

INDU ARORA

Mudrā

THE SACRED SECRET



In thy name, At thy lotus feet...



|| *akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākāraṇi vyāptāni yena carācaram* ||

(Which) pervades the entire unbroken form of the circle
(of creation), moving and unmoving

|| *tat-padāni darśitāni yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ* ||

To That beautiful and benevolent Guru through whom that state
was revealed (to me), Salutations!

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*It is my calling to share with you the practices that could empower you as a practitioner
(Sādhaka), be established in health (Swastha), share with you the tools of well being of mind.*

May whatever I share be of benefit to you, may my senses be of help, may my mind be worth

of guidance and being guided, may my whole being be of service...

may each fragment of my being, be for UNIVERSE.





DEDICATION

Dedicated to my father, “Late Shri Radhey Shyam Arora,” whose subtle teachings and love permeate each cell of my being, and who made me the person I am today and the person I shall be.

Dedicated to *Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* Swami Veda Bharati, in whose Ashram I wrote this book.

In Thy Name, At Thy Lotus Feet



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Readers

My humble *Namaskāras* and deep gratitude go towards all readers who have picked up this book. May you benefit from the knowledge of the sages and the ages, and may you share the light of this knowledge with the ones around you.

Most of all, I acknowledge the deep silence that is within each one of us. The richness, fluidity, and essence of this silence (*mauna*) that I soaked in during the writing of this book helped me find clarity. I pray and wish that you, as the reader, will be able to touch this silence and derive from this silence the strength, clarity, and immense potential that each one of us carries within.

*Om Shantih Shantih Shantih
In Thy Name, At Thy Lotus Feet
Indu Arora
April 2015*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I always try to stay aware of how much I do not know and how much more there is to know. This is my second book after *Yoga: 'Ancient Heritage, Tomorrow's Vision'* and like its predecessor, this book too is an inspiration from my students (whom I consider to be my teachers).

Let us start with the title of this book: *Mudrā: The Sacred Secret!*

What is so sacred about it, and why is it a secret?

The sacredness of the subject is due to the ability of the *Mudrā* to connect and bring forth communication in all the five layers (*pañca kośas*) of our being. It has been kept a secret since time immemorial due to the infinite powers that they bestow upon the practitioner; thus, the knowledge of the subject needs to be passed on with utmost care and precision. The secret is in the opening as well as the closing. As for me, opening and closing is the same thing. What is open outside is closed within, and vice versa. I am referring in particular to the *cakras* (psychic energy vortices). With the regular practice of *Mudrā* we open what is closed inside and close what is opened outwards. My focus in this book is on *Hasta Mudrā* (*hand Mudrā*) only, which clearly means that there is much more to *Mudrā* than just hand gestures. I hope that the introduction of *Mudrā* through this book whets your appetite to learn more...

For me, *Mudrā* is communication. The history of *Mudrā* dates back to the formation of the universe—or, what we may call the cosmos. None of it would have been possible without union and communication. Each living, non-living, animate or inanimate being in the cosmos communicates at many levels. Do not get confused about communication as just the ability to speak and gesticulate.

The five-element theory is based on *Sāṅkhya*. Every thing or being is made of five elements. The ratio and proportion of these five elements in that object or being gives it a particular shape, form, texture, color, and function. Five elements are also present at the level of atoms and subatomic particles. What holds the subatomic particles together is the cohesive force of water; what keeps them moving is air; where they move/rotate is the space element; as they move, it creates friction and heat, which is the form of the fire element, and the combined weight of it forms the atomic mass that is the earth element. Even at the level of cells that the human body is made up of, the communication is at three levels: intracellular communication (communication within the nucleus, cytoplasm, and protoplasm of the same cell), intercellular communication (communication from one cell to another), and trans-cellular communication (communication of cell to the entire human body). Therefore, communication is the key and the particular position in which it happens is the *Mudrā*.

In today's world, where we have lost the ability to communicate at all three levels, *Mudrā* can prove to have a special purpose.

Having shared knowledge on this subject since 1999, I have been asked repeatedly: “Do you have a book on this subject?” My answer has always been, “No, but you are yourself like a book. Now that you have gained a basic understanding of the subject, practice it, and more shall be revealed to you.”

Some get satisfied with this answer, and others still look for more material.

In most of the *Yoga* teacher-training programs, the only *Mudrā* touched upon is *Jñāna Mudrā* and that too in very little details. It is such an important aspect of *Yoga* and meditation, and yet, the least explored. I felt the need to bring this subject to light; I started conducting *Mudrā* teacher-training programs internationally. People have started approaching me thus: “Are you the *Mudrā* person?”

Students of *Yoga* as well as other people who do not have a background of *Yoga* seem equally interested, impressed, and happy to receive this knowledge.

I have personally seen the benefits of *Mudrā* in my body. I have felt its benefits during meditation as well as when used as therapy.

I planned to make this book a compilation of 108 hand *Mudrās* but I could not stick to this sacred number, as there are so many. I have skipped some and kept them aside for a book on advanced practice.

I have written this book with the intention that everyone should benefit from the precision, simplicity and clarity of content.

I would suggest you to practice the pronunciation of the name of the *Mudrās* as well as some Sanskrit terms using the Transliteration Key provided in the first part of the book to master/be attuned to the correct vibrational frequency hidden in the name of the *Mudrā*/ Sanskrit term used. Additionally, you may look at the index with the name and the major benefit of specific *Mudrā* to find one that is suitable for you. However, I request you to go through the introductory chapter, which talks in detail about the guidelines regarding practice, history, science, and meaning of *Mudrā*.

I hope that each one of you enjoy it as much as I enjoy sharing my knowledge of this mystical art and science of communication.

