

## ANALYSIS OF HASTABHINAYA OR HASTMUDRAS IN PERFORMING ARTS

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### ABSTRACT

In this research paper, initially the meaning of hastmudra (Hand Gesture) is made clear, explains both single and combined hastmudras on a broader level and their practical usage is explained. In total 28 single and 23 combined hastamudra or hand gestures are explained in this research paper.

KEY WORDS: Gesture , Hand Gesture, Mudras and Hastabhinaya.

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### PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

The importance of mudra (hand gestures) in the performing arts like dance is described in this research paper. When the ancient man was not aware of language, he used the language of signs to communicate his ideas & thoughts. In the present era, when man is a civilized being and may choose any communication channel available to him to express his ideas, the hand movements contribute a great deal to convey his message effectively in different meaningful expressions.

In the world of dance, different gestures or movements made with hands are known as *Nritya Hasta*. *Nritya hasta* expresses the language of dance. In his abhinaya, a dancer performs with his hands along with face expressions, body language and movements of steps. As a dumb person is unable to express his ideas into words, thus expresses his thoughts using the language of hands. This language of the deaf & dumb people is renowned across the world as sign language. Sometimes words cannot convey feelings or emotions to that extent that can be done by articulated thoughts and ideas. Dance is a visible art form and it has the power to convey complete narrative through the expressions of human body only. Cinema is also a visible art like dance in which the first film was the silent one. In spite of that, complete narrative was presented by the silent actions of artists. Tolstoy rightly says that ear is inferior sense than eye. The language is audible but painting or visible art is such a language in which one can enjoy by

only looking at them. It is said that Mahatma Buddha told his disciples not to make his statues. After sometimes, Buddha's teachings were spread through the wooden or stone symbols to the followers. The first artist was a priest himself. That artist had to learn the full knowledge of the religion to make religious symbols and pictures. To understand his religious teaching, he initially took the support of hand Gestures and body language.

Different meanings of gestures are given in the dictionaries Mohar, Sikka and bhangima of body. In Indian Classical dances, gestures are known as *bhangimas*. The word '*Mudra*' is derived from sanskrit word '*Mud*' which means enjoyment or pleasure. According to Tantra Shastra, Mud is that particular characteristic of main bhangima of hands by which gods are pleased and disciples are freed from enemies of kam-krod (Anger, pride and lust) etc.

Some thinkers and writers have opinions that mudra is derived from Persian word '*Muhar*' meaning 'a sign'. Parsi brown has written about its importance that, India's language of gestures is not similar to any other country in the world. Natya shastra also gives references to this language of gestures.

Bharat Muni has divided Hastabhinya into three parts-

1. Single hasta or non composite hast mudras
2. Combined or composite hasta mudras
3. Nritt hasta.

Gestures made by the use of only one hand are known as single hand gesture or *Asamyukta Hasta*. Gestures made by two hands are known as *Samyukta hasta*. Gestures made in the pure dance (Nritt) are called *Nritt hasta*. Natya shastra has only 64 hand gestures among which 24 are single hand gesture, 13 are samyukta hasta and 27 are nritt hasta. In Abhinaya Darpan, nritt hasta are not granted different status and are combined with Samyukta and Asamyukta. In Abhinaya Darpan there are 51 Hasta mudra; 32 are asamyukta, 19 samyukta hast. Hand Gestures or Hasta mudras described in Abhinaya Darpan, written by Acharya Nandi keshwar are as follows :-

## ASAMYUKTA HAST MUDRAS:

- 1. Pataka** :- By spreading all the fingers of a hand in one straight line, by keeping the tips in lower posture and by turning thumb to its root is called pataka.

Usage - It is used to present clouds, Beginning of Natya, lying down, attempt at going, moon light, forcing open doors, strong sunlight, entering a street, touching things, meaning of seven case ending, shield, the ideal king, the sea, addressing a person, the succession of good deeds, going forward, a rainy day, a month, a sword, cleaning with a broom, flow of the air, river, horse, cutting, sunlight to shut the door, wave to enter a street, to take an oath etc.



