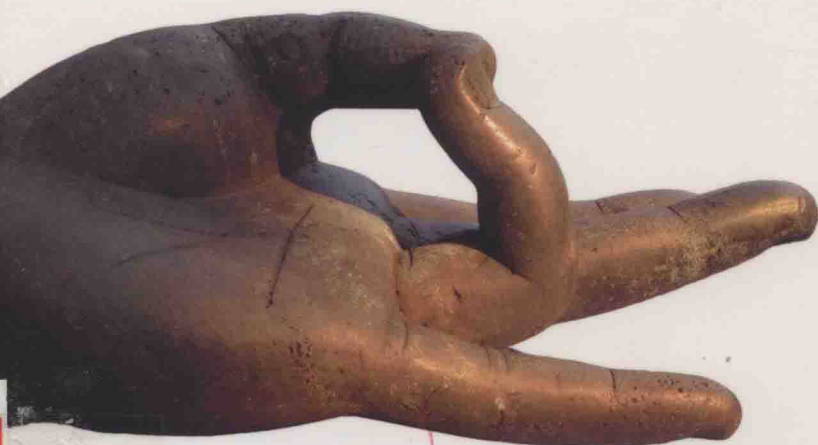


The
Healing
Power
of
Mudras

The Yoga of the Hands



Rajendar Menen



The Healing
Power of
MUDRAS
THE YOGA OF THE HANDS



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Prabhadevi, Suzanne, Pondicherry, G-304 Sameer and Hard Disc. There are several fellow travellers, and the wind, the rain and the sun, and His grace that made their presence felt every moment of my life as I continued to enter this vast, uncharted space of natural healing. May the grace encompass us all.

Most important, this book is dedicated to my mother, who nursed me through crises, weathered my innumerable idiosyncrasies with stoic calm and gave me the genes to fight for a better world.



Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the help of several practitioners of Mudra healing. Not much documentation is available but I tapped all sources I could lay my hands on. A very special note of gratitude to Gertrude Hirschi for her humbling and illuminating insights into the subject. She is blessed and is a true Messiah of healing. It is unfortunate that all these truisms from ancient India need the western world to document, perfect and improve upon. But now that they have done it, let the seeds scatter and pollinate the land. This is sharing at its profoundest.

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Preface

Life is a series of endless miracles which keep happening in our lives almost all the time. They happen so effortlessly and without warning that they often pass by unrecognised. They visit the humblest as well as the most powerful, without prejudice or favour, and defy all logic and rational explanation.

This is my fourth book on healing. In a career spanning over two decades as a journalist and writer, and having led a peripatetic life spanning continents, I have been privy to the most mundane, the colossally bizarre, the malignantly morbid, the ludicrously humorous and the profoundly soul elevating. I have spent quality time on the streets and in brothels and the corridors of the dispossessed while attempting to document their angst and joy. Miracles kept happening in their lives and in mine, in fact all around us, but we simply bypassed their pedigree, remained connected to the real world of cause and effect, and pronounced our everyday judgements.

But it was while researching the process of healing that I fully realised the miracles that were happening in our lives almost all the time. Our bodies are a miracle, birth and death are miracles, and the whole process of healing is a miracle. It is easy to pass it all off as 'holistic healing', the 'mind-body connection' and with other similar jargon. Conventional and alternative medicine men also take recourse in rational explanations, but they know that, beyond a point, remissions happen and healing occurs without easy explanation. It is then passed off as divine intervention.

Over the years I have also experimented with several healing techniques. Most of them work, but for different people and at different times. If they don't work for a particular person, it doesn't mean that the technique or the therapy is wrong. It is just that the person and the time are not right... or that the person is not yet ready to be the medium.

I have also been practising yoga and meditation for over a decade and have been privileged to spend huge quality time with several masters. There are several days during the practice when your entire being is elevated and you feel an endless joy floating through you. If you were to jot down the period with pen and paper, the milestones would be no different from the saddest periods of your life or even the most ordinary ones. Yet, there is an inexplicable joy that transports your being into a cascade of sheer ecstasy.

Mudras – as you will read in the book – are simple, free and easy to do. They can be done anywhere and they heal the body. I am not, at any stage, suggesting that you do away with your doctor and his prescriptions. But regular practise of Mudras has been shown to heal conclusively.

