

## TOOLS TO AID YOUR PRACTICE

### MUDRAS

From Sanskrit, mudra translates as seal, sign, or gesture. Mudras can be thought of as energetic connections made by consciously positioning parts of the body. Changing mudras can be compared to changing the wiring on a circuit board to alter the path of electrical currents. The circuit of the life force energy, prana, can be manipulated to accomplish desired influences with an understanding and employment of beneficial body configurations.

Given time and experimentation, you can discover some of these both positive and negative arrangements of the body for yourself. Once you have become aware of the concept and start to pay attention, you may notice you are unconsciously doing this all the time. If you get into a position that feels uncomfortable, not necessarily physically, but psychically, you change it. You do this without thinking. Careful observation shows the various circuits conducting life force energy can influence and even permanently alter body function.

Many beneficial ways of configuring the body, referred to in yoga as mudras, have been known through the ages and examples can be seen represented in the dance and art of many cultures. Even the common act of placing the palms together in prayer is a mudra, the Prayer or Anjali Mudra. The palms held together are the meeting place of yin and yang, symbolizing the completeness of the Divine. The Prayer Mudra is also called the Namaste Mudra when used to acknowledge the Divine in all.

We are going to explore a few mudras that have features that promote the stated goals of this practice. Mudras are a science and you are encouraged to delve further into this pragmatic study, the knowledgeable execution of which can greatly influence your health and wellbeing.

First we'll discuss the Shiva Tongue Mudra. When meditating, softly hold the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth. With the attention on the Third Eye Chakra, awareness of the position of the tongue is more pronounced.

The tip of the tongue can be drawn further back along the roof of the mouth. This creates an energetic connection that stimulates the production of beneficial brain chemicals such as melatonin, serotonin, and the endorphins. In the yoga lexicon, all these beneficial brain chemicals are lumped together and called "Amrita", Sanskrit for "Heavenly Nectar". In some yoga traditions the drawing back of the tongue, even into the opening of the floor of the nasal cavity, is described as tasting or savoring the Amrita, thought of as dripping from above. Some aspirants would go so far as to slice the flesh holding the front of the tongue to the floor of the mouth freeing the tongue to probe further up into the nasal cavity. Various results are reported in some of the arcane yoga literature—which of course can only be validated by experience. It is suggested this practice be considered an example of carrying what might be constructive on one level, too far. Yoga reveres balance and extremes upset balance. Part of

