

# Medicinal and Health Benefits of Buddha Mudras

Anoma Sakhare  
MA (Buddhist Studies),  
IBSC, MCU

## Abstract

Mudra is such a method of yoga through which the experience, knowledge and method of spiritual practice of ancient seekers and philosophers can be propounded in modern scientific contexts. It is clear that through the postures done with the fingers of the hand; the effect of the essential elements of the body can be increased or decreased. Buddhism has about 500 gods and goddesses. A general description is also available. They are mainly divided into six parts- 1. Buddha 2. Bodhisattva 3. Gods and Goddesses, 4. Protectors, 5. Protectors of Truth, and 6. Deities of the lower level. In order to please the above-mentioned deities, Mandala and chanting activities are performed which are accomplished by various types of mudras. There are mainly five mudras available in the idols of Lord Buddha 1. Dhyāna Mudra 2. Vyākhyāna Mudra 3. Abhayā Mudra 4. Dharmachakra Mudra and 5. Bhumisparsha Mudra.

**KEYWORDS:** Mudra, Buddhism, Buddha, elements.

## INTRODUCTION

Mudra is such a method of yoga through which the experience, knowledge and method of spiritual practice of ancient seekers and philosophers can be propounded in modern scientific contexts. This oriental learning is capable of giving a new direction to the present era. Through this, not only the problems emerging at the individual level, but many problems like social, religious, national, international etc. can be solved. Mudra is an important method useful in daily activities and its proper regular use can play a decisive role in various fields.

Our physical structure is like a complex machine. Its different parts perform various functions. All of them can be influenced simultaneously by the use of mudra. Through this yoga, control over mental, physical and emotional disorders can be achieved by awakening the seven chakras like Mūlādhāra etc. Along with this, Mudra Yoga helps in building a healthy, cultured and strong society by keeping the endocrine glands, ChaitanyaKēndra and five elements balanced and controlled.

It is clear that through the postures done with the fingers of the hand; the effect of the essential elements of the body can be increased or decreased. Due to which the balance of these elements is maintained in the body and along with the body, the

defects of the intellect, mind and consciousness are eliminated and the qualities are emitted.

Name of the fingers the elements	Name of the elements
Thumb element (Fire - sun)	Fire
Index Finger element (Air - wind)	Air
Middle Finger element (Ether - space)	Sky
Ring finger (Earth)	Earth element
Little Finger Water element (Water)	

The postures of Yoga Tattva Mudra Science are infinite. Mudras of this category are usually made with only five fingers of the hand, but in some mudras, along with both hands, the whole body is also used.<sup>1</sup> For example, the whole body is used in Gyan Mudra, Vairagya Mudra, Abhaya Mudra, Dhyana Mudra etc. Simple Gyan Mudra can be done with one hand or both hands while walking, sitting or doing various tasks, but the main Gyan Mudra is done by sitting in a posture.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://buddhismnow.com>

<sup>2</sup> Carroll Revital, Carroll Cain, *Mudras of India: A Comprehensive Guide to the Hand Gestures of yoga and Indian dance*, p. 331

Disease preventive mudras can be done simultaneously two, three, even four consecutively. If you want, you can change the currency after every second. Mudras can also be done for some more time by changing frequently if required.

Before doing any action, if there is proper information about its advantages and disadvantages, method and procedure, then its use is soon result. Although mudra cultivation is a physical activity, its effect is also seen on the subtle system systems of the seeker. This tantra keeps the nature, conduct and spirit of man in balance. Through this thesis, an attempt has been made to make the seeker more aware and active in the use of mudra by introducing them to the same aspects of mudra sadhana.<sup>3</sup> With this, the seeker himself will be able to know which chakra or gland to control by knowing the symptoms of his diseases and can get good results by using the respective mudras in a proper manner.

Buddhism has its own dignified place in the religious traditions prevalent in this world. Today a large section can be considered a follower of Buddhism. The Śramaṇa culture prevalent in India, Jain and Buddhist, is divided into these dual traditions. Although Buddhism originated in India, the followers of this class are also seen in other countries.

*BuddhamSaranamGacchāmi, Dhamma SaranamGacchāmi, SanghamSaranamGacchāmi* – is the basic mantra of the Buddhist Sangha. In this religious tradition, the attainment of Lord Buddha, the religion established by him and the Dhamma Sangha is considered a virtue. In India, the human race is a supporter and follower of the ideas of Buddha.

Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was probably born in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Your name was Siddhartha, the son of Maharaja Suddhodāna and Queen Maya. King SuddhodānaGautam belonged to Gautriya and Shakya caste, so Siddhartha was also called Gautam and Shakya Muni.