Several explanations are offered for the healing that takes place. But as you get regular with the practice, you begin to knock at the doors of an inner spirituality. With time, you are transformed from deep within at the cellular level. You begin to respect your body more and look at all life with new admiration. Slowly, you begin to give in to the powerful and comforting embrace of existence. You know, somehow, that it will take care of you.

Welcome to Mudras, healing, and the new you!

–Rajendar Menen

Understanding Mudras

It is widely believed that the human structure is a miniature form of the universe that is made up of five elements – fire, air, water, earth and sky. These elements are present in fixed proportions and even the slightest imbalance of any of these can be disastrous.



Vajrapradama Mudra

Mudras help normalise the five elements in the human body. Nature has made the human body self-sufficient, self-contained and almost perfect. But a human being is prone to innumerable pressures. The food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and even our thoughts are in no way compatible with what can be called the ideal way of life. Since there is no equilibrium, as the body and mind are at war with so many external and internal pressures, we fall ill. Our bodies are in a constant state of flux, recharging and rebalancing all the time. When there is an imbalance we fall ill.

The balance we aspire to and need is a tricky business. Anything can upset it. From loneliness, break-ups in relationships, shifting house, even examination failure and not reaching peer group expectations, to name just a

few, to the insidious attacks from viruses and germs that room with us on this planet. All mandatory props for a healthy life have been devalued today. The water we drink, the food we eat, and even the air we breathe has been compromised. We have moved far away from nature, and the germs and the human body that host them have also mutated several times. It is so very easy now to lose balance, to fall from grace so to say.

We will now examine how Mudras influence the human being. The five fingers of the hand represent the elements. The thumb represents fire, the forefinger air, the middle finger sky, the third or ring finger earth and the fourth finger water.

“Hands have a power of their own,” says Acharya Keshav Dev, a well-known practitioner. “Through the regular practise of various Mudras, a person can control his life.”

Director of the Vivekanand Yogashram in Delhi, soft spoken, articulate and extremely knowledgeable, the Acharya can talk endlessly and with authority on the science of Mudras. About *hasta mudras* (hand postures), the Acharya says that there is a tremendous flow of energy in our hands and each finger represents one of the five elements – the thumb is *agni* (fire), the forefinger is *vayu* (air), the middle finger is *akash* (ether), the ring finger is *prithvi* (earth) and the little finger is *jal* (water). “The roots of all diseases lie in an imbalance of one of the five elements and can be corrected with medicines, willpower and Mudras,” he says. “The science of Mudras is one of the finest gifts of yoga to the cause of human welfare.”

The Acharya explains that Mudras are universal and suitable for everyone. They can be practised for half-an-hour everyday. It is advisable to sit cross-legged while doing a Mudra, but he adds that the Mudra will not be rendered ineffective even if it is done while on a stroll with the hands casually tucked in the pockets, fingers folded in a particular Mudra. They can also be done lying down, and so are easy to do.

Mudras never generate an excess of energy, he continues. Like a thermostat, they simply seek an optimal balancing of *prana*. So the next time you are ailing, remember it may just be an instance of maladjusted *prana* and an innocuous sleight of hand could be the cure!

Mudras are yoga movements involving only the arms and hands. They are extremely easy to do, but so powerful that they can transform one's life. They liberate the energy locked within your body – in energy channels called *nadis* and energy centres called *chakras*. Mudras help create inner peace and inner strength, eliminate fatigue and anxiety, protect physical and emotional health, help transcend stress, depression, guilt and anger, calm the mind and sharpen intuition, and promote happiness, love, prosperity and longevity.

Considering the ease with which Mudras can be done, the little time and space they consume, and the enormous benefits associated with them at no extra cost whatsoever, it may just be the valuable tool to good health and mental peace that we need so urgently in a life that is so frenetically hurtling away from any type of balance. No previous experience with yoga is needed to do Mudras. You don't have to be an athlete or be youthful either. In fact, Mudras can be done even from the sick bed. All you need to do is move your arms and hands freely and pay attention to your breathing. This is as simple as it can get. And you enrich your life – wherever you are – in as little as a few minutes a day.

In a modest, nondescript apartment at Juhu Gully in suburban Mumbai, 64-year-old Ramesh Shah practises Mudras everyday and also teaches them to those who are interested. "It is a simple way of preserving one's health and my goal is to spread the message to all those who need it," he says.



Ramesh Shah