Chapter - III

Place of Symbolism and it’s relevance

1. Place of Symbolism and it’s relevance

The term - Symbol signifies a Mudrā, a Seal or a Mark with certain meaning. In the term “Mudrā” lies concealed, an expression or idea through a suggestive pose or posture of the body or a limb, depicting an ocean of wisdom underlying the same. Shri Śankaracharya held the “Bhadra Mudra”, [tip of the forefinger on the thumb] before disciples to clear their doubts and reveal the ultimate Truth. He was silent during eloquent speech!

“A mass of ideas are composed into one mark or symbol, and the history of a nation or the legend of a life, can be read through it. The raising of a forefinger in anger against another creates fear in his mind, and he attempts to run away to save his life, unless he is capable of effectively retaliating, in which case the former would have thought twice before raising his finger against him. A man makes himself better understood by signs and symbols and, if language fails to prove his case or cause, he establishes the same through movements of his limbs or to supplement or emphasize his arguments. This science has developed into Tantra Śāstra, and the Tāntrics are adepts in this art and achieve their ends through the practice of Mudrās. In Kerala there is a highly developed folk-dance called Kathakali, wherein the different characters effectively play their parts and communicate with each other, only through Mudrās or Symbols and not through words”[1].

Śankaracharya was a great devotee of Parāsakti-Rajarājeswari- the Mother of Literature, Fine Arts and Spiritual Wisdom. In his “Soundarya Lahiri” he invokes
the mother in her various powers and faculties through praises and adulations. The first sixty-four verses of Soundarya Lahiri- which means intoxication by beauty and personal charm – are to be represented by the sixty-four “Cakrās” starting from “Swastipadma”. The greatest of them is the “Sri Cakrā” in the centre of which resides Rājarājeswari, the bestower of spiritual light and wisdom. Lalitā is one of the forms of Durgā represented by the intersection of innumerable triangles both upright and inverted, and in the middle of which is the “Bindu”, is her seat of creative power and propagation. Each “Cakrā” is symbolic of the forms of gods and goddesses and the centre of each crossing triangle is symbolic of the seat of emanation of light and wisdom. This “Tantra Śāstra”, has to be learnt from the traditional scholars. The Science of Forms and Figures known as “Yantra Śāstra”, depicts the forms as geometrical figures, each one with its intense implications and meanings capable of deeper interpretations. While physical sciences are with reference to known realities, Mantra, Tantra, and Yantra Śāstras are dealing with unmanifest realities and the immense potentialities of Nature. According to Nātya Śāstra principles, The human body is the noumenon of the Cosmos and the various powers of nature can be developed within this body through the help of, Asanās and Upāsanās based on, the Mantra, Tantra and Yantra Śāstras. It is said that the concentration of the mind at a single point is nuclear in its effect and powers can be developed and invoked either for constructive purposes or even destructive as is seen sometimes. Kerala, Karnataka and Bengal have made tremendous studies and progress in these branches of science. The Chinmudra which Lord Dakshinamurthy holds in his hand teaches us that our ego which is concentrated on the index finger must bend and that our individuality must end as represented by the symbol ‘Zero’ which the index finger produces when it bends and touches the middle of the thumb in the Mudra.

2. Lalitā Tripurasundari, the Red Goddess

Vidya means knowledge, specifically female knowledge, or the goddess, and in
this context relates to her aspect called Śri, Lalitā or Tripurasundari whose magical diagram is called the Śri Yantra. She is a red flower, so her diagram is a flower too.

The tāntrik tradition views its symbols as having a gross aspect, a subtle aspect, and a supreme aspect. In terms of Lalitā, the gross form is the image of the goddess with her four arms, the subtle form is the yantra, and the supreme form is her mantra, all three being the goddess in different aspects. The colourful symbolism indicates deep wisdom coupled with practical methods for realizing Lalitā who loves pujā. There can be various pujās including daily rites, those performed at the four twilights, rites done for specific objects, optional rites done on festival days, auspicious days rites in assemblies, and rites accomplished with a partner.

Lalitā means She Who Plays. All creation, manifestation and dissolution is considered to be a play of Devi or the goddess. Mahātripurasundari is her name as transcendent beauty of the three cities, a description of the goddess as conqueror of the three cities of the demons. Every aspect of Devi has her own mantra and yantra. The yantra of Devi Lalitā is Śri Yantra. The divinity of the yantra always occupies the centre position or apex.

The different parts or petals and lines of the yantra are usually arranged in concentric circles (mandalās) and contain the rays of the goddess. The Shri Yantra has nine of these mandalas, each filled with various aspects of the Devi which are totally 111. The Śri Yantra is said to be a geometric form of the human body, which implies the goddess as Macrocosm being one with human being as Microcosm.
3. Formation of the Śri Yantra

The creation of the Śri Yantra is described in the Yogini Hridaya (Heart of the Yogini Tantra). This is said to be the second part of the Vāmakeshvara Tantrā.

Prayer-
“Dear One, Tripura is the ultimate, primordial Śakti, the light of manifestation. She, the pile of letters of the alphabet, gave birth to the three worlds. At dissolution, She is the abode of all tattvās, still remaining Herself – Vāmakeshvaratantra." [2]

“ From the fivefold akti comes creation and from the fourfold Fire dissolution. The sexual union of five Śaktis and four Fires causes the chakrā to evolve. O Sinless One! I speak to you of the origin of the chakrā.” [2 a]

"When she, the ultimate Śakti, of her own will (svecchaya) assumed the form of the universe, then the creation of the chakrā revealed itself as a pulsating essence. From the void-like vowels with the visarga emerged the bindu, quivering and fully conscious. From this pulsating stream of supreme light emanated the ocean of the cosmos, the very self of the three mothers……..

The baindava of the chakrā has a triple form, dharma, adharma and ātma, and mātri, meya and pramā. The chakrā of nine yonis is the great mass of consciousness bliss and is the ninefold chakrā and the nine divisions of the mantra.....

The baindava is placed on a dense flowery mass and is the Chitkala. Similarly, the ambika form of eight lines is the circle of the vowels. The nine triangles quiver forth the effulgent form of 10 lines. The Śakti, together with her surrounding nine blossomed forth the 10 trikonās. The second quivering form of 10 lines has Krodhisha as first of the 10. These four chakrās, of the nature of light, create the 14-fold form, the essence of perception.” [2 b]
Unless the yantra be decorated with the appropriate bija mantra and other mantras, it is worthless. It is also dead unless it is installed with life and the individual doing the puja is initiated into the tradition.

“4. The Mandalās of the Śrī Yantra

The Earth Square or Bhupura

This mandalā represents the walls that enclose the practitioner. The three lines of the bhupura of Śrī Yantra each has a set of sub-limbs of the goddess. On the outer line are the eight world protectors (lokapālas), the guardian spirits of the directions and intermediate directions.

On the middle line are eight Siddhi Śaktis identified with the senses. On the inner line are eight Śaktis ruling Desire, Anger, Envy, Delusion, Greed, Jealousy, Virtue and Vice. They are the eight Mātrikās. These saktis are collectively known as the ‘Percieved’ (Prakata Yoginis). A form of the Devi known as Tripura rules all these shaktis in this mandala of the yantra known as 'The Cakrā Ruling the Three Worlds'. She has four arms, is the colour of crystal, is adorned with pearls and holds a book, a pot, and a beautiful lotus. her Vidyā is ‘Am Am Sauh’.

Outer line has Indra (East) wears yellow, rides an elephant; Agni (South East) wears red, rides a ram; Yama (South) wears black, rides a buffalo; Nirriti (South West) wears dark green; Varuna (West) wears blue, and his vehicle is a crocodile; Vāyu (North East) wears pale clothes; Soma (North) wears pure white; Ishāna
(North East) is a form of Mahādeva Śiva, rides a bull.

