

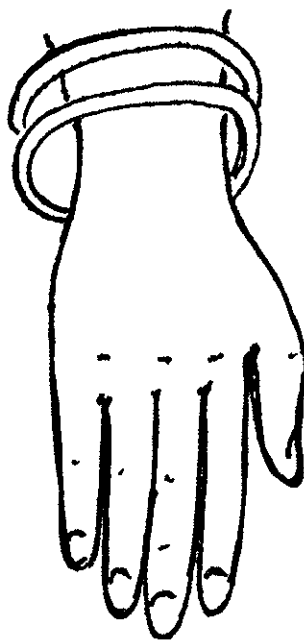
Mudras - Symbolic hand positions of Hindu and Buddhist rituals



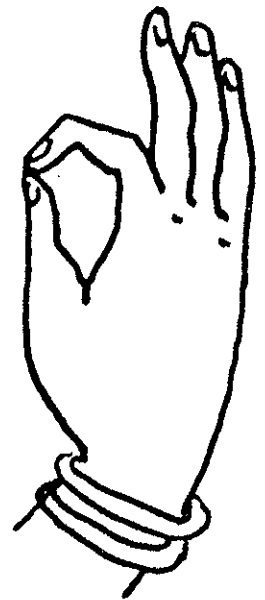
Abhaya Mudra
[ah-BYE-ah]
"Have no fear"



Varada Mudra
[vah-rah-DAH]
Wish-granting



Bhumisparsha Mudra
[boo-MEES-spar-shah]
Calling Earth to Witness



Vitarka Mudra
[vee-TAR-ka]
Teaching the
of Wheel of Law



Anjali Mudra
[an-JAH-le]
Greeting & veneration



Dhyani Mudra
[dee-YAH-nee]
Deep meditation

Mudra Exercise:

Mudras have served for centuries as simple, engaging and highly visual symbols for teaching Buddhist and Hindu stories and beliefs. Every Buddha is depicted with a characteristic gesture of the hands that corresponds to natural gestures – of teaching, protecting, offering gifts. Devotees see the mudra and, immediately, the story or teaching springs to mind. Not only are mudras effective teaching tools, they are physically beautiful symbols that anyone can fashion, experiencing a bodily connection to the ideas.

Tell the story: Siddhartha Gautama was an Indian prince who gave up his family, home and possessions to learn why there is so much suffering in the world. For six years he engaged in aestheticism – depriving himself of all bodily comforts - nearly starving himself to death before realizing that would not help him or anyone else alleviate suffering. Finally, he settled on a “middle way” of life, presenting adherents with a path to walk between overindulging and deprivation.

The Gautama Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree, determined to meditate until he achieved enlightenment.

Seeing this, Mara, the Lord of Illusion, feared that his own demonic power was about to be broken. So he tried to break the Buddha’s concentration by tempting him with sexy women, violence and mockery. When the Buddha was successful in not being distracted, Mara challenged him, demanding: “Who can vouch for the fact that you resisted temptation? No one was around to serve as your witness.”

“The earth shall be my witness,” the Buddha responded, touching the earth.

In this resplendent golden Enshrined Buddha, we are reminded of the **Buddha calling the earth to witness** the truth of his words (with his right-handed mudra). After resisting temptation, the Buddha was able to continue meditating and, at dawn, achieved enlightenment.

Mudra sheet:

- **Show** the Mudra Sheet illustrating six of the dozens of different mudras. Sometimes, different names may be attached to the various positions.
- **Encourage** visitors to use their own hands to fashion a mudra.

Find the Mudra:

- **Take a closer look.** Pass out the Mudras-on-a-Stick. Visitors can work in teams or individually
- **Spread** out throughout Gallery 213
- **Locate** your mudra on other sculptures (ala “Where’s Waldo”).
 - Abhaya Mudra can be seen on the Thai Walking Buddha
 - Dhyani Mudra can be seen on the Cambodian Crowned Naga Buddha
- **Remind** visitors that mudras can be seen on Buddhas and Bodhisattvas throughout the MIA:
 - Abhaya Mudra on Amida Buddha (G220)
 - Varada (wish-granting) Mudra on Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (G200)