With Namaskāra Mudrā
Indu Arora

EDITOR'S NOTE

I have always had a fascination for fingers...they are so small and yet do so much! They almost seem to have a life of their own. From the teachers, parents and grandparents gesticulating to explain things better, to finger puppet shows in school, to writing, cooking, stitching, painting and creating myriad creations, to eating and holding things, to dance...one can go on and on about the importance of fingers in our lives. I did not know about their role in *Mudrās*, at that time.

Mudrās or hand gestures have a therapeutic and spiritual quality, is something I became aware of in my own spiritual quest. I realized that hand *Mudrās* lock and guide energy flow and reflexes to the brain. By bending, stretching and touching the fingers and hands, we can talk to the body and mind, as each area of the hand is connected to a certain part of the mind or body. This fact has been utilized in massages as well.

I was delighted and honoured to edit Indu's manuscript - ***Mudrā: The Sacred Secret***. It was a tremendous learning experience as she peeled off layers upon layers and explained the origin, science, psychology and philosophy of *Mudrās* and went on to expatiate the types and benefits of the same with evocative pictures and beautiful illustrations. It was almost like listening to her talk! She is an experienced *yogini*, a fountainhead of knowledge, who endears her friends, followers, students and readers alike, with her deep-seated understanding imparted with utter humility.

When I met Indu first, she seemed a person deeply interested in *Yoga*, who had written a very comprehensive book about it too. But as I got to know her better, through her work, I realized that she is indeed a *Yogini* in the true sense.

Yoga is generally perceived as a combination of postures and breathing techniques for overall fitness and well being. While the postures are designed to affect all the body systems and breathing practices bring awareness of the relationship that exists between the body and the mind, there is still so much more to *yoga* – it has a subtle effect on our consciousness. This is done by the *Mudrās*.

Mudrās used in combination with breathing, enliven and enhance the flow of *prāṇa* in the body by stimulating the different parts of the body involved with breathing. Relating directly to the nerves, *Mudrās* create a subtle connection with the innate patterns in the brain influencing 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. It is an amazing power to be able to control our body in such a way – to focus our consciousness and manipulate

our experience. The knowledge and experience of *Mudrās* techniques is so powerful! It adds a totally new dimension to the *yoga* experience.

The Universe is composed of five elements, earth, air, water, fire, and ether. Similarly, our body is also a composition of five elements, represented by our five fingers. According to *Ayurveda*, disease is due to an imbalance in the body caused by lack or excess of any of these five elements. The fingers are essentially electrical circuits. The use of hand *Mudrās* adjusts the flow of energy affecting the balance of air, fire, water earth and ether, bringing about healing. A daily practice ensures a healthy metabolism, glowing skin, active joints, focused mind and sharp senses.

The section on therapeutic *Mudrās* is one that should be read by all and applied when required. I feel that even the physicians should have knowledge of these *Mudrās*, as they would complement their treatment. In Indu's words, "What better tool can nature bless us with than we ourselves, who else has the ability to delve into the deepest core and secret of our being and dig out the reason for the conflict with our own body and mind?"

There are numerous *Mudrās*, many mysterious and others contemporary in nature.

The mysterious and important contribution of *Mudrās* in *Prāṇāyām* and *Gāyatri Mantra* discloses the amazing power of the combination of words and gestures in achieving miraculous results. The practice of *Prāṇāyām* redirects the *prāṇic* energy or life force into the appropriate energy pathway. *Mudrās* are used to avoid the leakage of *prāṇa* and intensify its force. Similarly, the thirty-two *Mudrās* for *Gāyatri mantra* are connected to thirty-two important vertebrae of our spine. It doesn't end here –the fascinating journey of connecting to self, unraveling and understanding the secret of *Mudrās* continues...

To conclude in Indu's words, "Do not lose any chance to connect to self...explore these *Mudrās*, one at a time, and practice for a few days to see the effect. Do not lose hope if you do not see any tangible result, be assured that each cell of your body is moving every time you are in practice and there is a subtle ripple effect building up...each cell is pregnant with dynamic energy, all you have to do is to connect."

Stay connected, stay healthy and happy!

Sunita Pant Bansal
2014, New Delhi, India

FOREWORD

Indu Arora has produced an excellent book on mudras that is likely the most comprehensive presentation yet available in the field. Several new publications on mudras have come out in recent years but hers adds additional yogic dimensions as well as subtle details of application. The variety of mudras and the explication of their usage is quite extensive, providing an abundance of approaches for the reader to explore for years to come.

Indu explores the usage of mudra as both a healer and as sadhaka, as one on the spiritual path. This makes her approach more experiential and reflecting of higher energies and intentions than those who look at mudras mainly at a physical or psychological level.

She highlights the healing power of different mudras making them relevant to everyone and easy to experiment with. Her explanations are clear and complete and she has adequate illustrations to explain each mudra and how to use it.

Mudras can be done simply and quickly when other Yoga practices may not be possible, such as when we are working during the day. Through holding our energy and awareness in the mudra, we can awaken the higher powers of our Yoga practice as needed.

Indu shows us many secrets of mudras and higher Yoga approaches that can help deepen our practice on whatever level that we choose to apply it. She unfolds inner dimensions to Yoga that add beauty, grace and energy to it. Her book is an important and innovative addition to the literature on mudras and on Yoga as a whole. It reflects a deeper understanding of Yoga than most of the available literature in the field.

No doubt Indu has such a deeper and thorough knowledge of many other aspects of Yoga. We hope that she addresses these in future publications.

Dr. David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri) D. Litt.
Director, American Institute of Vedic Studies
Author of more than thirty books on Yoga and Vedic sciences

REVIEWS

“...so far, the most complete, practical, and authentic work on mudras. Clearly, *Mudra: The Sacred Secret*, is the fruit of Indu Arora's extensive studies and interaction with living teachers of the tantric tradition. With this work, Indu Arora has made a remarkable contribution to the field of yoga, tantra, and ayurveda, and has offered to the readers an opportunity to further enrich the healing modalities of their practices.”

– Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, PhD
Spiritual Head, Himalayan Institute

“The Consciousness of Yoga as the Flow of Divine Grace rests upon a higher form of energy in order to manifest it. Indu Arora explores the deeper practices of Yoga through the dynamism of Mudra unfolding the powers of healing, rejuvenation and transformation. Mudra Jnana unlocks the yogic process revealing a secret force of Shakti hidden deep within our psyche. Indu awakens us to the grace and power of Mudra in our daily life, making our every gesture full of light.”

– Yogini Shambhavi Devi
Author of ‘Yogic Secrets of the Dark Goddess’

“This is a wonderful reference book. It is concise and relatable. Written with clarity and purpose, Indu will reach the beginner and the experienced Yogi, giving multifaceted material to satisfy every level of learner. I found the examples to be clear and concise, and the pictures are a wonderful guide into the gestures.

.....hard to put it down. I will refer to this work over and over in my spiritual journey, and would recommend it to anyone who wants to expand their knowledge base.”

– Beth Shaw
President and Founder: YogaFit Training Systems Worldwide

“In *Mudra the Sacred Secret*, Indu Arora has performed a remarkable work of scholarship and has made a valuable contribution to the study of yoga. Leaving seemingly no Mudra stone un-turned, Indu has dogged down the best-known and most obscure knowledge on the topic, creating the definitive work on this engaging and valuable topic. This is a very fine piece of work.”

– Chris Kilham
Author: The Five Tibetans

“Indu Arora has chosen a very fundamental topic for presenting to a wider audience: the theme of mudra, which in the Indian tradition covers a wide range of meanings and practices, ranging from ritual to dance, to yoga, Tantra, iconography, and generally to the understanding of the human body and its infinite possibilities. Bringing together all these implications and applying them in the field of healing is her special contribution. Keeping in mind the spiritual background of mudra, she succeeds to bringing the hand poses into the practical field, which will be extremely helpful for therapists of different methods and traditions. In fact, mudra does not only include hand gestures and positions of the fingers, but also the whole body as an expression and attitude of the Divine, which in meditation and states of Samadhi assumes a spontaneous posture.

Her book will go a long way to overcome the dichotomy that is so widespread (especially in the West) between mind, body and spirit or self. The body is the best instrument for spiritual practice, and mudra is the most visible expression of a deep impression left on the soul (the original meaning of mudra also includes stamp, seal or impress).

I wish her a wide audience who can appreciate and use these insights in practice of healing and other ways of integration of body and self.”

– Prof. Dr. Dr.h.c. Bettina Sharada Bäumler
Director: Samvidalaya at the Abhinavagupta Research Library, Varanasi, India

“Indu Arora has written an excellent book about the sacred art and science of Mudra. The book shares authentic information with simple scientific explanation about the ritual of Mudras. The most important being the intention and attention to align your individual spirit with cosmic spirit. It is a perfect addition to the vast library of modern day application of Vedic Sciences.”

Thumbs Up (if that counts as a Mudra)

– Dr. Suhas Kshirsagar BAMS MD (Ayu)
Director: Ayurvedic Healing
Author: The Hot Belly Diet

“In Mudrā: The Sacred Secret, Indu Arora embarks on a journey to discover the esoteric history and meaning of Mudra (gestures), their profound spiritual effect and their therapeutic application. As readers, we are swept up in her enthusiasm and at times left stumbling in her footsteps. Her passion for the language of Mudra, takes her to the source—ancient Vedic texts and the wisdom of masters. Though I practice and teach Mudra and Mantra,

I am a novice in my understanding of the philosophical and spiritual foundation of these ancient practices, so Indu Arora’s well-researched book will be my guide. In her quest for authenticity, the “Mudra Basics” section is anything but basic. Indu Arora explores the theories from ancient to modern, from religious and secular culture, from art, literature, dance and medicine to elucidate the science of Mudra. The sections that are the most beautifully photographed and explained are those that describe the individual Mudras themselves. Here, one need not be a scholar or even particularly drawn to the practice of Mudras to appreciate their beauty and their spiritual and therapeutic use. The book itself is art, and the philosophical and practical wisdom gathered here will provide an insightful reference for me and for students of Yoga and other spiritual traditions.”

– Amy Weintraub
Founder, LifeForce Yoga Healing Institute
Author of Yoga for Depression and Yoga Skills for Therapists

“Our ancient Indian yogic & artistic traditions are esoteric & mystical systems primarily designed to re-connect & re-align the microcosmic entity (human being) with its macrocosmic source (Cosmic Universe). Both these systems combine signs and symbols (mudras/ hastas), postures (asanas/sthanas) and sounds (mantras/shollus) to channelize the Universal life force (prana) in such a way that it balances, harmonizes and heals the body-mind. The body-mind then becomes a perfect vehicle, conducive to the flowering of a state of pure, serene and blissful awareness (Ananda).

Indian dance is yoga - a ‘sacred communion of the Body, Breathe and Being moving in perfect harmony.’ It is not surprising then that hastas (hand gestures) is one of the key elements of all Indian classical dance traditions and the purpose of Indian art is the aesthetic experience of Bliss (Rasananda).

In her book ‘Mudra- The sacred secret’, Indu compassionately shares her deep study, experience and wisdom of this sacred, esoteric science. The book is well researched, well-structured and beautifully illustrated with simple clear instructions that will enable its reader to deepen their understanding and practice of this vidya. It is a wonderful gift and guide for all sadhakas.

