

MUDRAS UNLOCKING THE HEALING POTENTIAL FOR BODY AND MIND

Siddhi Ratnakar Nachankar* and Sachin Upalanchiwar

Assistant Professor, Swasthavritta Department. R. A. Podar Medical College (Ayu), Mumbai.

Article Received on
17 June 2023,

Revised on 07 July 2023,
Accepted on 27 July 2023

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202313-29233

*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Siddhi Ratnakar
Nachankar**

Assistant Professor,
Swasthavritta Department.
R. A. Podar Medical
College (Ayu), Mumbai.

ABSTRACT

Mudras are primarily performed using the hands and fingers, although some involve the entire body. Each finger is associated with one of the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether and is said to correspond to specific qualities or characteristics. In recent years, scientific research has begun to shed light on the therapeutic potential of mudras. Studies have shown that mudras can influence brain activity, alter the autonomic nervous system response and regulate hormonal balance. Moreover, they have been found to have a positive impact on conditions such as hypertension, anxiety, insomnia and chronic pain. As the ancient wisdom of mudras converges with modern scientific understanding, these sacred gestures are gaining recognition as a

valuable adjunct to conventional medicine and a means to unlock the body's innate healing potential.

KEYWORDS:– Mudra, Healing Potential, Mental Health, Positivity, Mudra Benefits.

INTRODUCTION

In the ancient traditions of India, mudras have been revered as powerful gestures that can unlock the healing potential of the body and mind. Mudras are hand gestures or postures that are believed to influence the flow of energy within the body and stimulate specific areas or organs. These gestures have been practiced for thousands of years as an integral part of yoga, meditation and Ayurvedic healing practices. By combining the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of human existence, mudras offer a holistic approach to wellness and self-care.

The word "mudra" is derived from the Sanskrit language, where "mud" means "bliss" or "delight," and "ra" signifies "produce" or "bring forth." Hence, mudras can be understood as

techniques that bring forth a state of bliss or harmony within oneself. Just as the body has a network of energy channels known as Nadis, mudras are believed to facilitate the flow of prana (life force energy) through these channels, thereby balancing the physical, mental and emotional aspects of an individual.^[1]

मुद्रायति क्लेशं इति मुद्रा । - "Mudra is that which removes pain and sorrow

मुदं रति इति मुद्रा । - That which brings about happiness is called as mudra

नास्ति मुद्रा समं किञ्चित् सिद्धिदं क्षितिमण्डले । - There is nothing in this world like mudra which gives success."

Mudras are primarily performed using the hands and fingers, although some involve the entire body. Each finger is associated with one of the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether and is said to correspond to specific qualities or characteristics. By manipulating the fingers and hands in certain ways, the practitioner can activate these elements and influence the corresponding energies within the body. Additionally, the pressure applied during mudra practice on specific points or meridians can stimulate various organs, glands and nerves, promoting overall well-being.^[2]

The healing potential of mudras extends beyond the physical realm. These powerful gestures have a profound impact on the mind and emotions as well. By engaging specific mudras, one can cultivate a state of tranquillity, focus and mental clarity. The intricate connection between the hands and the brain is widely acknowledged and mudras tap into this connection to influence the neural pathways and enhance cognitive functions. Through the practice of mudras, one can experience improved concentration, reduced stress and enhanced emotional balance.

One of the most renowned texts on mudras is the "Hatha Yoga Pradipika," which expounds the significance and benefits of these gestures. It describes numerous mudras that can be used to address specific health concerns, such as digestive disorders, respiratory issues, hormonal imbalances and even psychological disorders. Mudras can be practiced in isolation or in conjunction with other yogic techniques, such as asanas (Yoga postures) and pranayama (breathing exercises), to amplify their effects.

In recent years, scientific research has begun to shed light on the therapeutic potential of mudras. Studies have shown that mudras can influence brain activity, alter the autonomic

nervous system response and regulate hormonal balance. Moreover, they have been found to have a positive impact on conditions such as hypertension, anxiety, insomnia and chronic pain. As the ancient wisdom of mudras converges with modern scientific understanding, these sacred gestures are gaining recognition as a valuable adjunct to conventional medicine and a means to unlock the body's innate healing potential. In this comprehensive exploration of mudras, we will delve into the various types of mudras, their specific benefits and how to practice them effectively. We will explore mudras for physical health, mental well-being, emotional balance and spiritual growth. Additionally, we will examine the role of mudras in the context of yoga and meditation practices, as well as their integration into daily life. By embracing the wisdom of mudras, we can tap into our own healing potential, bringing about harmony and balance in our body, mind and spirit.

