

# Mudras

BUDDHI MUDRA: Tip of little finger (Mercury) touches tip of thumb for clear and intuitive communication.

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*Mudrā* in Sanskrit means seal or stamp of authority. In ordinary Sanskrit this meaning has always been in use. For instance, a political play written by Viśākhadatta (c. 7 CE) is called *Mudrā-rākṣasa* (The signet [ring] of Rākṣasa). Rākṣasa was the chief minister of the Imperial Nandas, the enemies of Candragupta Maurya, king of Magadha, and this ring was his seal of office....

In early Indian religious understanding, the term *mudrā* refers exclusively to ritual hand gestures symbolizing a variety of meanings and conferring legitimacy on a ritual act. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, a famous early work on iconography, interestingly associates *mudrā* with esoteric rituals (*rahasya-mudrā*). In book III (the book on dance), it describes techniques of dance, including hand gestures (*ṅṛtta-hasta*). Not until the middle of the book does it turn to a discussion of the *mudrā* hand gestures (*mudrā-hastān vyākhyāsyāma*), which are presented as being in a separate category from the other hand gestures. Although the whole section on the performing arts in this Purāṇa concerns ritual worship, the mention of "esoteric" (*rahasya*) in relation to the *mudrā-hastas* clearly indicates that such *mudrās* were reserved for esoteric worship and not intended for use in the forms of public worship that incorporated dance along with gestures and mimesis. This esoteric quality becomes obvious when one takes into account the sorts of things that are represented by *mudrā-hastas*. Often these are abstract ideas like the mystic syllable "Om" or the esoteric use of the vowels (Beyer, 1973, pp. 101–102). The same Purāṇa introduces a type of *mudrā* known as *śāstra-mudrā* (3.33.15–16). These gestures depict deities in the special characteristic postures described in

the *mantras* associated with them. *Śāstra-mudrās* also include a not particularly esoteric group of gestures used to represent the vehicles of these deities.

Gupta, Sanjukta. "Mudrā." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. Vol. 9. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005



*Buddhi mudra*, or enlightenment gesture, is often associated with the Buddha and is ideal for centering and calming. Bring your thumb and index finger together, tip to tip, as in the *Om mudra*. Then bring the back of your hands together, knuckles touching, and rest your hands against your lower abdomen at your Jupiter *chakra*. This *mudra* represents divinity and the oneness of self and also the joining of all energies. It quiets the mind, stills action, and enlightens the self to its inner divinity. Try this *mudra* when you are feeling tense or rushed.

From: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga: Illustrated* (Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson), page 201