



Art and Culture

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BUDDHIST GESTURES AND POSTURES

- **Mahatma Buddha** has been depicted in various **gestures and postures also called as mudras in sculptures** made by artists of different schools.
- These gestures have **great importance in Buddhism** as they reveal many important **details about Buddha himself** and the **Buddhist philosophy**.
- Some of these gestures are associated with **sitting Buddha** while some others are with **standing Buddha**. In both cases, whether sitting or standing, position of **Buddha's hands reveals a lot**.
- Different specific hand gestures were used in these sculptures.
- There are **10 different hand gestures** of Buddha found in Buddhist sculptures. Mahatma Buddha always used his **right hand to make these gestures**.
- The Buddhist literature explains the meaning of these gestures. This helps us in understanding many important dimensions of Buddhism.



Hand gestures practicing by monks

SITTING POSTURE

Padmasana Mudra (Lotus Position)

- Buddha used Padmasana Mudra while sitting cross legged.
- Various hindu and Jain deities has shown sitting in this position.
- This posture (mudra) was used by Brahmanical monks as well during the ancient age.
- It is a very common way of sitting during rituals and ceremonies even at present.
- It is widely used for meditation in Hindu, Tantra, Jain, and Buddhist traditions.



Buddha in Padmasana



**Mahavir in Lotus
Position**

Abhaya Mudra

- This hand gesture was used by Mahatma Buddha in both standing and sitting positions.
- It indicates fearlessness.
- This mudra has open palm facing front and hand extending outwards after holding it at chest level.
- It is made with the right hand raised to shoulder height, the arm crooked, the palm of the hand facing outward, and the fingers upright and joined. The left hand hangs down at the side of the body
- In Gandhara art, it is seen when showing the action of preaching. It was also used in China during the Wei and Sui eras of the 4th and 7th centuries.



Dhyana Mudra or Samadhi Mudra.

- This hand gesture was used by Mahatma Buddha while sitting cross legged in Padmasana Mudra.
- It is also known as Both palms are kept in lap with one over the other. Thumbs touch each other to make a circle.
- It facilitates cleansing human consciousness of any impurities.
- It was used by Buddha during meditation and deep contemplation to achieve unity with higher energy.



Namaskara Mudra or Anjali Mudra

- This hand gesture was used by Mahatma Buddha while standing as well as sitting.
- In this gesture both palms are kept together at the heart level because it is believed that only heart is capable of deeper spiritual insight.
- This gesture evokes greeting with utmost respect and adoration.
- It recognizes presence of 'divinity in every one'.



Varada Mudra

- This gesture is called '**boon-granting mudra**' because through it the enlightened being bestows positive energy.
- This helped in fulfilment of wishes of the pure hearted devotees through the blessings of Mahatma Buddha.
- In this gesture, the palm of the hand faces upwards and the body is in sitting position.
- Varada Mudra represents **compassion and liberation**.



Bhumisparsa Mudra

- Bhumisparsa means **'touching the earth' or 'calling mother earth to witness the truth'**.
- This hand gesture was used by **Mahatma Buddha in sitting position.**
- During the days of his meditation, Buddha was **disturbed by evil spirits in every possible way** but he did not move from his position. He just lifted his right hand and pointed his fingers towards earth to be a witness of his purity.
- In this gesture fingers of right hand point towards earth, while the left hand is kept in the lap, with the palm facing upwards.
- It represents **unshaken belief and commitment.**
- This enabled Buddha to overcome the darkness (Mara) disturbing him from moving on the path of righteousness to attain enlightenment.



Karana Mudra

- Karana mudra was adopted by Mahatma Buddha to **expel negative energy and to attract positive energy in sitting position.**
- The index finger is held near the ear. Thumb, middle and ring fingers touch each other to form a circle.
- It also known as **warding off the evil** gesture.



Vajrapradama Mudra

- Through this gesture Buddha said that **'I am at peace and I represent peace'**.
- Mahatma Buddha considered heart as the strongest communicator and therefore placed his hands near it.
- This gesture represents **unshakable self-confidence**.
- This gesture denotes the fiery thunderbolt that symbolises the five elements—air, water, fire, earth, and metal. It is performed with the help of right fist and left forefinger, which is placed by enclosing the erect forefinger of the left hand in the right fist with the tip of the right forefinger touching (or curled around) the tip of the left forefinger.