Middle Line contains the Siddhi Śaktis who are smeared with vermilion, wear red garlands, carry noose and goad, and are as bright and beautiful as red lotuses.

Inner Line has the nine Narayanayees. Brahmāni wears yellow, has four arms, is beautiful. One hand dispels fear, one grants boons, and carries a jewelled jar for purification. The three eyed Māhesvari wears white, holds trident, skull, axe, and a vessel of curds. Kaumāri wears yellow, holds shakti-the weapon, Javelin, and makes the gestures of dispelling fear and granting boons. Vaishnavi is dark in colour, holds conch, discus, lotus and grants boons. Vārāhi wears many ornaments and gems. She has the head of a wild boar, holding plough, mace, sword and shield. Aindrani is black and brilliant with a thousand eyed crown of lightning, carrying a bright blue lotus. Shivadooti is terrifying in form. Cāmunda is black, holds trident and damaru (the drum), holds axe, and skulls as garland.

The gem is topaz. The time is 24 minutes (360 breaths). The Mudrā is the ‘All Agitating’.

5. Mandala of Sixteen Petals

The Śaktis in this circle are ‘Hidden’.

The whole mandala of 16 petals is called 'Fulfiller of Desire'. The presiding form of the Lalitā is Tripureshi. Her ‘vidya’ is ‘Aim Klim Sauh’. She is described as ornamented with all gems, carrying a book and a rosary. The 16 yoginis in this mandala are associated with the attainment of desires by the cultivation or strengthening of power over mind, ego, sound, touch, sight, taste, smell, intellect, and other invigorating qualities. They are described as the ‘Nitya Kālās’. They hold a noose, a goad, nectar, and gestures of giving. They are bright red in colour. The gem of the mandalā is sapphire. The time is three hours (2700 breaths). The Mudrā is the ‘Wettening’ Mudrā.
6. Mandala of Eight Petals

The Śaktis in this mandalā are called the ‘Secretive’. The whole circle of eight petals is called the
'All Exciting Chakrā'. Presiding deity is Tripura Sundari. Her ‘vidyā’ is ‘Hrim Klim Sauh’. She is described as love intoxicated and her eyes are full of bliss.
She smiles and shows the mudrās dispelling fears and granting boons – Abhaya and Varada Mudrās.

The eight saktis in each of the eight petals of the mandalā potent with Speech, Holding, Walking, Excreting, Pleasure, Abandoning, Concentration and Detachment. They are described as sapphire blue, and holding blue lotus. Their names (Ananga Madana etc) all convey terms of love and sexuality.
The gem is cat's eye. The time is day and night (21600 breaths).

7. Mandala of Fourteen Triangles

This mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Bestowing All Good Fortune'. The Yoginis are called 'Concealed by Tradition'. The presiding form of the devi is Tripura Vāsini. Her ‘vidyā’ is ‘Haim Hklim Hsauh’.

She is red and beautiful. Fourteen Śaktis of the triangles are associated with the chief ‘nadir’ or currents of bioenergy. They are the ‘Akarshanis’ or Attractors.
The gem is coral. The time is weekday. The Mudrā is called ‘All Subjugating’.

8. Outer 10 Triangles

This mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Bestowing All Objects'. The Śaktis are called the ‘Kula Kaulas’.

The presiding deity is Tripura Śri. Here, the goddess is as effulgent as 1000 rising Suns, adorned with celestial ornaments and holding book.
The 10 Śaktis in the triangles are described as having joyful faces, holding noose
and goad and adorned with various crystal and heavenly gems. These are the Yoginis of the 10 vital breaths. The gem is pearl. The time is Lunar Day (tithi).

The Mudrā is called the ‘All Intoxicating with Love’. Inner 10 Triangles

The mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Protecting All'. The Yoginis are called -‘Without Origin’. The presiding aspect of Lalitā is Tripura Mālini. Her vidya is ‘Hrim Klim Blem’.

She holds noose and goad, dispels fear, and holds a skull. She is like vermilion in brightness.

Her Śaktis are the colour of 1000 rising suns, adorned with pearls and gems, holding noose, chisel, and showing the gestures of knowledge. They are the saktis of the 10 Vital Fires. The gem is emerald. The time is Lunar Fortnight. The Mudrā is the ‘Great Goad’.

9. Eight Triangles

This mandala is called 'The Chakra Destroying all Disease'. The yoginis are known as the ‘Secret’ or ‘Rahasya’. The presiding aspect of the Red Goddess is Tripura Siddha.

Her vidya mantra is ‘Hrim Shrim Sauh’. She is described as the Destroyer of Poison.

Her yoginis are the colour of pomegranate flowers, wearing red clothes, smeared with red scent, each carrying five arrows and a bow. These saktis are the rulers of Cold, Heat, Happiness, Sorrow, Desire, and the three gunas Sattvas, Rajas, Tamas. They are also called the eight Vāsinis and rule the eight Sanskrit letter groups. The gem in this mandala is diamond (Vajra). The time is month. The Mudrā is Khecari Mudrā.
10. The Four Weapons

In between the mandalās of eight triangles and the central triangles are the four weapons of the Red Goddess -- flowery bow, flowery arrows, noose and goad.

Central Triangle

This mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Giving All Success'. The Yoganis are called 'Very Secret'. Lalita dwells here as Tripura Ambā, her Vidya being 'Hsraim Hsrklim Hsrslauh'.

She is also known as ‘Sampatprada Bhairavi, coppery effulgent, like 1000 suns, with three eyes, a face like the moon, adorned with white gems, with a beautiful figure, rising swelling breasts, intoxicated, wanton, young, proud, holding book, dispelling fear, holding a rosary and granting boons.’

Her three Śaktis are called Kāmeshvari, Vajreshi and Bhagamalini. Kāmeshvari is called the Rudra Śakti, Vajreshi is the Viṣṇu Śakti, Bhagamalini is the Brahma Śakti.

The gem of the mandala is ‘Gomaya.’ The time is season (two months). The Mudrā is the ‘Bija ‘Mudrā.  

Bindu Mandala

This mandalā is called 'Purely Blissful'. The Yogi in this mandalā is the Queen of Queens, Rājarājeshvari, the Very Red One, her Transcendent Majesty ‘Lalita Māheshvari Mahātripurasundari’.
Her vidya (Kāmarāja vidyā) is ‘ka e i la hrim ha sa ka ha la hrim sa ka la hrim’, and another secret 16th syllable. Her description is that given in ‘Vāmakeshvara Tantra’.

Surrounding her are the Fifteen Nityās. The gem is ruby. The time is year. The mudrā is Yoni Mudrā.

11. Yantra Mantra Tantra of Lalitā

Lalitā, as primordial devi, rays out her attendants and shaktis as modifications of moon, sun and fire. In this Śiva has no place, no qualities, is without the ability to act. Only when united with devi may 'he' act. Without the ‘e’ denoting Śakti, Śiva is only a Śave – a corpse.

This is based on the subtle and practical idea of Śiva as pure consciousness, witness of the triple manifestation of his Śakti. This Śakti, the very essence of the three gunas of Sattvas, Rajas, and Tamas, is the cause of all manifestation in the universe and as a human being. The three shaktis, by blending and reblending, create all things.

Śakti is triple as sun, moon and fire – She is everything – all of the sidereal constellations and planets, and therefore of Time itself. She is triple as Will (Iccha), Knowledge (Jñāna) and Action (Kriya). She is threefold as intellect, feelings, physical sensation.

Śakti is triple as wake-dream-deep sleep. She is Omkara Rupini, Anandadayini, Akāra, Ukāra, Makāra Rupini. What is called the Fourth is the witness, Śiva, who is said to pervade the whole cosmos just as heat pervades a red hot iron.