- 2. Tripataka**:- After making pataka gesture, if the ring finger is lowered from pataka, it is called tripataka.

Usage - It is used to present crown, tree, Indra, weapon, pattern drawn on the face and the body, invocation descent, touching auspicious things, union of man and woman, turning round, lifting or lowering of the face, lamp, stroking the hair, rubbing down a horse, tying a turban, closing the nose of ears, applying strong scent, clay lamb, firelight, pigeon, bow,. According to Dasharupa, Tripataka hand is used in stage whispers when one person is addressed out of several persons present on the stage etc.



**3. Ardh pataka :-** After lowering the little finger in pataka mudra, Arath pataka mudra is formed.

Usage:- Leaves, sky, bank of river, dagger, tower, horn, knife, flag, peak, saying 'both' etc.



**4. Kartarimukha:-** In pataka mudra, if the ring finger is lowered half way and index and middle fingers are spread then, kartari mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show opposition, separation of woman and man, the corner of the eye, stealing, a creeper, drawing patterns on the body, red paint for the feet, whisk, buffalo, yearning of separated husband and wife, cow, buffalo, thick coil of hair, tower, scissors etc.



**5. Mayura:-** The hand is raised with the palm outwards. The 1st, 2nd and little fingers are extended straight; the 3rd finger is bent.

Usage :- the peacock's beak, bird of omen, creeper, vomiting, brow spot, forehead, wiping away tears, stroking the hair, argument according to law etc.



**6. Ardhachandra:-** when pataka mudra is slightly tilted and the thumb is spread out it makes ardhchandra mudra.

Usage :- It is used to show fortnight, platter, origin, moon on the 8th day of the dark fortnight, platter, anxiety, prayer, meditation, greeting common people, wrist, bangle, effort, astonishment, tying up the hair, intemperance, eye-brow, bow, cloth, movement of the feet, tightening the girdle, the back, , making a vessel, carrying a child, white color etc.



**7. Aral :-** when palm is raised and faces outward, 2nd, 3rd and little fingers are stretched straight, the 1st finger is crooked or curved and the thumb is a little bent beside it and almost touching the tip of the finger, aral mudra is formed.

Usage :- Then aral mudra is used to depict sipping of water by Brahmins, nectar, drinking poison, dressing the hair, the aversion of a parasite for a friend, wiping sweat form the brow, putting collyrium on the eyes, circumambulation at morning and evening prayer etc.



**8. Shuktund :-** In pataka mudra when index and ring fingers are lowered then Shuktund mudra is made.

Usage :- It is used to depict throwing of a spear, mystery, shooting an arrow, Brahma weapon, curve, nose, javelin, turning round, fighting, crossing, proceeding, lover's Quarrel, disrespect, abandonment, disc etc.



**9. Mushthi** :- when four fingers bent in to the palm at the thumb set on then, mushthi hast mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show wrestling, grappling the hair, steadiness, waist, saying, greeting common people, holding a book, carrying away, running, lightness, ghost, deserving, imprisonment, God of Death, digging, gift, permission, minister, crossing, enduring, gift, heel or ankle, loveliness etc.



**10. Shikhar**:- In mushti mudra when thumb is extended straight out then shikhar mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict the God of love, husband, silence, pillar, recollection, embrace, letting fly, pounding, steadiness, gratifying the ancestors, establishing a family, spire, hera, playing a palmyra fan, difference, steadiness, bashfulness, mahisha mardini, galloping of a horse, making the sign of the hair knot, sight, search, ear, drying, hands, wonder, time and wheels etc.



**11. Kapittha :-** From shikhar mudra if index finger is bent to touch the tip of the thumb, and remaining fingers remain closed, then kapittha mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show lakshmi, winding, saraswati, cymbals, holding, grasping the end of a robe, milk, king cows, churning out Lakshmi from depth of sea, holding elephant goad, spreading cowries, showing a dance, pounding barley, counting Saraswati's rosary etc.



**12. Katkamukh :-** In kapittha mudra, when apart from index finger middle finger is also joined with thumb then katkamukh mudra is made.