It is evident the effort and time Indu has spent on this wonderful encyclopedic book, to a dancer the vocabulary of hastas is an all- engaging process. Thank you Indu for this sharing.”

– Dr. Prakriti Bhaskar
Indian Classical Dancer, Choreographer & Research Scholar
Director, Shiladhish Art & Research Institute, Mumbai- INDIA

“In Jyotisha (Vedic Astrology), the star constellation—Hasta—emits the power to place your heart's desire in the palm of your hand. Likewise, Indu Arora's latest book, *Mudra: The Sacred Secret*, reveals the profound powers within your own hand—to heal and awaken. Drawing from classical Yoga philosophy and Ayurveda, she enlivens the enlightening energy within your palms for your own benefit, as well as those whom you touch. Through textual references, inspiring examples, and beautiful images, Indu Arora breaks new ground with this never-before-explored topic. And you'll discover that as the eyes are the window to the soul, the hands are the doorway to the heart.”

– *Dr. Katy Poole, Ph.D.*
Jyotishi (Vedic Astrologer) and Life Coach

“Indu Arora has no doubt written the most comprehensive book on mudras to date. Five fingers on each hand—who knew what powers they had! Rearrange them into one of the many mudras in this book, and you can release negativity, change your state of consciousness, heal yourself, transcend time, or become enlightened. Indu Arora provides clear instructions, diagrams, photos, and philosophy to make the practice of mudras easy and meaningful. This is an excellent book for healers, yoga teachers, yoga practitioners, and anyone who wants to add another dimension to their practice of yoga.”

– *Sharon Steffensen*
Editor, Yoga Chicago magazine

“For years, Indu Arora has demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the interconnected traditions of Yoga and Ayurveda as well as the deep sincerity and dedication of a seeker and student. As a teacher, Indu Arora aptly demonstrates her mastery of mudra in her new book, *Mudra: The Sacred Seed*.

The science of mudra offers us a healing modality that can be used by anyone, at any level of ability, and is a powerful adjunct to multiple therapies as well as a stand-alone practice for anyone at any ability. In this elegant and user-friendly book, Indu Arora's comprehensive explanation of mudra advances our ability as teachers, students and practitioners to incorporate these techniques in classes and in therapeutic settings.

Indu Arora's combination of clear instruction and imagery as well as a synthesis of psychological and physical benefits of the mudra elevates our understanding of this essential component of yoga practice. Her new work advances the science of mudra as we understand it in the modern age and it is a must-have addition to any

library for those interested in both personal practice as well as yoga as therapy.”

– *Felicia Tomasko, E-RYT 500, RN*
Editor-in-Chief LA YOGA Magazine
President, the Bliss Network
Member of the board of directors, National Ayurvedic Medical Association

“Using the framework of five elements, five pranas, cakras and Gayatri mantra, Indu Arora takes the reader on a journey of mudras in “*Mudra: The Sacred Secret*” for its therapeutic and spiritual benefits. Each mudra is beautifully illustrated with her own hands, describing general mudras, therapeutic mudras, five element mudras, five prana mudras, therapeutic mudras of touch, spiritual mudras, mudras of cakra and mudras in the practice of Gayatri mantra. The core qualities, formation, benefits, cautions of each mudra are described with proper illustrations. Highly recommend for yoga students, yoga teachers, yoga therapists, health care providers and scholars who are interested in the therapeutic and spiritual benefits of mudras and will find themselves coming back to the text time and time again for deeper study and practice.”

– *Dilip Sarkar, MD, FACS, CAP*
Associate Professor of Surgery (Retired), Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, VA
President, International Association of Yoga Therapists

“Mudra is sacred practice of the Rishis to instrument changes in consciousness and experience inner bliss. Mudra is an indispensable tool for sadhana, and assist in the experience of deeper states of meditation. However, a book detailing this great art and science was sorely missed. Indu Arora's book “*Mudra the sacred secret*” is perhaps the first book of its kind that dwells into this esoteric subject with depth of perception, insights and references from source literature. This book can be a companion for any sincere sadhaka in modern times.”

– *Acharya Shunya Pratichi Mathur*
Founder, Vedika Gurukulam, School of Ayurveda and Vedic Studies, California
President, California Association of Ayurvedic Medicine (CAAM)

“As a young boy growing up in a traditional conservative family, I was introduced and taught the practice of Sandhyavandana (salutations to the Sun). Sandhyavandana drawn from the Vedas was performed thrice daily: morning (pratahsamdhya), noon (maadhyanika), and dusk (saayamsamdhya). The entire ritual involves invoking various deities, use of hand gestures (hasta mudras), breathing practice (pranayama), yoga sun salutations (surya namaskara) and mindfulness meditation (dhyana and dharana). The importance of this ritual was never understood; it was memorized and done perfunctorily. Later, during my doctorate and postdoctoral training in Neuroscience, I understood the importance of nerve connections and nervous stimuli especially in the skin and fingers. Touch is one of the five sensory potentials (pancha tanmatras) and is perceived by the skin. It is one of the gateways of the body through which we draw in impressions from the external environment.

The fingertips are richly endowed with nerve endings and are very sensitive to the touch stimuli. A set of specialized neurons transmit the touch signals (afferent impulse-role of samana vayu) to the cortical region of the brain where it is processed and experienced as a sensation and a suitable message gets delivered by motor neurons to the fingers for an appropriate action to be taken (efferent impulse-role of vyana vayu). In addition to the touch sensation, the fingertips and other areas of the body surface are also endowed with receptors that recognize pain (nociception) and temperature impulses (thermoception). For example: Bring the forefinger of one hand close to the center of the palm of the other hand. Try not to touch the palm with the forefinger but keep it very close to the palm and notice what sensations arise in the fingertip (commonly described sensations include among others pain, heat, a thin ray of energy or a jet stream of air moving in a clockwise direction). How do you explain this phenomenon?