The physical body, according to the precepts of Ayurveda, is triple as the 'humours' Vata, Pitta and Sleshma. The varying combinations of these three Śaktis make up the physical body.

Śakti is also fivefold as aether, air, fire, water and earth. The combination of the
five elements and three gunas produce Lalitā 's Eternities (Nityās) -- 15 in number, each identified with a lunar day of the bright fortnight. The moon, symbolising Śakti, is the mirror or reflection holding together all creation.

A close examination of the details relating to the nine mandalās of Śri Yantra reveals that the shaktis of the whole circle represent the human being, who, in potential, is Śakti-Śiva united. The aim is for a person to realise that all powers, energies and manifestation are shaktis of consciousness, pure awareness. The yantra may be examined in two ways, either as manifestation or dissolution. Maintenance is an intermediate state between the two polarities. When she is worshipped as creator, the order is from centre to perimeter. As dissolver, the puja is from perimeter to centre.

The Triple Goddess, from her own will to manifest, extends herself in a ninefold way, as modifications of moon, sun and fire. Various mandalās shows the type of energy represented. The island of jewels is the gross human body with its 9 alchemical bases or dhatus. Each is figuratively described as a gem -- diamond, emerald, sapphire, ruby &c. The sea of nectar (semen/ova) is the base for the arising of the human body.

There are many prayogās (ritual uses) related to Śri Yantra. Some rites depend on auspicious times, such as Full moon days or nights in specific solar months Devi also manifests as the five elements of aether, fire, air, water and earth. The saktis are purple (air), white (water), red (fire), yellow (earth), blue (ether).

It is important to remember that Śri Vidyā was primarily oral, and are incomplete unless initiated by a ‘Guru’, so it is necessary to know a host of things before a rite can be started.

Devi Lalitā may be installed in a disciple, a yantra, or an image. All the methods essentially follow a similar form, but the right time must be selected. A disciple
must have the necessary qualifications and potential. After initiation, she or he is to perform an operation to endue the vidya with energy or life. This involves the recitation of the root vidya a specified large number of times, although other valid methods exist for preparation.

There are said to be fifteen lines of mantra, each perceived by a different Rishi (Seer). The most widespread seems to be that called ‘Kadi’ (beginning with 'Ka’), which itself has three sections. The other main division is ‘Hadi’, although it is said that the Kulārnava Tantrā incorporates both in a division called ‘Kahadi’. The subtle difference being that devotees of the Kadi line worship the Śri Yantra from the perimeter to the centre, while Hadi devotees worship it from the centre to the perimeter.

Bharata Muni, in the Nātya Śastra gives his clear insight into various types of feminine energies with his description of the ‘Ashtāyikās’. He had received tremendous vision from the Goddess herself to be blessed to write so clearly on aspects of ‘Śaktis’ and the application of this knowledge in stagecraft.

12. Lalitā as the Whole Universe

Tāntrik rites often include ‘nyāsas’, the placing of some principles in a certain sequence ‘on one's own body’. The idea is that this process purifies and divinises. Lalitā’s Śodha (sixfold) Nyāsa is a highly complex rite in which a practitioner places on the body the 51 letters of the alphabet, the planets, the 27 naksatrās or lunar mansions, the 12 sidereal constellations, and the 51 sacred sites (pithās) of all India.

Placing these different things on the body the practitioner comes to realise oneness with the whole cosmos. This ritual also illustrates some important concepts. The Tantrarāja states that there is no difference between the circle of the letters of the alphabet and the sidereal Zodiac. She is the very essence of sun and moon. As letters of the alphabet, Lalita is Mātrika Śakti, who deludes by her Māya – illusory power.
13. Sixty four Tantrās

These tantras are enumerated in Vāmakeshvara and Kulachudamani Tantrās, and in other places. A proponent of the orthodox school, Lakshmidhāra, wrote a commentary on the famous Śri Vidyā hymn, the Saudaryalahari. Unfortunately, most of the 64 tantras are lost. But their contents may be gauged from Lakshmidhāra’s commentary.

1) “Mahāmaya Sambhāra. Deluding of intellect and senses.
2) Yogini Jala Sambhāra. Involving the agency of Yoginis.
4-11) Eight Bhairava Tantrās. The commentator says that these are objectionable as they belong to the Kapalikas or skull wearers such as Nāths, Aghoris, and so forth.
12-19) The Bahurupa Astaka. Importance attached to the eight shaktis or Mātrikās.
20-27) The Eight Yamalās. Of these, only Rudra Yamalā seems to have survived, although it is doubtful that the text which exists is the same as the original. Other of the yamalas do exist in part as quotations in later tantras. The commentator says these relate to Siddhi.
28) Candra Jnāna. Expounds the 16 Nityās, but condemned as ‘it smacks of Kapalika tenets’.
29) Malini Vidyā. Enabling one to cross great oceans. This could be the Mālini Vijaya Tantrā, a work of the Kashmir Śāivites which includes magical operations based on the 36 tattvās.
31-33) Vāmajusta, Mahādeva and Vatula. These are condemned as they deal with Vāmacharā.
34-35) Vatula Uttara and Kāmika. The latter is still extant, and belongs to the Kashmir group of Āgamās. The chief guru of this school is the famous Abhinavagupta.
36) Hridbheda Tantra. Condemned through Vāmachāra.
37-38) Tantrabheda and Guhyatantrā. Condemned because of retaliatory magic.
39) Kālavada. Digits of the moon, induction of chandrakālas, which are the 108 parts of the moon found in a horoscope.
40) Kālasara. The rules of colour. There is no reason given for its exclusion.
41) Kundika Māta. Attainment of siddhi through elixirs and drugs.
42) Mata Uttara. Deals with 'quicksilver'. See the Mātrikabheda Tantrā.
43) Vinakhya. Power over Yakshinis.
44) Trotala. Magical practices of medicine and clairvoyance.
45) Trotala Uttara. Bringing the 64 crores of yoginis face to face.
46) Pancāmrita. Nectar from the body. The five nectars are mentioned in the Kaula Jñāna Nirnaya.
47) Rupabheda.
48) Bhuta Uddamara.
49) Kulasāra.
50) Kullaoddisha.
51) Kulacudāmani. 48, 50 and 51 are still available. The commentator says these tantras are not sanctioned by Veda.
52-56) Sarvajna Tantra, Mahākāli Māta, Arunesi, Modinisa, Vikunthesvara. They are all declared reprehensible as they belong to the digambaras (naked sadhus).
57-64) East, West, South, North, Uttara Kaulas, Vimalā, Vimalotta, Devi Māta.
   One of these lines still exists.”

14. Planets

The tāntriks knew the seven traditional planets of western astrology, and also had a greater number of shadowy planets, of which Rāhu and Ketu -- the nodes of the moon -- are the best known. These constellations were thought of as beyond the 12 sidereal constellations, so remote they were almost beyond time itself. These 27 are employed in Śrī Vidyā to determine suitability of partners, constructing Vajrā Yantrās, and so forth.
15. Yoginis

The Yoginis of the bodily centres (dhātus) reveal that as they are associated with the well known but much misunderstood cakras. These Yoginis are really images of the ayurvedic or alchemic bases in the body.

They can only be understood in relation to such an alchemy. Kundalini is the body sakti, the great deluder, the trickster, the cause of sleep. To raise her means to become conscious of her manifestation. Śakti in the body has her various forms as Prana (Breath) Sakti, fire Śakti and so forth. When Prāna Śakti becomes agitated, she zigzags up the body. At this time one starts to experience dissolution. Various things may be seen and felt.

Dākini, Rākini and others preside over the alchemical physical bases of skin, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow. The last of these yoginis presides over the highest dhatu, highest as it forms the physical basis for new life -- ova/semen. In this form she is truly limitless, as she manifests as the Aeon Tree (Kalpadruma). The Dākinis and Rākinis and others are pictured as terrifying Twelve Rāshis (Constellations).