According to Buddhist literature, the life depiction of Shakya Muni (Buddha) is not available anywhere, it has been divided into twelfth parts on the basis of Jataka tales etc. It is in short words as follows- 1. Buddha's descent from heaven to earth

as a White Elephant 2. His entry into the womb of Queen Maya 3. Birth of Buddha 4. His greetings by Brahma, Indra and other gods and goddesses on the occasion of birth 5. Lord Buddha's transcendental knowledge 6. World detachment 7. Indifference 8. Consummation bond with Yashoda 8. Birth of son Rahul 10. Dispassion towards material pleasures 11. Renunciation of the world and 12. After six years of rigorous sadhana, attainment of ultimate knowledge under the Bodhi tree. From the day Shakya Muni attained enlightenment, he came to be known as Buddha. Buddha's teachings were in oral form, so no written relics of him are found. His design was based on samsara, reincarnation and karma. The Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the 12 Causes of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (Suffering Tradition) were the basic principles and teachings.

The Four Noble Truths are the foundation of Buddhism, on each of these Aryatruths an independent arrangement can be written.<sup>4</sup>

The four noble truths are- 1. *Dukh* 2. *DukhSamudaya*, 3. *DukhNirodha* (Nirvana) and 4. *DukhNirodhaGaminiPaṭipadā* (Noble Eightfold Path).

These are the names of the eightfold path: 1. Right view 2. Right thought 3. Right speech 4. Right action 5. Right living 6. Right exercise 7. Right memory and 8. Right Samadhi. The said eight paths have also been said with many distinctions. The following are the 12 causes of dependent arising- 1. *Avidyā* 2. *Sanskār* 3. *Vigyan* 4. *Nāmarūpa* 5. *Ṣaḍāyatana* 6. *Sparsh* 7. *Dukha* 8. *Trishna* 9. *Upādāna* 10. *Bhava* 11. *Jaati* and 12. *Jara-Marana*.

Apart from this, Lord Buddha presented interpretations on many subjects like *Dhyāna*, *vipaśyanā*, *nirvāṇa* etc.

Buddhism is divided into several sects, the main ones being Hinayana and Mahayana. In both these traditions, there is a lot of ritualistic activities even today. Under those rituals, while worshipping, a table named Altar is kept, on which all the worship materials are kept. On top of this altar, first of all the *Aṣṭamaṅgalā* made of wood or metal is placed, the seven gems are placed behind the *Aṣṭamaṅgalā* or in the side. In their foreground, seven cups of silver or brass are kept offering puja

<sup>3</sup>VermaArchana, *Performance and Culture: Narrative, Image and Enactment in India*, p. 44

<sup>4</sup> <https://buddhismnow.com>

material.<sup>5</sup>Water in the first two cups, flowers in the third, fragrant incense in the fourth, Deepak in the fifth, water in the sixth and naivedya in the seventh. The water of the first cup is used for Paḍyā, the water of the second cup is used for the face, flowers and incense are used for the beautiful and joyful expression of the atmosphere, lamps are used for lighting and for offering water and naivedya. In many statutory rituals, eight successful offerings are also given which were once offered to Sakyamuni himself. In some rituals, a mirror (form), conch (word), nutmeg (smell), sugar (rasa) and silky yellow cloth (touch) are placed as symbols of the five sense objects.<sup>6</sup>

Buddhism has about 500 gods and goddesses. A general description is also available. They are mainly divided into six parts- 1. Buddha 2. Bodhisattva 3. Gods and Goddesses, 4. Protectors, 5. Protectors of Truth, and 6. Deities of the lower level.<sup>7</sup>

In order to please the above-mentioned deities, Mandala and chanting activities are performed which are accomplished by various types of mudras.

There are mainly five mudras available in the idols of Lord Buddha 1. Dhyāna Mudra 2. Vyākhyāna Mudra 3. Abhayā Mudra 4. Dharmachakra Mudra and 5. Bhūmiśparśha Mudra. The description of 40 mudras related to God is also available. These mudras were discovered by a descendant of King Rama-III Phra Buddha YotPhra (Rama-I). Along with this, special mudras of seven gems, Aṣṭamaṅgalā, eighteen duties, twelve material hand unions etc., various deities related mudras and mudras used in GarbhaDhatuMandal, VajraDhatuMandal, Homa etc. are also obtained.

From the above discussion it is known that the practice of mudras in the Buddhist tradition has been there since the primitive age. The articles related to this are clearly found in this ancient literature.

According to modern science, many glands work as a team for the operation of various bodily functions of a person, which is called Tantra. The main two systems as the controller and organizer of

the body are the vascular system and the endocrine gland system.