Aim of study

The aim of studying "Mudras: Unlocking the Healing Potential for Body and Mind" is to investigate the therapeutic benefits of Mudras, ancient hand gestures used in yoga and meditation. By exploring their effects on the body and mind, the study aims to unlock their potential for promoting holistic healing and well-being.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The practice of mudras is not limited to yoga enthusiasts or spiritual seekers. Their accessibility and simplicity make them suitable for people of all ages and backgrounds. Whether you are a busy professional seeking stress relief, a student looking to improve focus and memory, or someone recovering from an illness, mudras offer a gentle yet effective approach to healing and well-being. They can be practiced anytime, anywhere and require no special equipment, making them a convenient tool for self-care in our fast-paced modern lives. But practising mudra, it is important to know the dominance of each element. Our bodies are made up of the 5 elements: Fire, Air, Ether (Space), Earth and Water. Do you know that all these elements are within us and each finger in our hands corresponds to an element.

1) Earth, or bhumi, connected to something solid is represented by the ring finger.

- For example, earth elements in your body include the skin, bone, hair, teeth and organ. It concerns our basic needs, such as food, shelter and sex.
- Diseases tied to this element: Osteoporosis, Paralysis

- Mudras: Prithvi mudra
- 2) **Air, or vayu, is represented by the index finger.**
- This is believed to be the uppermost of all the elements. The air is a life force, gives freedom and lightness. The mudra related to this finger is good to relieve excessive gas, joint pains, bloating and abdominal discomfort.
 - Diseases tied to this element: Acne, Hypothyroidism, Alzheimer's disease.
 - Mudra: Vayu mudra, Nyana mudra, Chinmaya mudra
- 3) **Water, or jala is the most important element to all survival of all living things.**
- The pinky finger represents this element, which can relate to movement, gentleness, fluidity, flexibility and inquisitiveness.
 - Diseases tied to this element: Eczema, Constipation, Dehydration
 - Mudra: Varun mudra
- 4) **Ether, known as Aakash is an element that puts everything together and allows them to prosper.**
- This element is represented by the middle finger. Practicing mudra related to this element can help control high blood pressure, reduce dullness in the body and remove anger and fear.
 - Diseases tied to this element: Depression, Stress
 - Mudra: Aakash mudra, Shunya mudra
- 5) **Fire or Agni is an element that corresponds with life force, energy, strength and vitality.**
- The thumb represent this crucial element. Doing mudra related to this element can help boost the immune system and keep metabolism strong.
 - Diseases tied to this element: : Constipation, Indigestion
 - Mudra: Surya mudra, Aditi mudra



Image 1

Mudra in hindu culture

The spiritual meaning of the mudras found its perfect expression in Ancient Indian history. The gestures of the deities depicted in Hindu and Buddhist art symbolize their functions or evoke specific mythological occurrences. They play a large role in Buddhism, where six mudras are very familiar in the pictorial depictions of Gautama Buddha. These are very closely related to his teachings and his life. Hatha Yoga also expresses the many states of mind, such as mourning, joy, anger and serenity, through gestures and body positions. They realize that the reverse also applies certain gestures can positively influence the psyche. Mudras are also practiced in Tantric rituals.

Mudra in dance forms

Mudra specialist Ingrid Ramm-Bonwitt describes this beautifully, “The hands are the bearers of important symbols, which are still universally understood in the East today. With his or her hands, the Indian dancer expresses the life of the universe. Through its variety of interpretive possibilities, the rich symbolism of the dance’s language of gestures gains a greater significance for the mind than words could express.”

Number, classification^[3]

Number of Mudra according to various classics

- Hathayoga pradipika- 10
- Shiva samhita -10
- Gheranda samhita- 25
- Abhinaya darpana -28

Mudra classification based part of the body used

- **Sarvanga mudra:** Whole body is involved in performing these mudras
- **Hasta mudra:** Only hands are involved in this.