Vedic texts describe the presence of numerous tiny chakras (reservoirs of energy) on the fingertips that either get energized or depressed depending on the stimulus received. This may also partly explain the phenomenon of phantom pains. Of interest, neuroscience does not have an answer to the chakras or the energy reservoirs in the subtle body (sukshma sarira).

So since the fingertips are richly endowed with receptors that recognize varied stimuli and since these are also the sites of subtle chakras, could the placement and position of the fingertips be manipulated for optimal health, wellbeing and prevention of health disorders? Interestingly, every movement of the body part (be it facial, hand, eyes or finger) denotes a Mudra. All types of emotions can be easily displayed through a specific mudra using one or more of the body parts. Furthermore, mudras have been used for centuries in vedic traditions for promotion of good health and could be used as a “stand alone” therapy or together with pranayama and meditation. Mudras were adopted to sustain optimal health, relieve stress, prevent illness, and to recover from a variety of physical, mental and emotional problems. The one advantage of mudras-it can be done with ease, it does not require any paraphernalia and it can be done just about anywhere and anytime.

As I started gaining further knowledge of Mudras through my Yoga and Ayurveda practice, I was able to realize

the importance of these gestures as part of my daily Sandhyavandana that could serve as a valuable tool on the path of spiritual awakening. Unfortunately my knowledge of mudras was restricted to the dozen or so gestures that I use as part of my sandhyavandana ritual. Thus, I welcomed the book “Mudra-The sacred secret” written by Indu Arora.

The book opens with a detailed introduction to the vedic philosophy, the philosophy psychology, science, and benefits of Mudras, chakras and pressure points. Information is provided on nearly 140 hand mudras classified under three broad categories and is accompanied by full-color illustration of the hands and fingers, the proper placement, the Sanskrit name, transliteration and English translation. Additionally, Indu Arora has provided elaborate information on the technique, its applications, physical, mental and spiritual benefits of the mudra. Furthermore, information is also provided on health issues and alleviation of the health challenges with a specific mudra(s). It is a very insightful and informative book and I would highly recommend to anyone who wishes to understand subtle body energy systems, spirituality and mental wellbeing. Undoubtedly, the book will be of great interest to yoga and ayurveda practitioners, integrative and holistic teachers and students and all others interested in acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of mudras.

Finally, for those skeptical scientists, there are at least a couple of scientific studies that show the benefits of mudras in conjunction with meditation that results in down-regulation of the inflammatory process together with positive changes in mood, anxiety, and other neuropsychologic parameters. Needless to say Mudras are not only healing gestures but also holy gestures. With my hands folded into an Anjali mudra, I offer my pranams to Indu Arora for writing a book that offers us unlimited opportunities for growth, healing, and integration of the body, mind and intellect.”

– Rammohan Rao PhD; CAS; RYT
Research Associate Professor of Neuroscience
Buck Institute for Research on Aging, Novato, CA
Faculty, California College of Ayurveda
Nevada City, CA, 95959

Mudrā

The root of the *Sanskrit* word *Mudrā* is “*Mud*,” which means to impart bliss, happiness, pleasure, joy, *ānanda*. *Mudrās* are the means for the achievement of *Ānanda-śrī*. *Ānanda* means “pure bliss,” and *śrī* here symbolizes “feminine energy.” The rising of the feminine energy to meet the masculine energy and the joy of this union is *Ānanda-śrī*. In other words, this bliss is attained through the divine powers of the *Mudrā* or hand gestures, which emphasize and intensify the concentration on the Divine and attract the blessings of the Divine.

In this connection, the *Tantrasāra* defines *Mudrā* as being a source of pleasure to the Gods worshipped and a cause of freedom from the defilements of sin and passion.

Another meaning of *Mudrā* is represented by the words ‘seal,’ ‘gesture,’ ‘posture,’ ‘lock,’ ‘symbol,’ and ‘currency.’

As per Eastern philosophies, cultures and *Yogic* practices, *Mudrās* are systematic hand, body, and face gestures.

More closely, *Mudrās* are “closed electrical circuits” of the subtle channels in physical and etheric bodies.

Mudrās are a combination of elegance and mysticism.
They purify, energize, and Divinize the spiritual aspirant
in a similar way as *mantra* recitation.

Definition of *Mudrā*

Mudrās are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression, consisting of hands, face, and body postures. They retain the efficacy of the spoken word. It is an external expression of inner resolve, suggesting that such non-verbal communications are more powerful than the spoken word.

It is certain that the word *Mudrā* has a deeper meaning than suggested by its mere translation or synonyms.

The word *Mudrā* is not merely a collection of letters; each letter relates to a particular vibration, and each vibration invokes a particular sensation, thought, and emotion. The sages and seers in their trance, or *śūnya*, state of mind as *parā* experienced these vibrations. The *parā* is a state where one receives the grace as an experience of the infinite, which is beyond any possible expression. One becomes the experience itself. The journey from *parā* to *paśyanti* gave birth to a meaning in their being through self-reflection. The *paśyanti* is the state of becoming a seer, a witness to the experience within, through *vimarśa*: self-reflection. When the meaning found a way out as speech through voice, it took the form of pure letters known as *akṣara*, or syllables as *vaikhari*. Each syllable is directed towards a specific vibration and a specific experience. The combination of all these experiences expressed as body and hand gestures is what we understand as *Mudrā*.

I would like to quote from Acharya Karunamoya *Sarasvatī*'s foreword in Shyam Sundar Goswami's book *Laya Yoga* regarding the power hidden in the syllables...