Usage:- holding a garland of flowers or a pearl, picking flowers, drawing a bow slowly, applying such things as musk or scent, speech, drawing out an arrow, holding a fly whisk, holding a discus or a fan, embrace of harlots, picking flowers, holding out a mirror, distributing folded betel leaves etc.



**13. Shuchi (Needle) :-** In katakamukh mudra when index finger is raised straight then shuchi mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to demonstrate one parabrahma, sun, city, saying, one hundred, threatening, pinning, fan, rod, the body, umbrella, braid of hair, astonishment, down, capability, beating the drum, circle, explanation, pointing to a distant country, life, looking at things, going to front, turning a wheel, arrow, secret, threatening, listening, beak, recollection, beak, nose, white color etc.



**14. Chandrakala:-** when thumb is released and raised from shuchi hast mudra then chandrakala mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to the face, to indicate the crescent moon, the span of the thumb and forefinger and objects of that shape, the crown of Shiva, the Ganges and a cudgel etc.



**15. Padmakosha:-** when all the fingers are spread and turned inward, then padmakosha mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict wood, fruit, breast, elephant, apple, ball of flowers, rain of flowers, bud, egg, mango, hole of a snake, cluster of flowers, trunk of an elephant, vessel of gold or silver, shape of a bell, mirror, bending bough, opening of a flower etc.



**16. Sarpashirsha :-** when palm is hallowed slightly, raised and faces outwards and all fingers and thumb are close together and extended as the hood of the snake then sarpashirsha mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show snake, sandal paste, cherishing, sprinkling, message of wrestlers, pranayama, mud, flapping of elephant ears, giving water to gods and sages, bashfulness,



drinking water, answering, sprinkling sandal powder, washing the face, holding the breasts of women, clinging, image, milk, saffron etc.



**17. Mrigsheersh :-** In sarpsheersh , when small finger is separated and straightened then marigsheers mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict traditional manners, cheek, costume of an actor, drawing three lines on the brow, coming, massage of feet, patterns on the ground, roaming, placing the feet, padmini, calling the beloved, applying sandal paste etc.



**18. Singhmukh :-** When palm is raised facing outwards & 1st and little fingers are stretched straight; the 2nd and 3rd fingers are bent parallel to the palm and the thumb touches their tips, then singhmukh mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show pearl, stroking, fragrance, coral, drop of water, when placed on the heart, salvation, loin-face, lotus garland, elephant, hare, waving kusha grass etc.



**19. Kangula :-** when ring finger is turned inside from padmakosh mudra, then kangula mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict Lakucha fruit, same as kangula, white water lily, breast of a young girl, fruit, mouthful, lotus, breast-bud, holding the chin, circle, grapes, little bell, hailstone, anything small etc.



**20. Alpadam :-** when palm is faced upwards, hallowed and fingers are spread out and bent to form a petaled circle then alpadam mudra is made.

Usage :- It is used to show woman's breast, lotus in full bloom, mirror, appreciation, longing, full moon and beauty of an elephant's walk etc.



**21. Chatur :-** when palm is faced outwards and hallowed , 1st, 2nd and 3rd fingers and the thumb are bent like a hooded snake and the little finger is extended straight, then chatur mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to a show little, gold, musk, sorrow, proof, aesthetic, iron, slow gait, difference of castes, breaking to pieces , oil or ghee, face etc.



**22. Bhramara :-** when middle finger and thumb are joined and index finger is placed at the root of the thumb, remaining two fingers are kept straight then, bhramara mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show parrot, bee, cuckoo, crane, kathakali, similar birds, feather, water umbrella, gandharva birth, ear of elephant, weeping, fear etc.



**23. Hamsasya :-** When index finger touches the tip of the thumb and remaining fingers are kept erect then hamsasya mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show ascertaining with instruction, putting forward the wick of a lamp, dyke, impeding a current, tying with thread, blessing the festival, impeding a current, the first rain etc.