Endocrine glands are designed as the regulatory and protective systems of our body. It performs its effects through chemical secretions, which are called hormones; these hormones mix in the blood and become helpful in the formation and health of the body and also on the mental condition, temperament, behaviour etc. It is a major source in controlling the impulses, lust, hatred, desire etc., which have a deep effect within the human being. According to Yōgācāryas, glands constitute the mind and character. By using mudra, the charge and energy located around and below the pelvis can be lifted.

With this, good character development is also possible by increasing the power of endocrine glands manifold. The imbalance of these secretions leads to physical, mental and intellectual deformities. Indian Yogi seekers have described these glands thousands of years ago as Chakras or Lotus.<sup>8</sup> When comparing the glands and the chakras, no significant difference is seen between them.

Just as a bee makes honey by mixing its secretion in the juice of irrigated fruits, similarly the glands take essential elements from the body and mix their juice with them and produce powerful hormones like chemical factories. These hormones work to regenerate the dead cells in our body every day and make them functional. Due to this the physical activities continue to go on in an orderly manner. Sometimes when there is a deformity in the glands, it becomes necessary to balance them; otherwise many incurable diseases can arise. The root cause of all physical and mental diseases is the imbalance of the endocrine glands.

The main function of the glands is to keep the organization of the body strong by regulating the *PañcaMahābhūtas*. These do the work of keeping the balance of the brain and every part of the body and keeping it safe from diseases. In this way, the glands become helpful in our physical, mental, character and personal development and

<sup>5</sup>Verma Archana, *Performance and Culture: Narrative, Image and Enactment in India*, p. 55

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 61

<sup>7</sup> <https://buddhismnow.com>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia/beginners-guide-asian-culture/buddhist-art-culture/a/bodhisattva-avalokiteshvara>

development. The effect of the imbalance of these glands is reflected on the personality and behaviour of the person, such as if the adrenal gland is not functioning properly then the liver does not work properly and the person becomes frightened and irritable. When the sex glands become more active, the lust increases and the person becomes selfish. If the thymus gland is unbalanced, then there is frivolity and wickedness in nature. When the pituitary gland does not work at par, the person becomes ruthless and harsh and his tendency to commit crimes increases. Therefore, it is very important to keep the endocrine glands in balance. All these glands are related to each other because the disorders arising in one gland affect all the other glands. The secretion of the endocrine glands can be balanced through the use of mudra.

### Effects of Mudra on the Five Elements

Our body is primarily a body of five *Mahābhūtas* (elements). These five elements together form the composition of all our actions. Their different combination determines the nature of the body. When the five elements are maintained in proper quantity, the metabolic activities of the body also take place properly and the body remains healthy and fit.<sup>9</sup>

Due to family rites, hereditary tradition, diet, lifestyle, environment etc., the basic state of elements keeps on changing. This leads to deflection and distortion in physical activities and the disposition of the elements affects physical, mental and spiritual activities. When these elements are in their original state, the body acquires special energy and the brain functions in an orderly manner.

### Conclusion

The balance of the five elements in the body can be done by the use of mudra. Physiologists and Ayurvedacharyas have presented the five elements in five fingers. The person whose body lacks or imbalances the element can make up for that deficiency by using the mudra related to that element. The five elements like the earth, etc.

control the captivating power of our body. Western scientists have also accepted this as bioelectricity or life force. This life force is established at the time of conception in our body in the form of a life battery, which generates an electric current in the form of *Chaitanya* (consciousness). This power energy current remains active through yogic practices like mudra etc. Hence, mudras are immensely helpful in curing ailments.

### References:

1. Carroll Revital, Carroll Cain, *Mudras of India: A Comprehensive Guide to the Hand Gestures of yoga and Indian dance*, Singing Dragon (An imprint of Jessica Kingsley Publishers), London, UK and Philadelphia, USA, 2014
2. Reade Winwood, *Religion in History*, The Macmillan Company of India Ltd., Indian Secular Society, Bombay, 1972
3. TatjanaBlau, MirabaiBlau, *Buddhist Symbols*, Sterling Publishing Company Incorporated, 2003
4. Thomas Edward J., *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi and Madras, 2000
5. VermaArchana, *Performance and Culture: Narrative, Image and Enactment in India*, Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2011
6. <https://buddhismnow.com>
7. <https://www.burmese-art.com/about-buddha-statues/hand-positions/dharmachakra-mudra>
8. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia/beginners-guide-asian-culture/buddhist-art-culture/a/bodhisattva-avalokiteshvara>
9. <https://buddhismnow.com/2010/03/25/manjushri-bodhisattva/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.burmese-art.com/about-buddha-statues/hand-positions/dharmachakra-mudra>