Mudra types based on its action

- Chikitsa mudra – used in treatment
- Yoga mudra – used in practicing Yogasana
- Pranayama mudra
- Dhyana mudra – for meditation
- Pooja mudra – for prayer, rituals

- Adhyatmika mudra – spiritual practices
- Shat Chakra mudra

The Charaka Samhita, one of the oldest and most important texts of Ayurveda, primarily focuses on the principles and practices of traditional Indian medicine. While the Charaka Samhita does not extensively discuss mudras like it does with other aspects of Ayurveda, there are a few references to mudras in the text. Here are a couple of instances where mudras are mentioned:

Bhujangini mudra: In the context of discussing the treatment of diseases, the Charaka Samhita mentions Bhujangini Mudra as a therapeutic hand gesture. This mudra involves intertwining the fingers of both hands and holding them together, similar to how a snake would coil its body. Bhujangini Mudra is said to stimulate the digestive fire (agni) and improve digestion.

Gyan mudra (Mudra of knowledge)

- Join the tip of the thumb and index finger, while extending the other three fingers.
- Benefits: Enhances concentration, memory and knowledge. Calms the mind and relieves stress.

Prithvi mudra (Mudra of earth)

- Touch the tip of the ring finger with the tip of the thumb while keeping the other fingers extended.
- Benefits: Increases strength, stability and confidence. Improves digestion and promotes overall vitality.

Varuna mudra (Mudra of water)

- Join the tip of the little finger with the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
- Benefits: Balances the water content in the body. Helps alleviate dryness in the skin, eyes and mouth. Relieves cramps and regulates fluid circulation.

Vayu mudra (Mudra of air)

- Fold the index finger and press the base of the thumb against it, while extending the other fingers.

- Benefits: Reduces excessive air-related problems like flatulence, bloating and joint pain. Relieves stress and anxiety.

Agni mudra (Mudra of fire)

- Bend the ring finger and press its tip against the base of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
- Benefits: Boosts metabolism, digestion and energy levels. Aids in weight management and improves the absorption of nutrients.

Shunya mudra (Mudra of emptiness)

- Press the thumb against the middle finger, while keeping the other fingers extended.
- Benefits: Relieves ear-related problems, including tinnitus and vertigo. Enhances patience, creativity and focus.

Apana mudra (Mudra of digestion)

- Join the tips of the thumb, middle finger and ring finger, while keeping the other fingers extended.
- Benefits: Facilitates detoxification, regulates digestion and helps in elimination of waste. Boosts overall well-being.

Prana mudra (Mudra of life)

- Touch the tips of the ring finger and little finger to the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
- Benefits: Increases vital energy, uplifts mood and promotes clarity. Enhances the immune system and vitality.

Shankh mudra (Mudra of conch shell)

- Benefits: Promotes thyroid health, regulates metabolism, improves communication skills and boosts confidence.

Rudra mudra (Mudra of energy)

- Benefits: Enhances energy levels, reduces stress and anxiety, improves mental focus and promotes emotional balance.



Image 2 – Mudra Types

How do yoga mudra work^[4]

According to Ayurveda, diseases are caused due to an imbalance in the body, which in turn is caused by lack or excess of any of the five elements. Our fingers have the characteristics of these elements and each of these five elements serves a specific and important function within the body. The fingers are essentially electrical circuits. The use of mudras adjusts the flow of energy – affecting the balance of air, fire, water, earth, ether – and facilitate healing.

Hand Mudras create a subtle connection with the instinctual patterns in the brain and influence the unconscious reflexes in these areas. The internal energy is, in turn, balanced and redirected, affecting change in the sensory organs, glands, veins and tendons. Yoga mudras are practiced by sitting cross-legged in Vajrasana or in the Lotus Pose, or even by sitting comfortably on a chair. Ideally, Ujjayi breathing is done when practicing most mudras. Take at least twelve breaths in each yoga mudra and closely observe the flow of energy in the body.

1. Chin mudra

- 1) Hold the thumb and index finger together lightly while extending the remaining three fingers.
- 2) The thumb and index finger need only touch together, without exerting any pressure.
- 3) Keep the three extended fingers as straight as possible.
- 4) The hands can then be placed on the thighs, facing upwards.
- 5) Now, observe the flow of breath and its effect.



