

# THERAPUTICAL USAGES OF HASTAS/MUDRAS USED IN DANCE

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It is a universal fact, that gestures and actions have played a vital role in the development of languages. When there was no language, the primitive man used different gestures to communicate. Even today it is used by the dumb people. Language of gestures is considered to be 1<sup>st</sup> art form, known as 'Mudras'. This can be classified into 3 types.

1. **Nritya Mudra**
2. **Tantrik Mudra**
3. **Bhoot Mudra**

The first type of Mudra is directly related to Nritya. But the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> types A have also been very supportive for the development of dance. These types later became the base of Nritya hasta. In the very beginning of Bharatmuni's Natyashastra, it is said that for the making of Natya Ved, Lord Brahma took Abhinaya from the Yajurveda. Yajurveda focuses mainly on the Karmakands (Rituals). Tantrik Mudras are used in the Karmakands. Thus, it can be said that the Tantrik Mudras must have been an inspiration for the Nritya Hastas. Natya Hastas, have been described for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in Bharatmuni's Natyashastra.

Bharatmuni divided Hastabhinaya into Asamyukta, Samyukta and Nritya Hastas and he made a total 64 mudras. After Bharat, dance became popular and the hastabhinaya accepted by all mentioned by him. These mudras became a subject for Nrityashastra. Right from the time of Bharat till date, no. of different mudras have been described in various treatises. A few treatises are as bellow:

Natyashastra by Sage Bharat  
Sangeet Ratnakar by Sharngdev  
Sangeetopnishad by Sudhakalash  
Bharatarnav by Nandikeshwar  
Abhinaydarpan by Nandikeshwar  
Sangeet Samaysar by Parshvadev  
Nruttaratnavali by Jaay Senapati  
Nrityaratnakosh by Kumbhakaran  
Nrutyadihyay by Ashokmalla  
Sangeet Damodar by Shubhankar Kavi  
Hastamuktavali by Shubhankar Kavi  
Hast lakshana Deepika  
Ras kaumudi by Shrikanth  
Natyashastrasangraha by Utake Govindacharya  
Nrutyasutram of Vishnudharmottar puran by Dr. Puru Dadheech  
Mirror of Gestures by A.Kumarswami

The Asamyukta, Samyukta and Nritya hastas as described by Bharatamuni, are also mentioned in the Nrityasutram in 3<sup>rd</sup> Khand of Vishnudharmottar Puran. In its 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Adhyay, 200 mudras have been mentioned according to the Vaishnav tantra tradition. This is called 'Mudra Hasta'. 'Mudra' from Tantra and 'Hasta' from Nritya, these words were first seen in the Nrityasutram. This shows the strong relation between the two shastras. Various mudras of Tantra are useful in the Nritya Shastra. Many mudras have same names but different characteristics, where as some have same characteristics but different names.

Indian Culture is very religion oriented. Thus, the main purpose or intension behind Indian dances is to worship the divine. Hence it is said that by using the Hasta Mudras properly, one can attain desired results. In the end of Hasta Muktaivali poet shubhankar has stated that according to Lord Brahma, if a dancer uses the hasta mudras appropriately, prosperity and wealth permanently resides with him/her. They achieve fame and are loved by all. They are always blessed by the Gods like Indra, Shiva and Goddess Saraswati.

This art of communication can be work as a therapy. Many of the imbalances in the so called normal behavior may also be made set right by regular exposure to certain mudras along with special emphasis on certain notes or ragas. These therapy acts on the human beings transformed into thought and feelings. Dance therapy may address physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and social needs with therapeutic relationships. It focuses on meeting therapeutic aims, which distinguishes it from dance education.

Dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving direct expression through the body. Thus, it is an intimate and powerful medium for therapy. Dancing is a primal response to rhythm and music, so the dance therapy can be more effective with an appropriate use of music. Mudras for the sapta swaras and different ragas are mentioned in Nrityadhyaya, Natyashastra Sangraha E.g. Saa – Alapadma in right hand and chatura hasta in left with Mayura lalit mandal, veer drashti and Udvahita shira. Similarly, all the 7 swaras have their own characteristics and thus, if the mudra and the music on raag match, it creates a major impact on the performance.

There are several different forms of application of dance therapy, including gestures, authentic movement, group work etc. Dance therapy is a vast subject and the mudra is a small part of it. Mudra therapy is a non medical mode of treatment. Mudra therapy or Mudra chikitsa is an ancient therapy. It originated in India several years ago. Our Rishis used to perform this hand mudra to remain healthy.

Mudras are various postures of fingers and thumbs. In mudra therapy, different diseases are treated by holding and retaining the fingers and the thumbs in different ways. This simple measure surprisingly restores a state of balance (homeostasis) within the body and raises the level of the performer's resistance. With the patient's immunity thus strengthened, the disease has no other option but to flee.

