efficiently applied in a yoga session, only after the student in the path of yoga has already mastered learning the pranayama, pratyahara and asanas. It is therefore essential to start our yoga routine with a proper pranayama holding the proper mudra as per the intention of the student and then flow into various yoga poses. While holding the breath in those yoga poses, the student can perform the mudras to intensify the focus of that particular yoga pose. This way mudras can be incorporated into a yoga routine with great benefits like attaining deeper relaxation and inner calm and balance.

### **Acknowledgement**

None.

### **Conflict of Interests**

No conflict of interests.