Image 3 – Chin Mudra

Benefits of chin mudra

- Better retention and concentration power.
- Improves sleep pattern.
- Increases energy in the body.
- Alleviates lower backache.

2. Chinmaya mudra

- 1) In this mudra, the thumb and forefinger form a ring and the three remaining fingers are curled into the palms of the hands.
- 2) Again, the hands are placed on the thighs with palms facing upwards and deep comfortable Ujjayi breaths are taken.
- 3) Once more, observe the flow of breath and its effect.



Image 4- Chinmaya Mudra

Benefits of chinmaya mudra

- Improves the flow of energy in the body.
- Stimulates digestion.

3. Adi mudra

- 1) In Adi Mudra, the thumb is placed at the base of the small finger and the remaining fingers curl over the thumb, forming a light fist.
- 2) The palms are again placed facing upwards on the thighs and the breathing is repeated.



Image 5: Adi Mudra.

Benefits of adi mudra

- Relaxes the nervous system.
- Helps reduce snoring.
- Improves the flow of oxygen to the head.
- Increases capacity of the lungs.

4. Brahma mudra

- 1) Place both the hands in Adi Mudra, with the knuckles touching each other.
- 2) Tuck the hands near the navel area with the fingers facing upwards.
- 3) Observe the flow of breath.



Image 6: Brahma mudra mudra.

Benefits of brahma mudra

- Brahma Mudra allows flow of prana i.e., energy of life force throughout the body.
- It calms the mind and energizes the body.
- Improves focus.
- Releases negative energy and thoughts.
- Enables the practitioner to reach a higher state of meditation.
- Detoxifies the body

DISCUSSION

Mudras are hand gestures or positions used in various forms of meditation, yoga and spiritual practices. They are believed to have both physiological and psychological effects on the body and mind. While the scientific research on mudras is limited, there are some explanations and potential health benefits associated with their practice. It's important to note that the following explanations are based on the available information and further research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms and benefits of mudras.

Nerve stimulation: Mudras involve specific hand and finger positions, which can stimulate certain nerve endings and activate corresponding areas of the brain. The hands have a dense network of nerve endings and stimulating them through mudras may have an impact on the functioning of the nervous system.

Acupressure points: Mudras often involve pressing specific fingers against each other or applying gentle pressure on certain points on the hands. These pressure points may correspond to acupressure points in traditional Chinese medicine. Activating these points is believed to promote the flow of energy and balance within the body.

Mind-Body connection: Mudras are often performed in conjunction with deep breathing, meditation, or specific mental focuses. The combination of hand gestures and mental concentration is thought to enhance the mind-body connection, promoting relaxation, mindfulness and a sense of overall well-being.

Energetic flow: In some traditional practices, mudras are believed to influence the flow of prana or life force energy within the body. Each finger is associated with different elements or energies and by forming specific hand gestures, one can balance or redirect these energies to promote healing and vitality.

The potential health benefits of mudras are often anecdotal and based on centuries-old traditions. Some commonly mentioned benefits include stress reduction, improved concentration, enhanced digestion, increased energy levels and emotional balance. However, it's important to approach these claims with a critical mindset, as scientific evidence supporting these specific benefits is limited.

CONCLUSION

Future research on mudras holds great potential to deepen our understanding of their physiological, psychological and therapeutic benefits. Exploring these areas can contribute to the development of evidence-based practices, expanding the range of applications for mudras in promoting individual well-being and fostering healthier communities.

REFERENCES

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mudra>
2. <https://astroulagam.com.my/lifestyle/5-elements-our-body-mudras-tied-them-139354>
3. www.easyayurveda.com/2018/01/13/mudra-gesture-benefits-types/
4. <https://www.artofliving.org/in-en/wellness/spiritual/yogic-lifestyle/powerful-yoga-mudra-at-your-fingertips>
5. Images
6. Image 1- finger in our hands corresponds to an element – page no, 5.
7. Image 2 – Mudra Types – Page no, 9.
8. Image 3 – Chin Mudra – Page no, 10.
9. Image 4 – Chinmaya Mudra – Page no, 10.
10. Image 5 – Adi Mudra – Page No, 11.
11. Image 6 - Brahma Mudra -Page No, 11.