YOGA

Vajrapradama mudra
Unshakable trust gesture



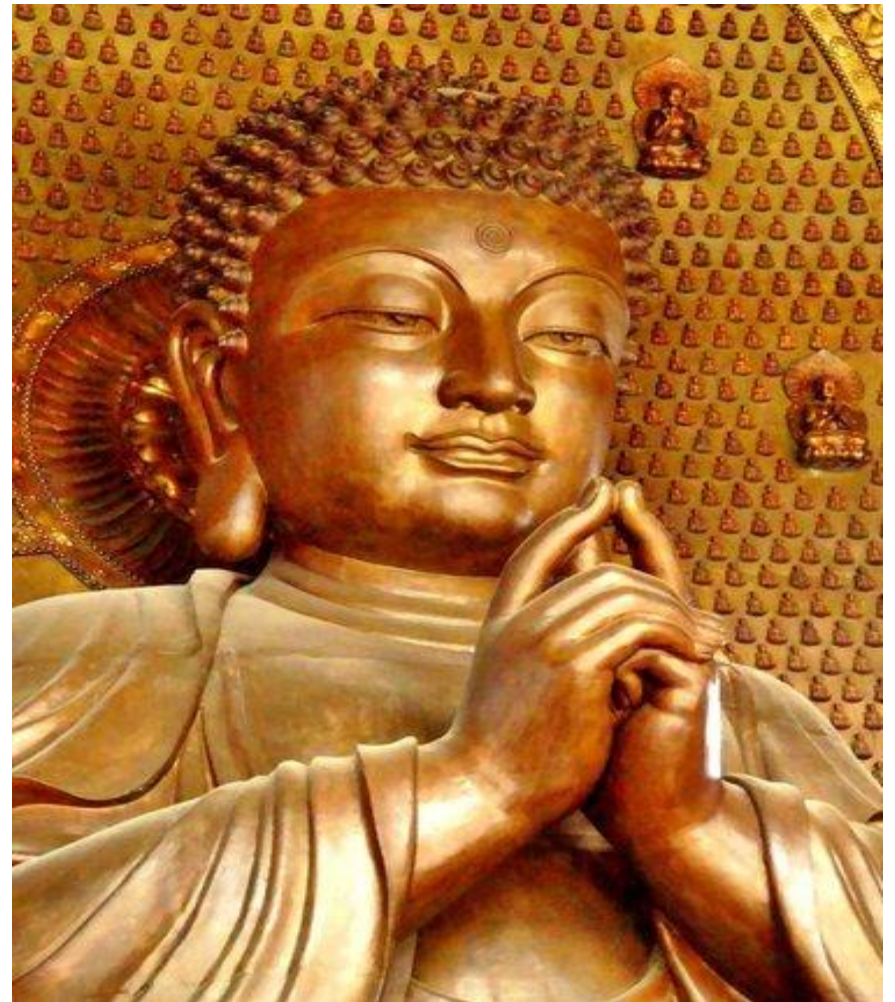
Vajra Mudra or Bodhyangi

- This gesture denotes the fiery thunderbolt that symbolises the five elements—air, water, fire, earth, and metal.
- It is performed with the help of right fist and left forefinger, which is placed by enclosing the erect forefinger of the left hand in the right fist with the tip of the right forefinger touching (or curled around) the tip of the left forefinger.
- seen on statues of the **Vairocana** Buddha (cosmic buddha from Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism)



Uttarabodhi Mudra

- This mudra was done by Buddha in both sitting and standing positions.
- This is the gesture of **supreme enlightenment**.
- In this gesture 4 fingers each of both hands are interwoven; index fingers touch each other and point upwards. Both hands are placed close to the heart.
- This gesture reflects **unshaken unity with oneself**.



Dharmachakra Mudra



- This mudra was adopted by Buddha **while delivering sermons in sitting position**. The first sermon of Buddha delivered at **Samath** was symbolized by a wheel or chakra after the death of Buddha. **This wheel was worshipped by Hinayana Buddhists.**
- In this gesture hands are placed at the level of heart. The thumbs and index fingers form circles and touch each other. The right hand palm faces outwards and the left hand palm faces towards the heart.
- This gesture expresses **continuous flow of energy of cosmic order**.



Vitarka Mudra or Vyakhyan Mudra

- the tips of the thumb and index finger touch each other and form a circle.
- The right hand is held up to the viewer and the left hand is resting in the lap.
- The Mudra symbolises the **teaching phase** in the life of Buddha and the circle stands for a never-ending flow of energy.



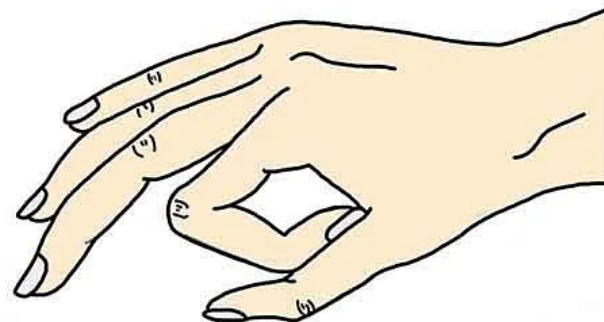
Jnana Mudra

- done by touching the tips of the thumb and the index together, forming a circle, and the hand is held with the palm inward towards the heart.
- The mudra represents spiritual enlightenment
- Also called chin mudra



JNANA MUDRA

HAND GESTURE OF WISDOM





Bhumisparsha Mudra
Touching the earth as Gautama did, to invoke the earth as witness to the truth of his words.



Varada Mudra
Fulfillment of all wishes; the gesture of charity.



Dhyana Mudra
The gesture of absolute balance, of meditation. The hands are relaxed in the lap, and the tips of the thumbs and fingers touch each other. When depicted with a begging bowl this is a sign of the head of an order.



Abhaya Mudra
Gesture of reassurance, blessing, and protection. "Do not fear."



Dharmachakra Mudra
The gesture of teaching usually interpreted as turning the Wheel of Law. The hands are held level with the heart, the thumbs and index fingers form circles.



Vitarka Mudra
Intellectual argument, discussion. The circle formed by the thumb and index finger is the sign of the Wheel of Law.



Tarjani Mudra
Threat, warning. The extended index finger is pointed at the opponent.



Namaskara Mudra
Gesture of greeting, prayer, and adoration. Buddhas no longer make this gesture because they do not have to show devotion to anything.



Jnana Mudra
Teaching. The hand is held at chest level and the thumb and index finger again form the Wheel of Law.



Karana Mudra
Gesture with which demons are expelled.



Ksepana Mudra
Two hands together in the gesture of 'sprinkling' the nectar of immortality.



Uttarabodhi Mudra
Two hands placed together above the head with the index fingers together and the other fingers intertwined. The gesture of supreme enlightenment.

Various Mudra of Mahatma Buddha