16. The Nādis and the Marmās

Nādi means river, and is extended to include other currents and courses, such as those of the bioenergy and the pulse. There are said to be seventy two thousand nādis in the human organism. This number indicates a large but not infinite number of channels of bioenergy. They are the pathways of Prāṇa Śakti.

The chief pathways are Suṣumna, extending from a point between the anus and genitals to the top of the head; ida and pingala, which are the solar and lunar pathways coiled around the central channel. This Suṣumna is Śiva and Śakti in sexual union. The human body is conceived of as a tree -- the root is at the top of
the head, and it ramifies downwards.

Marmas are 108 in number, well documented points of the human organism which, if pierced, usually cause death. Many are recognised by western medicine. On the Śri Yantra, marmas are represented by the confluence of three or more lines. These are joints in the human frame, knee joint, elbow joint &c. The body is the temple of the devi. On the Śri Yantra sandhis are represented by the junction of two lines.

17. Breath is Time

The Nātya Sādhaka attains command over the nerves with the help of the Mudrās. The breath control, observed in practice, also portrays a command over time, yet another attribute of ‘Śakti’ dominant in the Sādhaka. Breath is Time is a fundamental postulate of Śri Vidyā and much of the symbolism is based on it. The letters of Sanskrit said to represent the embodiment of Lalitā as mantra are 52 in number: 16 vowels and 36 consonants. These, multiplied together, total 576. This number, divided by nine yields 64. The Śri Yantra is said to have 64,000,000 yoginis in the nine sub-mandalas.

Each mandalā has a unit of Time associated with it. The basic unit is a breath. One nādika is equal to 24 minutes or 1440 seconds, and each breath is one 360th of this, or four seconds. A human being breathes 21600 times each 24 hours.

A Kali Yuga is 432,000 years of 360 days. A Dvāpara Yuga is 864,000 years. A Treta Yuga is 1,296,000 years. A Satya Yuga is 1,728,000 years. The circle of the sidereal zodiac has 12 constellations, each of which has nine parts (navamshas). These 108 (12 x 9) are called Chandrakālas. (this name to be noted as it has been adapted to a name of a hasta as well).

Each Chandrakala is, itself, a micro-constellation. The number of degrees in the
sidereal cakrā is 360. The number of minutes is 21600. A conjunction is 21600', a square 5400', an opposition 10800'. Each eternity (Nityā) of the root mantra has 1440 breaths. This implies that Lalitā is 21600, as she is the collectivity of the 15 Nityās.

Lalitā's chakrā is the grand synthesis of Time, Space, and humankind. Her 36 tattvas are the whole cosmos.

18. Sound

The letters of the vidya are ‘Nāda’, or sound, when charged with consciousness of these mere letters become mantra. The 16th syllable of the vidya also represents ‘Kāmakāla’. Beyond it is the Ultimate Absolute, beyond any sort of description.

“19. Chakras and the 64 Yoginis

There are many systems of cakrās in the tāntrik tradition.

"The letter ksa is in the Brahmāndhra, la in the forehead, ha between the eyes, sa in the mouth, sa in the throat, sha in the heart, va in the navel, and ha in the genitals." The origin of these sounds are meditated upon by musicians and dancers for perfect rendition.

Dear One, listen to the collective meditation in these chakrā places.

"The first of the eight is a celestial eight petal lotus of pure crystal effulgence, a heavenly fire or flame, completely without stain, free from all duality, from the fires of cruelty, devoid even of nothingness. One should avoid perturbation and practise equipoise (Samā) consciousness. One my see even beyond the future, one
with the endless circle of time, having knowledge of what is spoken at a distance, able to both grant boons and to paralyse, with the ability to seize and subjugate pashus, or to destroy or to kill them, mortal, always truthful, and in equipoise, becoming eloquent, a Siddhā, and able to do anything.

"One should meditate on the second as having eight petals, as bright as a beautiful pure flame. One conquers death and becomes the cause of great excitation. Meditating one-pointedly on this multi-fold form one becomes an emperor amongst kings, doing whatsoever one wills, and may destroy all in the three worlds, whether animate or inanimate - like Kruddha, the cause of both creation and dissolution, always engaged in love.

"The third great chakra is the deliverer from the nine tattvas. After meditating on the Guru in that chakra for six months, one may achieve whatever is wished for, destroy old age, be able to see at a distance, able to obstruct, even if one hundred yojanas distant. In a lonely place one should meditate on that multi-fold form.

"The fourth chakra is the cause of peace, increasing happiness and pleasure. By always meditating on it, afterwards one becomes immortal, eloquent, victorious over death and disease. Practising it daily, one causes death to flee. By continual practice for a period of sixteen seasons on this great chakrā, one becomes able to destroy in a day and a night.

"O Surasundari, the fifth great lotus has eight petals. One should always meditate on it as being of a smoky colour, then one may shake the three worlds. It causes eloquence and avoidance of untimely death, and allows one to both enslave and paralyse.

"If one should meditate devotedly on the sixth royal chakrā, fiery, with a pericarp of eight petals, as bright as liquid gold, the cause of Iccha Siddhi, it enables one to see into the future, giving Animā and the other seven siddhis - of this there is no doubt.

"Dear Mahādevi, the seventh is as bright as the full moon, auspicious, within the body, bestowing both enjoyment and liberation, destroying fever and death, enabling one to enter into another's body. what may not be done? One becomes
the best within a circle of people. "Pretty-Eyed One, the eighth great cakrā, adorned with eight petals, gives Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha." [3]

20. Important themes and symbols in Hinduism

“Geetedi, Gāyatredi, Gangedi, Gorupini, Govindedi, mahānāmo, Gagāra panchaka mahat………….The 5 G’s that are a inherent feature of Hindu tradition and worship.


The symbolic representations have specific significance in the temple priest, or the Tantri’s worship as well as the dancer’s make-up and attire.

Tilakā is a mark worn on the forehead and other parts of the body for spiritual reasons.

The shape of the tilakā often represents devotion to a certain deity: a 'U' shape for Lord Viṣṇu, three horizontal lines for Lord Śiva.

Aum (or Om) is the sacred symbol that represents God (Brahman). It is prefixed and sometimes suffixed to all Vedic mantras and prayers. It is often said to represent God in the three aspects of Viṣṇu, (A), Śiva (U) and Brahmā (M). As the divine primordial vibration, it represents the one ultimate reality, underlying and encompassing all of nature and all of existence.

Swastika is an Ārya, or noble and auspicious, symbol. It is a symbol of the action of the Principle of Manifestation. It also stands for purity of soul, satya, truth, and stability within the power of Brahmā or, alternatively, of Suryā, the sun. Its rotation in four directions has been used to represent many ideas, but primarily describes the four directions, the four Vedās and their harmonious whole.
The symbol of dancing posture of Śiva, known as the Natarāja, is the supreme statement in dance, the form of cosmos. Natarāja dances the union of Śakti and Śiva.

Worship of God is often represented symbolically through the aid of icons (mūrti) which are conduits. The Bharatanatyam dancers interestingly use the red ‘Alta’ or colour on the feet and hands too in auspicious shapes and symbols.