**24. Hanspaksha :-** when palm is raised facing outward and very slightly hallowed and little finger is extended straight and the other 3 fingers are bent a little forward, thumb bends over to touch the center of the 2nd finger on the inside then, hanspaksha mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show cupid, mountain, god, wind, enjoyment, bedding, breast, lying down, people, fall, covering, bowing down, sandal paste, cheek, hair, shoulder, mace, protecting, obedient, false-hood, blessing, fish, sword, getting on the lap, wrath, flame etc.



**25. Sandamsha :-** When fingers are opened and closed again and again in padmakosh mudra then sandamsha mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show singing, insect, apprehension, sacrificial, gentle dances, scales, gyana mudra, flaw in a tooth, examining, testing, sprout, poison, garland, down, solitude slipping, a wound, slowness, bug etc.



**26. Mukul :-** when palm is raised facing outwards four fingers are bent forward together and the thumb bent to touch the tip of the fingers, then mukul mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show God of love, eating , water lily, navel, humble speech, kissing, worshipping, bud, umbrella, worshipping the gods, prayer, charity, accepting fruits, behavior of an amorous woman etc.



**27. Tamarachud :-** when palm is raised facing outwards, 3rd and the little fingers are bent into the palm, 1st finger is bent and touches its own base, 2nd finger is bent forward and the thumb goes to touch it at the first joint, then tamarchud mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to crane, calf, camel, cock, rubbing down a horse, panel, wiping away tears, leaf, kawood-apple leaf etc.



**28. Trisul** :- when joining small finger and thumb & keeping other fingers straight, then trisul is made.

Usage :- It is used to three together, wood-apple leaf etc.



**29. Vyaghar**:- When palm is raised facing downward and hallowed. All the fingers are spread out and bent except the little finger and the thumb, which are held crooked and held parallel to the fingers, then vyaghar is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict frog, tiger, monkey etc.



**30. Ardhasuchi**:- When palm is raised outward second, third and little finger are bent into the palm, the first finger is extended and the thumb is held close to the edge of the palm up to the first finger then Ardhasuchi mudra is made.

Usage :- It is used to show young bird, large insect, sprout, demonstrate a bird, counting one etc.



**31. Kataka**:- In sandash mudra when middle and ring fingers are raised, then kataka mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict female demon, calling and moving, sleep, arrow, iron club, mirror, female, sweat, fragrance, garland, lotus, demon, vina or flute, fragrance, etc.



**32- Palli :-** In mayura hast when ring finger is bent forward at thumb and goes to touch from top then palli mudra is made.

Usage :- It is used to show a village or a hut etc.



### SAMYUKTA HAST MUDRAS:

**1. Anjali:-** when pataka hast is joined in both palms then anjali mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used in clapping time, indicating the form of Shiva, obedience, meditation etc.



**2. Kapot:-** when pataka mudra of both hands is joined at wrists and finger tips then kapot mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to a taking oath, with elders conversation, humble, cold, acquiescence, coconut tree, plantain flower, receiving things, citron, casket etc.



**3. Karkat :-** When fingers of both hands are enjoined and kept crossed out then karkat mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show stoutness, group, stretching the limbs, blowing the conch, yawning, crab, breathing hard, lamentation, bending the bow of a tree etc.



**4. Swastika :-** When two pataka hands are crossed at the wrists where the bases of the palms touch and the left hand is placed above the right i.e the right hand with fingers and thumb stretched are held close together pointing upwards, and left hand with fingers and thumb in the same way also pointing up and crossed at the wrists with the left hand on the right hand then, swastika mudra is made.

Usage :- It is used to show crocodile, dispute, praising, timid speech etc.



**5. Dola:-** when both hands in pataka mudra are kept at thighs then dola mudra is made.  
Usage:- It is used to show a drunken, welcome the beloved, beginning a Natya, fainting, indolence, infatuation etc.



**6. Pushpaput:-** When both hands in sarpshersh mudra are joined from the side of small finger, then pushpaput mudra is made.  
Usage:- It is used to show corns, fruits or water, offering and receiving, flower spell, offering lights etc.



**7. Ustang:-** when both hands in mrigshersh mudra are placed one over the other at the wrists, then ustang mudra is made.  
Usage:- It is used to show an armband, cold, embrace, saying 'sadhu', modesty, hands held upon opposite armpits, hiding the breasts etc.