#### **Mudra therapy is advantageous in a number of ways:**

- It is very simple, perhaps the simplest among different non-medical therapies both for dancers or a lay man.
- Mudras are quite easy to perform.
- It is an extremely gentle form of treatment.
- It is entirely safe since no chemical medicines are employed.
- Mudra therapy is inexpensive because no instruments are required.
- It is a form of self-treatment. Any person who has acquired basic knowledge about mudras can treat most trivial ailments on his own.
- Mudra therapy has a preventive aspect, too.

The physical body is made up of five elements namely – Air, Water, Fire, Earth and Sky and each finger represents an element. By pressing different fingers of both hands, we can regulate the magnetic waves and balance five basic elements in our body. By using this technique in our daily life we can control disease and remain healthy. Mudras can help cure breathing problems, digestion problems, help boost the immunity, balance the metabolism, and strengthen the nervous system and bones. It helps in Cardiac problems, Kidney issues, Migraines, Arthritis, to name a few, apart from revitalizing and generating spiritual energy and unveiling koshas. Mudras are employed along with Yogic Meditation to energize the Chakras and calm the mind apart from healing the physical body.

Drishti bhed, Shirobhed, Grivabhed are used in Dance. Same as these movements of eyes, neck and head is been used in Yog as sukshma kriyas. Each and every limb gets benefited through dance as it is a total exercise. Classical dances have a strong base of Yog. The shastra behind it is very spiritual and thus, it acts as a medium of communication between the mortal and the immortal. Several ancient health systems are based on the concept of the balance of the five elements as the human body is a microcosm of the universe and mudra science too emphasizes that health is maintained when all the elements are in balance in the body. The tips of the fingers also possess energy corresponding to these elements and by connecting various fingers to each other in different gestures, the balance of elements in the body can be corrected.

There are a few well-known mudras such as the Pran mudra, the Vayu mudra, the Shunya mudra, the Shankh mudra, the Prithvi mudra, the varun mudra and others.

### (1) Gyan Mudra (Mudra of Knowledge)

This mudra is known as Aral.

‘Hamsasya’ according to nadikeshwar and ‘Omkar mudra’ according to Nruttasutra. These are the similar mudras and work similarly.

It enhances the knowledge. The tip of thumb has centers of pituitary and endocrine glands. When we press these centers by index finger the two glands work actively.

#### Method:

Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the index finger, with the other three fingers stretched out. There is no particular time duration for this mudra. You can practice by sitting, standing or lying on bed whenever and wherever you have time.

#### Benefits:

- Increases memory power and sharpens the brain.
- Enhances concentration and prevents Insomnia.
- If we practice it regularly, it will cure all psychological disorders like Mental, Hysteria, anger and Depression.
- It is good for stresses and strains, emotional instability, laziness etc.

### (2) Prithvi Mudra (Mudra of Earth)

This mudra is known as Mayur.

We can find similar mudra for Mayur in Abhinay Darpan, Bharatarnav, Natyasangraha etc.

It reduces all physical weaknesses and makes a person active.

#### Method:

Tip of the ring finger touches the tip of the thumb, with the other three fingers stretched out together differently. It has no particular time duration. You can practice it any time you want.

**Benefits:**

- It helps to increase the weight for weak people.
- It improves the complexion of skin and makes the skin to glow.
- It makes the body active by keeping it healthy.

**(3) Varuna Mudra (Mudra of Water)**

This mudra is known as Trishul.

We can find similar mudra named Shul hasta in Omapatam.

It balances the water content and prevents all diseases which come due to lack of water.

**Method:**

Tip of the little finger touches the tip of the thumb, with the other three fingers stretched out together or differently. It has no specific time duration and one can practice it according to their time.

**Benefits:**

- It retains clarity in blood by balancing water content in the body. Prevents the pains of Gastroenteritis and Muscle Shrinkage.

**(4) Apan Mudra (Mudra of Digestion)**

This mudra is known as Simhamukha.

It plays an important role in our health as it regulates the excretory system.

**Method:**

Tip of the middle finger and ring finger touch the tip of thumb while the other two fingers are stretched out. It has no particular time duration. You can practice it any time you want. Practice for longer time yields more benefits.

**Benefits:**

- It regulates diabetes.
- It cures constipation and piles.
- It helps excreting the normal waste regularly.

The science of 'Mudra Therapy' is a very vast subject and has in depth relationship with mudras/hastas used in Indian Classical Dance.

**References:**

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4. Mudras & Health Perspectives: An Indian Approach by suman K.Chiplunkar