

# IN GOOD HANDS



A  
CEYLON PRESS  
TINY GUIDE TO HAND GESTURES OF  
LORD BUDDHA

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In a  
Word  
or Two

Even the most serene and pacific statue of Lord Buddha offers a dynamic lesson in the evangelising of fundamental Buddhist beliefs – but such insight is only readily available to those amongst us who can interpret the gestures he is pictured making with his hands and fingers.

For if ever hands can speak, those of Lord Buddha most certainly do.

There are at least 11 core messages encoded in such hand signals, known as “mudras,” some with the most subtle of further variants; and most, but not all, in common use in Sri Lanka. There are, of course others; and also variants of these 11; but mastering these few will give you a sure start.

1

EASIEST

The "Anjali Mudra"

2

MOST DIFFICULT

The "Uttarabodhi Mudra"

3

FAIRLY DIFFICULT

The "Jnana" or "Wisdom Mudra"

4

MOST POSITIVE

The "Karana Mudrā"

5

MOST POPULAR

The "Bhumisparsha" or "Earth Witness Mudra"

6

MOST ENERGIZING

The "Abhaya Mudra" - or "gesture of fearlessness"

7

MOST COMPLICATED

The "Varada Mudra"

8

MOST RESTFUL

The "Dhyana" or "Meditation Mudra"

9

MOST CENTRING

The "Vajra Mudra"

10

MOST INTELLECTUAL

The "Vitarka" or "Discussion Mudra"

11

MOST FAMOUS

The "Wheel of Dharma" or "Dharmachakra Mudra"

# THE ABHAYA MUDRA



Considered to be the most energizing of all Lord Buddha's mudra, The Abhaya Mudra is known as the gesture of fearlessness, and is said to dispel fear, and invoke peace.

This hand gesture is formed with the right hand raised to shoulder height, arm bent and palm facing outward with the fingers upright and joined. The left hand rests down.

# THE ANJALI MUDRA



For those looking to make an easy start on the Byzantium symbolism of the hand gestures of Lord Buddha, The Anjali Mudra is a perfect place to start.

Press your palms together at heart level, thumbs resting on the chest - and you have done it, made a 1 on 1 respectful gesture of greeting.

# THE BHUMISPARSHA MUDRA



Quite possibly the most complicated hand gesture ascribed to Lord Buddha, the famous “Wheel of Dharma” takes a little bit of practice.

The thumb and index finger of both hands touch at their tips to form a circle. This represents the union of method and wisdom.



Next, the 3 free fingers of left hands are extended and symbolize Buddha, the Dharma (the doctrine of universal truth), and the Sangha (the Buddhist monastic order, of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen).

So too the right fingers, which, when extended, symbolize the 3 main tools for his teaching - namely: the Hearers - who practice the teachings they listen to and - after 3 lifetimes - achieve "small" enlightenment; the "Solitary Realizers" who cultivate merit and wisdom over a 100 eons to achieve "middling" enlightenment; and the Mahayana or 'Great Vehicle' - collectively, Buddhist traditions, texts, philosophies, and practices.

# THE DHYANA MUDRA



Best known as the Meditation Mudra, this piece of symbolic Buddhist hand gesturing is made with one or both hands resting on the lap.

It envisages the practitioner meditating on Buddhism's abundant body of "Good Laws" which can be used to attain spiritual perfection.

# THE JNANA MUDRA



One of Lord Buddha's most winning symbolic hand gestures.

Thumb tip and index finger touch as a circle and face inward. In this simple bit of symbolism, you have the signal for wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.

# THE KARANA MUDRA



Bad day? Low self-esteem? Bothersome devils? Not for nothing is this hand gesture of Lord Buddha probably the most used and powerful.

Raise the index and little finger and fold all other digits. In one sweep you have made the sign to ward off evil, negative thoughts - and demons.

# THE UTTARABODHI MUDRA



For those looking to play in the big league, the Uttarabodhi Mudra is one of the most profound symbolic hand gestures made by Lord Buddha.

Index fingers touch and point up; all other fingers entwine at heart level. This is the gesture of supreme enlightenment, made possible by connecting yourself with divine universal energy.

# THE VAJRA MUDRA



The Mudra that symbolizes, with inimitable simplicity, the unity of all Buddhist beliefs.

In this relatively dynamic piece of Buddhist hand gesturing, the erect left hand of the forefinger is closed into the right fist, and the tips of both fingers are curled together.

# THE VARADA MUDRA



One of Lord Buddha's more complicated pieces of hand symbolism, but well worth the study.

Let your left hand hang at the side of your body, palm open, facing forwards with all fingers extended – and you have a perfect representation of charity and compassion, with each finger donated to a different virtue: Generosity; Morality; Patience; Effort; and Meditative Concentration.

# THE VITARKA MUDRA



Known colloquially as the Discussion Mudra, this artful piece of symbolism is concerned with talking about and communicating Buddhist teaching.

This Buddhist hand gesture has thumb and index finger touching, and the remaining fingers pointing straight, both hands occupied with the same action.





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