“Every name and form in which the lord is worshipped has a special symbolic significance of its own. The inner meaning of these symbols is often very grand and poetic, and to enter into and understand it, will certainly be a privilege to those who are striving to realize for themselves the truths of philosophy; for these symbols were devised simply as aids to imagination and many men have employed them with advantage. The meanings of these symbols differ of course according to the standpoint adopted, and the highest, viz., the Vedāntic will be the one from which we shall study them”. [5]

21. Our Festive images, Pujās and their significance

In a Hindu Temple, the divine spirit/energy is commonly invoked into the Murtis at the time of their consecration.
In India from the month of August starts a continuous period of festive celebrations throughout the country in every village, town, city, every nook and corner. Temples host celebrations of the holy months according to the almanac and corresponding to vedic rites. Special functions, events of dance, drama and music are hosted at the premises like Natyasabhās, Sabhānganas, Nātya Mantapās. Chidambaram temple is saturated with people thronging to see the festivities. Temples like sun-temple Konark, Kahjuraho, Brihadeeshwara, cave temple like Ellora-Ajanta are chosen venues for programmes of this kind to mark the festivals. Tāntric rituals are specially held as per the Vedic calendar, the Gregorian months being July-August [Bhagwaty Puja] and September-October [Dassera Puja] which are important for Devi worship.

During Kriṣṇa Janmāśhtami, some rock the adorable baby Kriṣṇa in cradles, sing lullabies and songs in His praise, some imitate his pranks [the Leelas] as the butter thief and climb atop one another to break pots of buter milk while some simply find ecstasy in singing and dancing His Bhajans with devotion. Lord Ganesh is brought home amidst pomp and splendour. Every year, the sculptors kindle their creative spirits and bring out such amazingly lovely images of this most benevolent Lord.

When he gets immersed, the form, sometimes even gigantic, reduces and merges. This gives a story of how an elegant and revered deity comes to this state. It is the legend of Ganesh who took to form from dust and is significant of so many truths of life, even his exit after the festival. This is only a reflection of life cycle, birth to death, disease and decay being a part of reality. The festival ritual of bringing home this Murti, embellishing him, preparing his prasad, loving and worshipping him brings life into the deity just as a temple priest would do. Immersion is symbolic of man's coming into existence and going back to dust/soil. Our form is only one of the manifestations of the formless.
Dolls play an important role in our lives. Be it during childhood, be it during adolescence or be it during our later part of life. We have all been making, collecting and using dolls to keep amused at play, to adorn homes with puppets or curios, to tell stories and more than anything, to offer our prayers symbolically as we do to our deities. The variety of dolls assembled aesthetically at Navrātri includes not only the deities but also men and women engaged in some activities or other like music, dancing, household chores or playing games. The various themes significantly represent the divinity in man and spread the message of love and unity, brotherhood and community development.

The nine days of Navarātri signify worship for three days each for the three major Goddesses, Lakshmi Devi, Pārvaty Devi and Saraswatī Devi, being bestowers of happiness, prosperity and learning. This symbolizes the importance given to the Goddess in our Purāṇas. The Energy – Parkriti that is embodied in the universal forms unites with the Spirit-Puruṣa which remains as the universal Self.

This great truth is represented when we place a nely wedded couple, in the centre of the dolls-display. That we are ourselves comprised of the five elements is represented by the “Kalasha”, the copper /wooden pot containing water, mango leaves, fruits, etc and lit brightly by a lamp.

Our prayers, our rituals, our customs, our symbols, our arts and cultural heritage do have meaning, beauty, significance and positive energy and effects, but as long as they are followed, practiced and rendered with devotion and faith.

22. Tantra Mudrās

The age-old Mantra – Karāgre vasate Lakshmi, Kara madhye Saraswatī, Karamoole Stitha Gowri, Prabhāte Kara Darshanam points out not only to the
symbolic location of the Goddesses in one’s palm but also indicates the possibility of one’s possessing the entire cosmic energy of the combined Goddesses within the miniscule and infinitesimal palm, (perhaps the same principle is followed by Reiki practitioners).

Hence, in temple worship, the various Mudrās or hand gestures and in arts like Bharatanātyam, the Hastās bear divine semblance and significance other than just the beautous appeal. Simple yet highly figurative and meaningful adornment and embellishment like the red colour application on hands and feet and other paraphernalia usually associated with the dancer’s attire all add up to the totality of experience.

Accompanied by a supplication through music and dance, involving movement of face, limbs and other parts of the body, these gestures can bring one face to face with an image or idea worshipped. A degree of purity of oneself if maintained, can be helpful to overcome diversions and distractions. Unless saturated with devotion, any Sādhana cannot kindle divine essence and spark with a mere automated, impersonal, soulless or perfunctory movement. Tapping and tuning in with the spirit and force would help channelise it just as one would get connected to a radio station with necessary tuning. Call him mystical, celestial or seraphic in nature, a true artiste becomes ‘hallowed’ due to devoted practice.

“In all forms of Art, Music, Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, we have a vision- an experience –and a symbol- an expression. Art is predominantly a sharing in the experience. Religion is essentially an awakening in the experience; When the man of vision, the mystic, or the artist has undergone experience, he does not absorb it all to himself or by himself. He must burst forth into forms of expression. He does so spontaneously in response to an inner necessity. The excellence of Art is mainly in the spontaneity of expression. Expression flows from the plenitude of experience, and in turn kindles experience in kindred souls. The expression
acquires the status of a symbol, and serves as perennial source of meaning. To the symbol belongs the meaning. The substance is beyond expression. Controversies in religion have only a symbolic relevance. “Essentially religious” as an inward experience reaching down to the depths of one’s own being. In so as any Art falls short to this, and serves merely as an expression of material quality or a mental mode, without revealing the spirit that animates and sustain it from within, it fails to satisfy finally and fully. The superior forms of Indian Art, through the ages, were ultimately expressions of spiritual experience.”[6]

It’s real purpose is to induce an experience similar to that which inspired it. Having lit the spark, it must recede, for, if it persists, it would distort.

In this limited sense Art has its own “revelations” even as the essence of religious experience is believed to be “revealed”.

Mudrās are sacred ritual gestures or hand positions. When used in religious dance they become an elaborate hand language. The Sanskrit word Mudrā means seal. In the most antiquated times mudrā was used with mantra and sealed the pattern of energy. The earliest mudrā was the Sanskrit symbol. Mudrā is a patterned movement mainly of the fingers that carries an idea or emotion. Mudrās are a gesture language capable of expressing ideas and suggesting symbols. Mudrās create an energy field and can be used in healing. The ultimate goal of mudra is a higher state of consciousness.

23. Tāntric Yoga and Mudrā

In yoga these sacred hand positions relate to the energy flow of a particular meditation. They enhance the āsana (posture) and sound current (mantra). Mudrās in yoga are symbolic of mantras and send signals to the glands and to a specific part of the brain depending on the purpose of the meditation. According to the science of yoga, the human body is made up of five basic elements - the
Pancha Tatvās

The five fingers of the hand are regarded as representative symbols of these vital elements in the body. Any disturbance, disorder or deficiency in these elements or the consequent disease or imbalance could be rectified and cured by appropriate practice of suitable mudras. The thumb corresponds to the source of balancing the flow of agni tatva. The vāyu tatva is controlled by the fourth (or the index) finger. The role of the middle finger in the mudras is for regulating the akasha tatva in the body. The keys of regulating the prithvi and the jala tatvās lie in the ring finger and the little finger respectively.

Naturopathy, Panchakarma, Ayurvedic medication by and Herbal medicines, Reiki, Prānic Healing, Aroma Therapy, Magnetotherapy, Yagyopathy, Allopathy, Homeopathy, Biochemistry, etc are all manifestations of this spiritual scientific acumen of human psyche. The methods of treatment under each of these systems of healthcare indirectly attempt in correcting the deficiencies or disorders of the five vital elements, because an imbalance in their natural harmony is the root cause of bodily and mental ills. The science of healthcare by mudrās is a branch of “Hathayoga”.