“Yoga is hidden in the vedamantra (Ṛg-veda-saṃhitā, 10.114.9) as bīja which are its original form. The bīja are four: ‘yang,’ ‘ung,’ ‘gang’ and ‘ah.’ Again, ‘yang’ is composed of two bīja, ‘ing,’ and ‘ang.’ When the powers locked in the bīja are aroused and harnessed, the nāda-bindu factor is absorbed into the bīja aspect, and then the bīja, being arranged in order, constitute the shrouta word ‘yogah,’ which in that form, as well as in its complex spiritual forms, occurs frequently in the Saṃhitās of the Veda. The two matrika-letters ‘ing’ and ‘ang’ represent agni (fire) and soma (moon), or Piṅgalā and Idā. Piṅgalā and Idā cause respiratory motions which are based on yang bīja. When yang is roused, respiration is suspended because of the absorption of the Piṅgalā and Idā in the Suṣuṃṇā, and as a result kumbhaka is effected. At this stage, the yang-force is transformed into yama (control). The emergence of yama occurs in three stages: physical control in relaxation in āsana, vital control in kumbhaka, and sensory control in pratyāhāra. At the pratyāhāra stage, the bīja ‘ung’ is roused and radiates udāna force, by which concentration develops in three stages in the mental field: dhāraṇā, dhyāna and Samprajñāta Samādhi. At this Samādhi stage, yama (control) becomes sangyama (super-control). In Samprajñāta Samādhi, the bīja ‘gang’ is roused as concentration-knowledge-light (prajnaloka). Associated with the ‘gang’ is wisarga (ah); it is represented by the sign: Wisarga is Kuṇḍalinī. Kuṇḍalinī is aroused in Samādhi and illuminates the whole superconcentrated mind by her splendor. Then, Kuṇḍalinī absorbs superconsciousness by her absorptive power to effect a mind-transcendent stage in which Samprajñāta Samādhi is transformed into Asamprajñāta Samādhi. Finally, Kuṇḍalinī herself is absorbed into and united as one with Parama Śiva - Supreme Consciousness. This super absorptive yoga is layayoga. Ṛg-veda calls it the attainment of stage of Indra in yoga (Ṛg-veda-saṃhitā, 4.24.4)”

Each syllable uttered is a direct link to the cosmos and to the ultimate truth. If one meditates upon the word *Mudrā*, the complete knowledge of the subject shall be unveiled to that being. Each word is like a guided path to its source of knowledge in the *ākāśa*, the space. The word itself carries within it the entire DNA of that subject.

Here, I wish to mention *Sūtra* 1.4 (1st chapter, 4th aphorism) from *Śiva Sūtras* to shed some light on this, along with a poetic expression to the meaning of the *Sūtras*.

Jñānādhiṣṭhānam Mātrkā(1.4)

Bound in the *Karmic* body

I still saw the truth: *Parā*

I contemplated upon it: *Paśyantī*

I couldn't resist and uttered: *Vaikharī*

The vibration supreme

...As little mothers

They conceal the truth in its womb

Manifest the little (minimal truth as *akṣara*: letters: offspring of truth)

Back into womb, I have to go

To seek, to see and to know

The knowledge supreme

The mothers unknown* (countless forms of *Śakti*) shall illumine the path

For the truth of the vibration is, it is just the ***Vibration Of The Truth!***

*Here, it means the innumerable, countless forms of *Śakti* that are intangible, nameless, and formless, and from whose womb the universe continuously evolves from moment to moment.

Actions (*Mudrās*) are manifested thoughts

Thoughts are manifested emotions (*Rasas*)

Emotions are subtle and gross experiences

Experiences are a result of communication

Communication manifests at three levels

All of it starts with communication and ends with a *Mudrā*

The level of awareness will allow you to peel those layers



Chapter - I

Origin and History of Mudrā

Mudrā in various cultures, traditions, and countries

Sanātana Dharma

Sanātana Dharma shows the earliest recorded knowledge and analysis of *Mudrā*. The earliest documentations are found in *Mantra Śāstra* (the book of incantations), *Upāsanā Śāstra* (the book of worship and prayers), and *Nṛtya Śāstra* (the book of classical dances).

Islam

In Islam, the mystical whirling dervishes used hand signs or *Mudrā* for various rites and rituals.

VĀYU MUDRĀ



AIR GESTURE

The Mudrā of Pain Relief

Vāyu means “air” and Śāmaka means “to neutralize” or “to nullify.” *Vāyu Mudrā* is also known as *Vāyu Śāmaka Mudrā* in *Ayurveda*. It is an *Asainyukta* (single hand) *Mudrā*. It belongs to the *Yoga Tattva Mudrā Vijñāna* and *Yogic* tradition.

FORMATION

Bend the index finger from the second joint to the root of the thumb, and press the back of the second phalange with the thumb. Keep the other three fingers (middle, ring, and little) as straight as possible. This can be practiced before or after meals.

BENEFITS

1. It releases extra wind from the stomach (flatulence) and the body, thereby taking care of pains and aches as a first aid.
2. It helps in rheumatic pains, gout, paralysis, Parkinson’s disease, chest pains, etc., and in any pain that is caused due to imbalance of air element.



 *Vāyu Mudrā*

CAUTION

This Mudrā works through alternating the air current by decreasing and then increasing it; so, care should be taken to practice it only for therapy purposes and it should be released as soon as relief is attained.