**8. Shivling:-** When left hand in pataka mudra is placed under shikhar mudra of right hand then shivling mudra is made.

Usage :- It is used to depict shiva-linga etc.



**9. Katka vardhan :-** When both hands in katka mukh mudra are joined at wrists then katak vardhan mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show the erotic flavour, deliberation, danda, certainty, lasya, ritual, marriage, pacification, blessing etc.



**10. Kartari-Swastika :-** When both hands in kartari mukh mudra are placed diagonally opposite at wrists, then kartari-swastika mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict the branches of trees, trees, the summit of hill etc.



**11. Shakat:-** When both hands bhramar mudra is made and is kept erect and both thumbs are joined at tip, then shakat mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict a gestures of Rakshasas, show demons or other terrifying objects etc.



**12. Shankh:-** When left thumb and right index finger are left apart, remaining three fingers and thumb to be held tight while index touches the middle finger of the left then shankh mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used only to show conch.



**13. Chakra :-** When both hands in ardhchandra mudra are crossed at wrist it makes chakar hast mudra.

Usage:- It is used to depict keeping one object over the other, embrace, wheel etc.



**14.Samput:-** When all fingers and thumbs are bent in chakra hast then samput mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show friendship, dual fight, covering objects etc.



**15. Pasha:-** When 2nd, 3rd and little fingers are bent into the palm and the 1st finger is bent and interlaced with the 1st finger of the other hand and the other hand, 2nd finger is slightly bent and the 3rd and 4th fingers are bent into the palm then pasha mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show a fight, net, enmity, chain etc.



**16. Keelak:-** In mrigsheers hast when little fingers are entangled towards the back then it makes keelak hast mudra.

Usage:- It is used to show affection, jocose talk, love and affection etc.



**17. Matsya:-** When one palm placed on top of another, with thumbs spread out makes matsya hasta mudra.

Usage:- It is used to show a fish .



**18. Koorm:-** When samput hasta mudra thumbs and little finger of both hands is kept erect then koorm mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show a tortoise etc.



**19. Varah:-** In mrigsheersh mudra when one hand is kept on the top of the back of other hand then varah mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to depict a swine, boar etc.



**20. Garud:-** When both hands are raised with palms facing outwards, the four fingers are stretched and the thumbs are extended away from the rest of the fingers. The hands are then crossed at the wrists and the thumbs are interlocked. The palms of the hands face inwards then Garud mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show an eagle and other birds.



**21. Naagbandh:-** When both hands in sarpsheersh mudra are crossed then Naagbandh mudra is made.

Usage:- It is used to show a pair of snakes, or naag.



**22. Khatwa :-** When thumb index and small fingers are straight while middle and ring fingers are joined and lowered towards palm then, it makes khatwa mudra.

Usage:- It is used to depict a cot, palanquin, bedstead of a litter etc.



**23. Merudand:-** When both hands in kapitth hast mudra are crossed at wrists then it makes Merudand mudra.

Usage:- It is used to show a pair of a birds etc.



It is not necessary only to have the knowledge of acting and body movements for dance students but instead they should have the knowledge of hasta mudras as sometimes a dancer is unable to express his or her feelings through dance and body language, then Hasta Mudras are such a medium through which one can express feelings directly. In any corner of the world, this symbolic language of hands becomes a language for a person who is foreign to the native language, whereby he communicates without speaking. Without any doubt, this not only happens in the dance world but in our daily lives too as any talk puts a greater impression which is being expressed not by word but by expressions.

**CONCLUSION:** Classical dances are not only intended for entertainment but to reach the salvation is one of the major concern which includes peace of mind and purity of soul in itself. A dancer presents the traditional religious narratives through his body movements, facial expressions and hand gestures. The students of dance will encounter failure in delivering the narrative to audience if they are not aware of mudras or hast mudras. Therefore, Hasta Mudra play an important role of symbol or language in communication. A dancer without speaking any word can convey the narrative more successfully, with the help of these Mudras.

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