(1) Prāna Mudrā: This is recommended for overall good health. As the name suggests, this mudra helps optimal flow of the prāna (vital energy) in the body. Practising this mudrā energizes and activates every cell of the body and thus helps in regulating the biochemical and physiological processes and induces youthfulness and alacrity. This mudrā enhances vitality and immune system of the body. This mudrā is formed by joining the thumb, the little and the ring fingers so that these three would gently and constantly touch each other while the middle and the fourth fingers are kept apart in a stretched position. The hands could be kept in vertical or horizontal position as per convenience. Instant effect of the prāna mudrā is felt in the form of energetic vibrations in the closed eyes, while keeping one or both the hands in this posture.
(2) **Jñāna Mudrā:** This mudrā is useful for enhancing mental capabilities. Its regular practice over a substantial stretch of time helps in sharpening the memory, mental concentration and thinking process and in increasing the grasping/learning capacities. Several types of mental disorders are prevented and cured by consistent practice of this mudrā. It is beneficial for those suffering from insomnia. Short-tempered and impatient people can also get soothing improvement in their nature by practicing this mudrā. The Sanskrit word “jñāna means pure knowledge. Lord Buddha’s idols and pictures often depict his hands in this mudrā. Only two fingers are used in this mudrā; namely, the tip of the index finger and the top of the thumb are mutually touched. The other three fingers are kept apart in a straight position.

(3) **Dhyāna Mudrā:** This mudra, as the word indicates, is helpful in conditioning the mind for meditation. Keeping the hands stable in this mudrā for sometime generates a state of peace in the mind. Regular and consistent practice for increasing the duration gradually releases the tensions, stresses and confusions that keep the mind in perpetual turmoil. Quietude and relaxation of the mind are essential for meditation. This mudrā should be practiced while sitting, preferably in sukhāsana (i.e. sitting with erect spinal cord with legs rolled round). For this, both the hands are kept on the lap - palm of the right hand is kept open above of the left. This mudra harmonizes the flow of the panca tatvas.

(4) **Varuna Mudrā:** This mudrā is quite useful as a remedy for several disorders of the liver. It is also found effective in removing blood related problems. Varuna implies the jala tatva. All the health problems caused by the deficiency of water are controlled and removed by regular practice of this mudra. Water constitutes about eighty-five percent of our body. Reduction in this level disturbs the body functions. Stiffness in the body or disorder in blood properties often occur when there is a deficiency of water (jala tatvā) or an imbalance in its proportion with agni tatva. Such ailments, including those of the excess of agni tatva, are
gradually cured by the practice of varuna mudrā. The top ends of the thumb and the little finger are to be touched while keeping the other three fingers straight. A balance of agni and jala tatvas is achieved by practicing this mudrā.

(5) Ling Mudrā: Weakness of chest and associated diseases are cured by the palm practice of this mudrā over an extended period of time. Keeping the hands folded in this posture generates an energy current, which warms up the body. Regular practice of this mudra is an excellent antidote against diseases caused by cough or other chest ailments. According to the theory of the ancient Indian system of medicine, the excess of jala tatva or reduction in agni tatvā as compared to its balanced proportion with jala results in cold, cough, running nose, chest congestion etc. Balancing the two in natural order is the best cure for such disorders; it also prevents further complications - e.g. asthma. Both the hands are used here. First the palms are touched face-to-face then the four fingers of one are interlocked with those of the other to form a firm support around the palms in such a way that the thumb of both the hands stand straight and touch each other completely. This pressure triggers a flow of agni tatvā to establish the desired balance with the jala tatva; the positioning of the other fingers maintains the necessary consistency of this process.

(6) Surya Mudrā: Practice of this mudra removes lethargy and dullness and, instead, induces alacrity and activity. The sun (surya) symbolizes brilliance and energy. In its absence there is night when every creature feels tired, fatigued and sleepy. Sunrise infuses new life, energy and alertness in everyone; tiny insect, birds and humans, every one becomes active in their daily routines. The rise and setting of the sun, in a way control the sleep and the awakening of the entire world. It eliminates all fatigue, heaviness and laziness in few minutes. The experts of the science of mudras claim that regular and long-term practice of this mudrā awakens supernatural powers hidden in the human psyche. The ring finger and the thumb are used in this mudrā. The ring finger is folded down to touch the root of the thumb and the top portion of the thumb is made to touch its middle
portion. The other fingers are kept in a comfortably straight position. The agni and the prithvi tatvas are mutually harmonized in this mudrā.

(7) Vāyu Mudrā: Disorders caused by gases or air pressures in and around the veins, arteries etc like joint pain, arthritis, rheumatism, etc are common examples of such disorders. The vayu mudrā helps control and cure the vata ailments. The optimum time of practicing it at a stretch and the overall duration would depend upon the stage and type of the ailments. It is also efficacious in recovery from paralysis attacks. Best results are obtained if this mudrā and the prana mudra are practiced together, one after the other. This is similar to the surya mudrā except that the index finger is used in place of the ring finger in this mudrā. The index finger is folded to touch and gently press the root of the thumb and then the top portion of the thumb is made to touch the middle part of the finger in such a way that it also puts some pressure on the latter. This mudrā regulates the mutual proportion and combination of agni and vayu tatvās.

(8) Prithvi Mudrā: Deficiency of minerals and vitamins causes weakness in the body. The practice of this mudrā removes the fatigue and strengthens the weak or tired organs of the body. The body begins to feel energized from inside. Narrow-mindedness and prejudices are significantly reduced by the practice of this mudrā. The tip of the ring finger is kept perpendicularly on the tip of the thumb in this mudrā to induce gentle pressure. It restores mutual balance of the agni and the prithvi tatvās.

24. Tāntric Buddhism and Mudrās

In Buddhist iconography every Buddha is depicted with a characteristic gesture of the hands that correspond to natural gestures of teaching or protecting and also to certain aspects of the Buddhist teaching of the particular Buddha depicted. Within the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism yoga likewise holds a central place. An example would be "guru yoga," the union with the mind of the spiritual teacher.
which must be done at the beginning of the spiritual path and regularly throughout.

Here mudrās accompany the performance of rituals and the recitation of mantras. They also help to actualize certain inner states and assist in bringing about a connection between the practitioner and the buddha visualized.

The most important mudras are:

1) Dhyāni Mudrā..............................(gesture of meditation)
2) Vitarka Mudrā.............................(teaching gesture)
3) Dharmachakra Mudrā....................(gesture of turning the wheel of the teaching)
4) Bhumisparsha Mudrā....................(gesture of touching the earth)
5) Abhaya Mudrā............................(gesture of fearlessness and granting protection)
6) Varada Mudrā.............................(gesture of granting wishes)
7) Uttarabodhi Mudrā........................(gesture of supreme enlightenment)
8) Mudrā........................................... (of Supreme Wisdom)
9) Anjali Mudrā...............................(gesture of greeting and veneration)
10) Vajrapradama Mudrā....................(gesture of unshakable confidence)

1) Dhyāni Mudrā The back of the right hand rests on the palm of the other in such a way that the tips of the thumbs lightly touch one another. The hands rest in the lap. The right hand, resting on top, symbolizes the state of enlightenment; the other hand, resting below, the world of appearance. This gesture expresses overcoming the world of appearance through enlightenment, as well as the enlightened state of mind for which samsara and nirvana are one. In a special form of this mudra, the middle, ring, and little fingers of both hands lie on top one another and the thumbs and index finger of each hand, touching each other, form a circle, which here also
symbolizes the world of appearance and the true nature of reality.

2) Vitarka Mudrā

The right hand points upward, the left downward; both palms are tuned outward. The thumb and index finger of each hand form a circle. The right hand is at shoulder level, the left at the level of the hips. In a variant of this teaching gesture, the left hand rests palm upward in the lap, and the right hand is raised to shoulder level with its thumb and index finger forming a circle. In a further form of this mudra, the index finger and little fingers of both hands are fully extended, the middle and ring fingers somewhat curved inward. The left hand points upward, the right downward.