AGNI-CAKRA MUDRĀ



THE WOMB OF COMPASSION

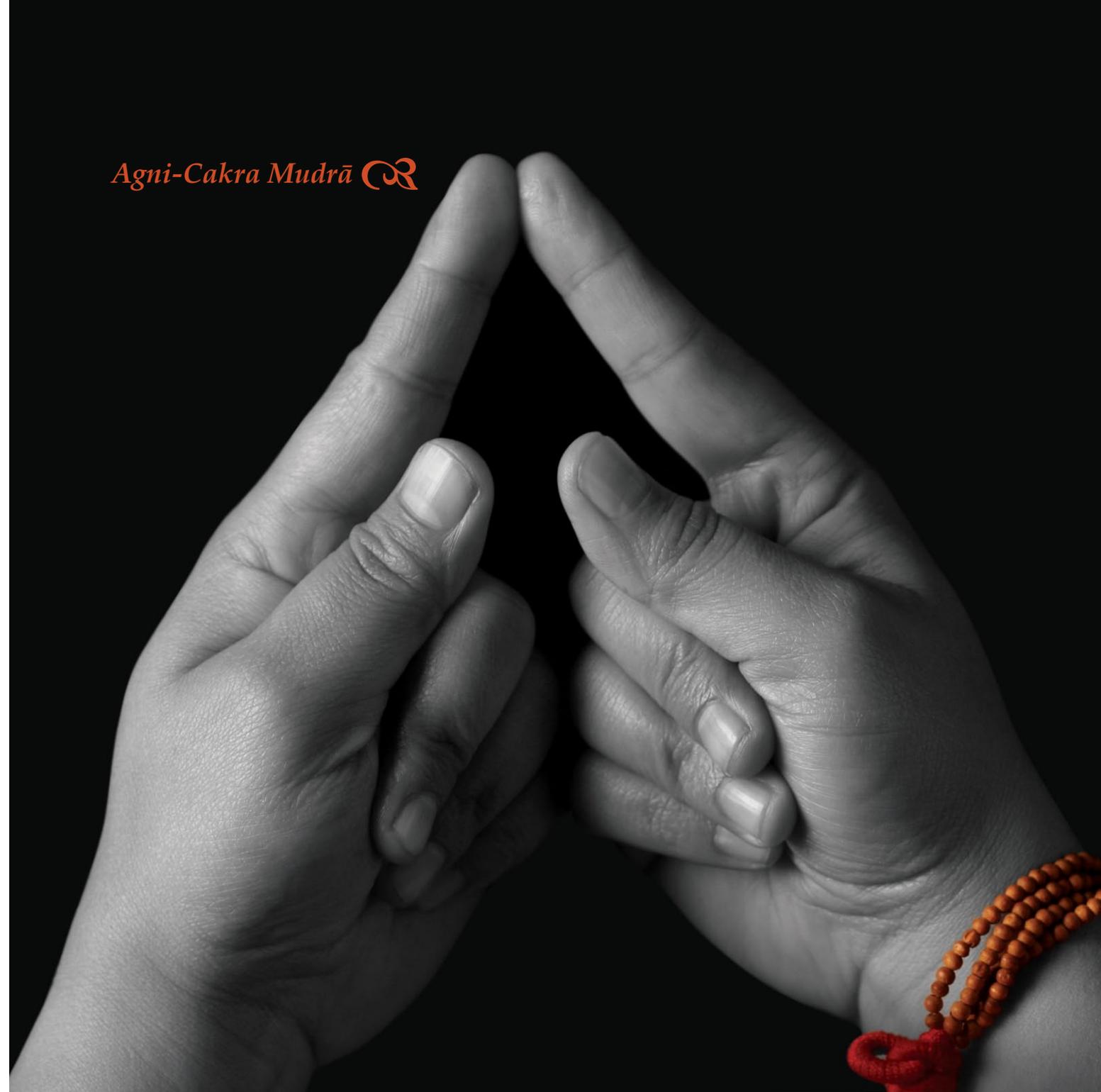
MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

This *Tantric Mudrā* is prevalent in *Vajrayāna* and *Mantrayāna* Japanese Buddhist tradition. It is a *Sainyukta Mudrā* (both hands). The priest or devotee generally practices this *Mudrā* at the time of performing the rites of *Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala* prayers. It may or may not be accompanied by *mantra* chanting. *Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala* is a *Vajrayāna* Buddhist tradition known as “womb realm.” The name of the *maṇḍala* derives from Chapter 2 of the *Sūtras*, where it is said that *Mahāvairocana Buddha* revealed the *maṇḍala*’s secret teachings to his disciple *Vajrasattva* from his “womb of compassion.” The seed syllable of the *Mahāvairocana* in the *Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala* is a simple and short “a,” which is experienced by simply opening the mouth and exhaling. The sound thus produced is “a,” which is a hidden sound in every consonant. It is thus called - the mother of all *Mantras*.

FORMATION

Bend the little, middle, and ring fingers of both hands into the center of the palm; rest the thumbs on the inner sides of the middle finger. Keep the index finger extended and join the tips of the index fingers of both hands to each other. Also making sure that the tips of the second phalange of the little and ring fingers of both hands are also touching each other.

Agni-Cakra Mudrā 



CIN MUDRĀ



MUDRĀ OF ULTIMATE REVELATION

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

This *Mudrā* of *Hindu* tradition symbolizes spiritual unfolding, supreme consciousness, and revelation of the absolute one. It is an *Asaniyukta* (single hand) *Mudrā*, practiced during meditation.

Cin Mudrā has similar affects on the subtle body as *Jñāna Mudrā*.

