

A TINY GUIDE TO THE HAND GESTURES

LORD BUDDHA



THE
CEYLON PRESS

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

THE “ANJALI
MUDRA”

EASIEST

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.



2

THE “KARANA
MUDRĀ”

MOST POSITIVE

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.



3

THE “VAJRA MUDRA”

MOST CENTRING

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.



4

THE
“BHUMISPARSHA”
OR “EARTH
WITNESS MUDRA
MOST POPULAR

Touching the earth, this mudra is formed when all right-hand fingers extend to touch the ground, so symbolising the Buddha's Enlightenment. The upturned left hand on the lap signifies the union of skilful means, and wisdom.



5

THE “DHYANA”
OR
“MEDITATION
MUDRA”
MOST RESTFUL

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.



6

THE “WHEEL OF
DHARMA” OR
“DHARMACHAKRA
MUDRA”

MOST FAMOUS

Possibly the most complicated, the “Wheel of Dharma” takes practice. The thumb/index finger of both hands touch tips as a circle: the union of method & wisdom. The 3 extended free left hand fingers symbolize Buddha, the Dharma (the doctrine of universal truth), and the Sangha (Buddhist order). The extended right fingers symbolize the Hearers who practice the teachings; the Solitary Realizers who cultivate merit/wisdom; and the Mahayana Great Vehicle of Buddhist traditions/philosophies.



7

THE “ABHAYA
MUDRA” – OR
“GESTURE OF
FEARLESSNESS”

MOST ENERGIZING

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.



8

THE “VITARKA”
OR “DISCUSSION
MUDRA”

MOST INTELLECTUAL

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.



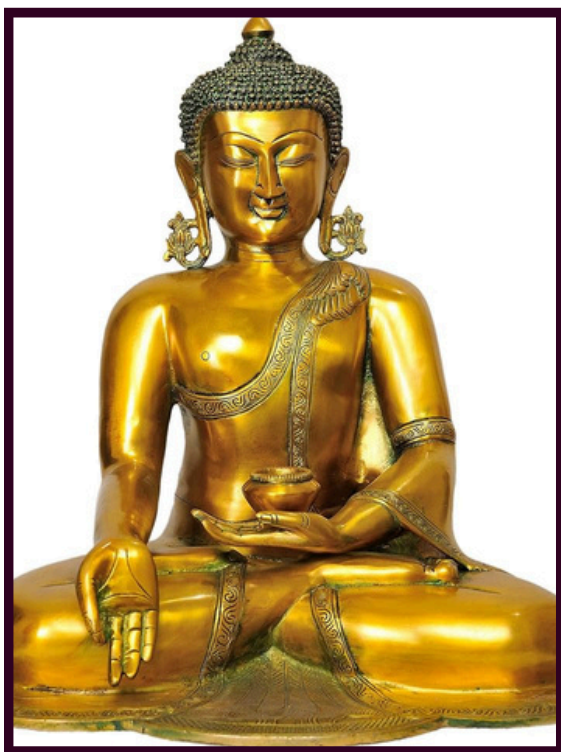
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THE “JNANA” OR
“WISDOM MUDRA”

FAIRLY DIFFICULT

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.



10

THE
“UTTARABODHI
MUDRA”
MOST DIFFICULT

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.



11

THE “VARADA
MUDRA”

MOST COMPLICATED

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.





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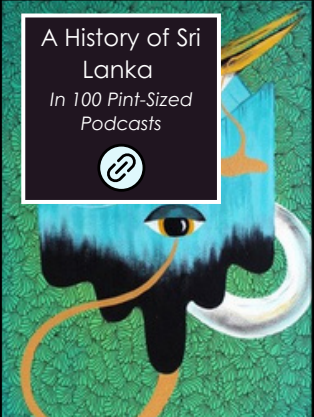
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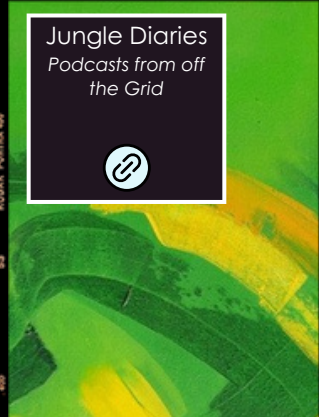
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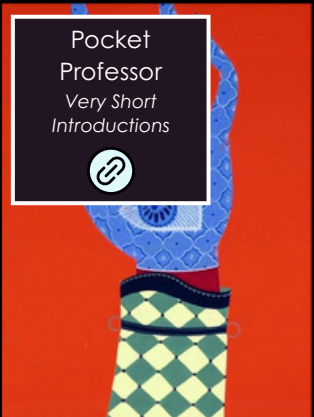
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