3) DharmaChakra Mudrā

The left palm is tuned inward (toward the body), the right outward, and the circles formed by the thumbs and index fingers of each hand touch one another.

4) Bhumisparsha Mudrā

The left hand rests palm upward in the lap; the right hand, hanging over the knee, palm inward, points to the earth. Sometimes the left hand holds a begging bowl. This is the gesture with which the Buddha summoned the Earth as witness to his realization of buddhahood. It is considered a gesture of unshakability; thus Akshobhya (the Unshakable) is usually depicted with this mudra.

5) Abhaya Mudrā

Here the right hand is raised to shoulder height with fingers extended and palm turned outward. This is the gesture of the Buddha Shakyamuni immediately after attaining enlightenment.
6) **Varada Mudrā**

The right hand, palm facing out, is directed downward. When Shakyamuni is depicted, it symbolizes summoning Heaven as witness to his buddhahood. This is also seen in representations of Ratnasambhava. The thumb and index finger of the downward extended hand touch one another. Frequently the abhaya and varada mudrās are combined: the right hand makes the gesture of fearlessness, the left that of wish granting.

7) **Uttarabodhi Mudrā**

Both hands are held at the level of the chest, the two raised index fingers touch one another, the remaining fingers are crossed and folded down; the thumbs touch each other at the tips or are also crossed and folded. This is frequently seen in images of Vairochana.

8) **Mudrā of Supreme Wisdom**

The right index finger is grasped by the five fingers of the left hand. This characteristic of Vairochana, is the subject of many interpretations in esoteric Buddhism, most which have to do with the relationship between the empirical world of manifoldness and the principle that is its basis—the unified world principle, the realization of unity in the manifold as embodied in Buddha.

9) **Anjali Mudrā**

The palms are held together at the level of the chest. This is the customary gesture of greeting in India. Used as a mudrā, it expresses "suchness" (tahata).

10) **Vajrapradama Mudrā**

The fingertips of the hands are crossed. This is a gesture of unshakable confidence.

With the onset of Buddhism, many mudrā practices were absorbed into the
culture. Common hand gestures are to be seen in both Hindu and Buddhist iconography.

**Abhaya Mudrā**

The Abhaya "No-fear" Mudrā represents protection, peace, benevolence, and dispelling of fear. In the Theravāda it is usually made with the right hand raised to the shoulder's height, the arm bent and the palm facing outward with the fingers upright and joined and the left hand hanging down on the right side of the body while standing. The mudrā was probably used before the onset of Buddhism as a symbol of good intentions proposing friendship when approaching strangers. The gesture was used by the Buddha when attacked by an elephant, subduing it as shown in several frescoes and scripts. In Mahāyāna the northern schools deities often used it with another mudrā paired with the other hand.

**Bhūmisparśa Mudrā**

The Bhūmisparśa "Earth-touching" Mudrā literally represents the Buddha as taking the earth as witness. It represents the moment when Buddha took the earth as testimony when he had resolved the problem of cessation of suffering while he was under the papal tree at Bodh-Gaya. The right hand touches the ground with the fingertips near the right knee extended or with only the index pointing down touching the ground with the left hand commonly resting on the lap with the palm facing up.
Dharmacakra Mudrā

The Dharmacakra Mudrā represents a central moment in the life of Buddha when he preached his first sermon after his Enlightenment, in Deer Park in Sarnath. Gautama Buddha is generally only shown making this Mudrā, save Maitreya as the dispenser of the Law. This Mudrā position represents the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Dharmacakra Mudrā is formed when two hands close together in front of the chest in Vitarka having the right palm forward and the left palm upward, sometimes facing the chest.

Dhyāna Mudrā

The Dhyāna Mudrā is the gesture of meditation, of the concentration of the Good Law and the Sangha. The two hands are placed on the lap, right hand on left with fingers fully stretched and the palms facing upwards, forming a triangle, symbolic of the spiritual fire or the Triratna, the three jewels. This Mudrā is used in representations of the Buddha Śākyamuni and the Buddha Amitābha. This mudrā was used long before the Buddha as yogins have used it during their concentration, healing, and meditation exercises. It is heavily used in Southeast Asia in Theravāda Buddhism with the thumbs placed against the palms.

Varada Mudrā

The Varada Mudrā signifies offering, welcome, charity, giving, compassion and
sincerity. It is nearly always used with the left hand for those whom devote oneself to human salvation. It can be made with the arm crooked, the palm offered slightly turned up or in the case of the arm facing down the palm presented with the fingers upright or slightly bent. The Varada Mudrā is rarely seen without using another mudra used by the right hand, typically with the Abhaya Mudrā. It is often confused with the Vitarka Mudrā, which it closely resembles. In India the mudrā is used in images of Avalokitesvara from the Gupta Period of the 4th and 5th centuries. The Varada mudrā is extensively used in the statues of Southeast Asia.

Vajra Mudrā

Vajra Mudrā is the gesture of knowledge. It is made making a fist with the right hand, index extending upward, and the left hand also making a fist and enclosing the index.

Vitarka Mudrā

Vitarka Mudrā is the gesture of discussion and transmission of Buddhist teaching. It is done by joining the tips of the thumb and the index together, and keeping the other fingers straight very much like Abhaya and Varada Mudrās but with the thumbs touching the index fingers. This mudrā has a great number of
variants in Mahāyāna Buddhism in East Asia. In Tibet it is the mystic gesture of Tārās and Bodhisattvās.

The vital core of Buddhism, it is said is contained in the Dhyāna Mudrā. Even as early as Buddha himself, communication by sign language had become an accepted practice for the wise and was included in the 64 arts [Kālās]. It can be averred that in everyday living too, one can observe several eloquent gestures in our country of India. The orthodox Brahmins were habituated to only use sign language while engaged in religious practice. The Nambudiris of Kerala had 16 gestures to denote the vedic texts. These Mudrās are especially subtle and sensitive as they follow also a musical notation or sound -Śabda Nāda. The really educated in ancient India were accomplished in the 64 Kālās.

The Mudrās even gave special natural powers as they were coherent with Mantra, the magical formula. The deep inward consciousness gets manifested, pupils once learnt Vedas, only to the accompaniment of Mudrās.

25. Tāntric YONI MUDRA

![Yoni Mudra](image)

It is used during esoteric worship of the Goddess. Ādi Śakti, the Primal Power Mudrā. This is the mudra from which we all emerged. It connects us to the mother.

26. Nātya Yoga and Nātya Hastabhīnaya (Hand Gestures)

The first full description of the principles and goals of yoga are found in the Upanisads, thought to have been composed between the eighth and fourth centuries BC. The Upanisads are also called Vedānta since they constitute the end or conclusion of the Vedas. The word "yoga" derives from the Sanskrit root yuj ("to yoke"); which is cognate to modern English "yoke" meaning "to join" or "
It is generally translated as "union of the individual ātma with Paramātma, the universal soul." This may be understood as union with the Divine by integration of body, mind, and spirit.

The earliest written accounts of yoga appear in the Rig Veda, which began to be codified between 1500 and 1200 BCE.

Yoga means union and is generally interpreted as union with the Divine, or integration of body, mind, and spirit.

Yoga may include love and devotion (as in Bhakti Yoga), selfless work (as in Karma Yoga), knowledge and discernment (as in Jñāna Yoga), or an eight-limbed system of disciplines emphasizing meditation (as in Rāja Yoga).

Going by the definition of Yoga, Nātya easily falls into a category of Yoga.

The guide to Nātya (Dance) Yoga the Nātya Śāstra, was written by Bharata Muni.

Sage Nārada along with Gandharvas were the first to practise Nātya Yoga, which comprise all the four main yogas.