Cin Mudrā symbolizes the growth of a *Yogic* mind from *Tamas* (darkness, inertia) to *Sattva* (lightness, purity). It is a *Mudrā* of unified consciousness. It activates the “*Gupta Nāḍī*: secret channel” of consciousness that goes to the *hrīd- gūhā* (the cave of the heart) as one the hands on the knees in the *Mudrā*. It creates a *prānic* circuit which allows the *prāṇa* to circulate in the body releasing and dissolving any energetic blockages as well as forming the new energetic pathways. In this *Mudrā* each finger has a specific representation:

- Thumb - Supreme Soul
- Pointer(Index) - Individual Soul
- Middle - Ego
- Ring - Illusion
- Little - Karma

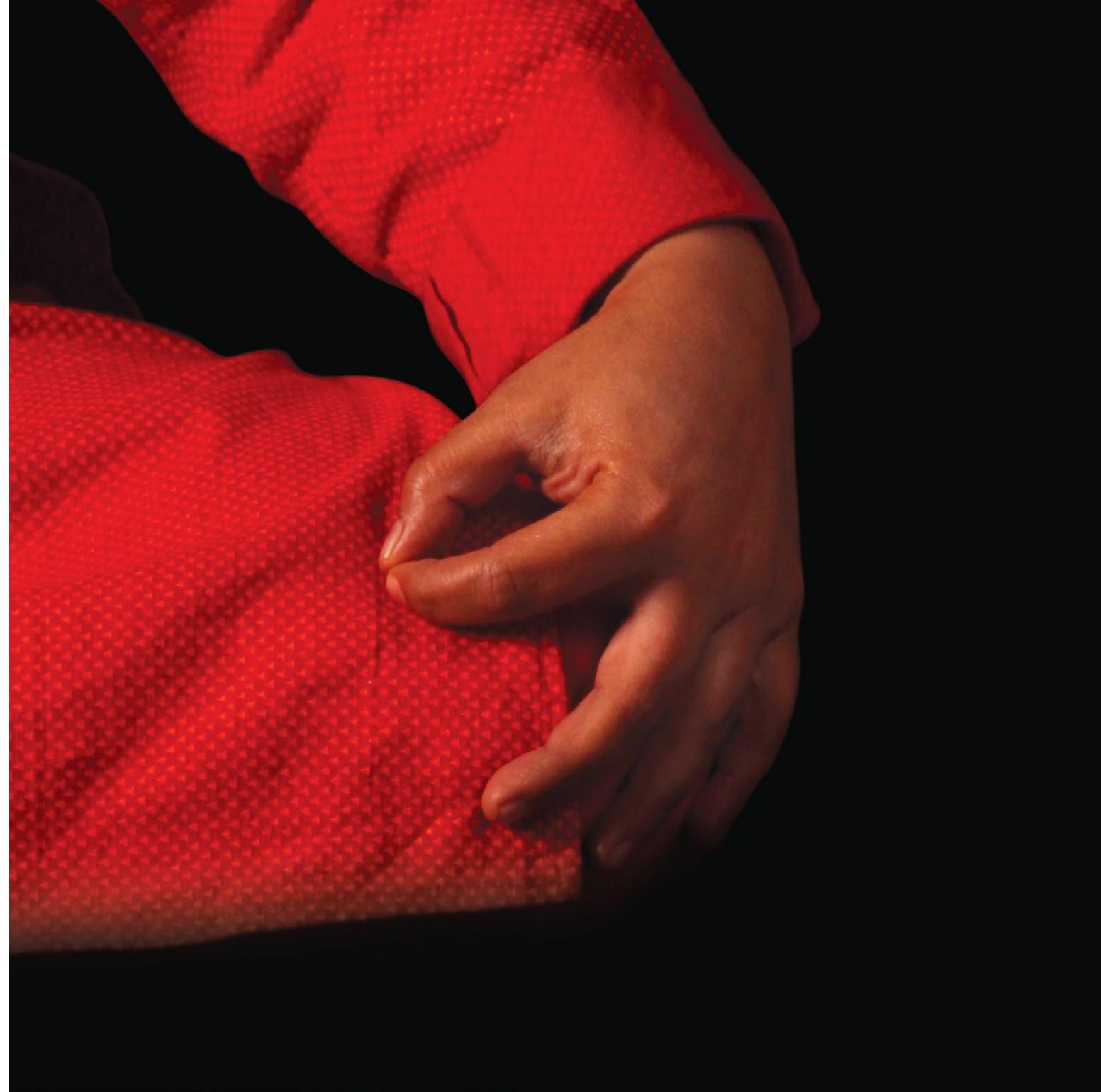
Cin Mudrā



Ego, illusion and *karma* are the three impurities that the *yogi* is tries to remove from his/ her life in order to unite their Individual Soul with the Supreme Soul and experience that divine, blissful state of union they strive for. It also helps in balancing the basic bio-rhythms of sleep and hunger. It helps one to stay in the state of *dhāraṇā* by slowly generating the alpha brain wave modulation. It calms down the *rajasic* tendencies and brings forth a sense of clarity and *sattva*. It has a special effect on the *Mūlādhāra cakra*, awakening the sleeping life force. The regular practice of this *Mudrā* brings a balance of the sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous system. Doing *Cin Mudrā* is a physical representation and reminder of this goal and serves to refocus and re-energize the practitioner.

FORMATION

Place palm face down. Index finger and thumb join at the tip. The ring, middle, and little fingers are kept relaxed. The subtle pressure between the index finger and the thumb is almost as if you are holding the essence of truth in a pinch.



Om Shantih Shantih Shantih

Indu Arora - is a Master Yoga Teacher, Yoga Therapist, Ayurvedic Clinician, and Author, with more than 14 years of teaching experience. With the book, “Mudrā: The Sacred Secret” she is opening the World of Mudrās for us. In her words, “I would like to share with you the Yogic and Ayurvedic wisdom which brings simplicity to our complex lives. Living in harmony with our inner nature and with the nature as such is the key to health. Nothing has the greatest power to heal, but Self!”

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Pandit Rajmani Tigunait
PhD Spiritual Head, Himalayan Institute

“...written with clarity and purpose, Indu will reach the beginner and the experienced Yogi, giving multifaceted material to satisfy every level of learner. Hard to put it down...”

Beth Shaw
President and Founder, YogaFit

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