Hastās were derived from the Mudrās. The 1st Hastā-patāka was supposed to have been used when Lord Brahma hailed Parabrahma with the cry of victory. Mushti hastā was used by Lord Mahavisnu to destroy the demon Madhu. The Ardha-candra originated when Śiva embellished himself with the half moon. Hence the mystic language of gods became that of the learned. Hand gestures are used for a variety of reasons, they may be used to mime the meaning of the song, or they may be simple aesthetic ornamentation. Some have very limited meanings, and some are used as catchalls for miming a variety of ideas. While in the dilieintaion of Nṛtta or pure dance, firm and absolutely neatly held hastās are a must in Bharathanātyam , in Abhinaya or expression, the hastās cannot be rigid and have to be smoothly flexible too. Besides the Sampradāya or traditional hastās, many others have been developed, whose histories are harder to trace eg: Gajamukha Hastā, Vrishbha Hastā, etc. In the cases where an idea is being
conveyed, it is more important to communicate clearly with hand gestures - adapting them if necessary - than it is to perform them with rigid correctness. A rhythmic use of hand gestures help in creation of aesthetic joy in spectators. It is sometimes felt that what is intimately felt, implied and conceived cannot at all times be justifiably represented or expressed by the word alone, totally bereft of gesticulations.

Gestures, both natural and conventional were studied and elaborated later for dance. Some of these employed in daily life are often used on stage but by incorporating rhythm, stylized meaning, suggestive import and significant correlation to presentation. Hence other than the Sampradaya Hastās, several others have been added from time to time to enhance appropriateness to the dance, interpret the expressive elements and uplift the aesthetic experience of the spectators

The Nrtyavinoda of Mānasollasa was composed in - Karnataka. It is a section of a medieval encyclopedic text called the Mānasollasa or Abhilasitarthacintāmani, ascribed ot King Somesvara III. The treatise has been dated to 1131 AD. It covers all aspects of dance - dance movements, poses, and expressive gestures (abhinaya) of the hand, face and head. It's particularly interesting in the fact that the movements noted here are significantly different from the Natya Śāstra, although the abhinaya information shows a great similarity.

27. Difference between:

**Hastās**

1. Dance and drama gestures are called Hastās.

**Mudrās**

Mudrās performed only in rituals are called Mudras. (religious, vedic and tāntric)
2. To communicate the story to the rasikās  To communicate with Gods
3. Have many meanings Have limited meaning
4. Requires corresponding facial expression No expression is necessary
6. It can be to convey pure joy eg- Nritta Hastās. It always has specific meaning
7. Hastās are exotic Mudrās are esoteric

28. Symbolism of Deities represented in dance

The Adi Devta, the first Lord to be propitiated is Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. Elephant –faced, he is the Lord of the Mooladhara chakra and has symbolically, tied a serpent around himself.

Ranganātha and Natarāja mean the very same thing, differently expressed. Natarāja is the lord of the stage, so also Ranganātha (Ranga means stage). The stage is the stage of the world, of the cosmos, or better still of the body and the senses. There is a verse in Śivananda Lahari describing this dance of bliss. In that verse, Neelkanta is used for Śiva. Neelkanta is Sanskrit also means a peacock. Peacock, as we know, is a dancing bird. This allegory is employed both in Sāhitya Ratnākara and in Śivananda Lahari. In the former, the dance of the peacock is described with reference to Śiva, and in the latter, the dance of Śiva is described with a reference to the peacock. Symbolically, the peacock is a dancer. A dancer controls the serpent element here also may mean the power over the Kundalini Śakti through dance. Each art has its own vocabulary and parlance able to convey the most intimate vibrations of the human soul.

“Subrahmanya or Kārthikeya -This suggestion lies in the peacock clutching serpent with its claws. The peacock is the greatest enemy of the serpent. It can destroy the serpent if it wishes to, but the serpent is held here in captivity without being destroyed. The serpent represents the ego, the fleshy, carnal personality of man which tempts him to use his material equipments for seeking the fleeting pleasures of the pluralistic world. Like the serpent, the ego crawls in darkness created by man’s ignorance of the Supreme light. The serpent carries poison in its
fangs but it is interesting to observe that the poison is for its own protection. Similarly, the ego carries with it the poisonous mind, which, when focused on one’s material vestures, assumes the vanity of ‘I-ness’ and ‘mine-ness’. The same mind can be intelligently used for evolving oneself by changing its focus of concentration from body, mind and intellect to the Supreme self. By this process one unfolds and recognises one’s Real Nature. It is important, therefore to note that the ego is not destroyed. The same ego which lures man to the enchantments of the pluralistic world can be channelised to discover the Supreme Self. This idea is symbolized in the serpent being held firmly by the peacock”. [7]

Kriṣṇa, the favourite of many poet saints is one Lord with whom every person could easily identify with. Every aspect of Kriṣṇa and His deeds is replete with highest mystical symbolism, indicating the highest Truth. The incarnation of Kriṣṇa represents the descent of the Infinite Brahman to the material world. Although there is no mention of him in the Nātya Śastrā, he is another charming dancer while he is involved in Rāsleela and becomes a forceful subjugator of Kāliya during the Kāliya Mardhanam. Point to be noted is that serpent could mean senses and Krishna overpowers them. In Kundalini Yoga, the serpent rises to the head, Śiva and Śakti unite in the thousand petalled Lotus and Lord Kriṣṇa, Himself a Parabrahmaswaroopa, places himself comfortably atop the serpent. There cannot be a better symbolic representation of a supreme Yogi. His flute resonates eternally and penetrates the innermost recesses of hearts of maidens. His various Leelās are a poet’s delight and words flow and tears well up in the eyes when devotees talk of his omniscience, revealed in the Bhagavadgeeta, his magnum opus and the Gospel of the Hindus. Kriṣṇa offers solutions to improve the way of life, for everyone, using this practical guide. The relationship between Radha and Kriṣṇa is that of Jeevātmā and paramātmā.

“One must have the subtle-sensitivity of a poet, the ruthless intellect of a scientist, and soft heart of the beloved in order to enter into enchanted realm of mysticism”. [8]
When we see the eyes of Natarāja we are reminded of the Śambhavi Mudra of Yoga in which the eyes are open but the vision is turned inward.

Natarāja means the Lord of the Stage. The idea is that the world is a stage, a puppet-show which presents the vision of life and activity through the power of the all-pervading Ātman or God, the unseen Lord of the Stage. Who will not dance when he is caused to dance, and who will not sing when he is caused to sing by divine energy. But for the inner Ātman all the world is Jadā (inert).

The Ātman or Self being the real teacher of the human mind, Natarāja is meant to represent the Teacher or Guru. There are two kinds of Gurus—the apparent and the real, the seen and the unseen. The former is the teacher who instructs the disciple and takes him along the path—this is what we usually mean by the word Guru; but all teaching really comes from inside, not merely in the sense that the outward apparent teacher is but the instrument employed by Ātman or God, but also in the sense that all growth is from within. The plant, for example, grows from within; the manure, water, etc., are simply aids to its growth. In the same way, the mind grows only from within, assimilating of course the teachings from outside. Natarāja, then, is the real Guru, concretely represented. One of the functions of the Guru, perhaps the most important, is to be what he teaches to enforce his teachings by example. It is this idea that is the keynote to the Natarāja symbol.

The little drum in one of the right hands is meant to express the idea that God or Guru holds the cause of all the world, i.e., sound (Śabda Nishtam Jagad—through sound the world stands) in his hand. In other words, all the world is in His hand, to be folded or unfolded at His own will. To the Jnāni or wise man the world exists only if he chooses and not otherwise. The deer on one side is the mind because the latter leaps and jumps from one thing to another as wildly as that animal. The Ātman is far beyond the reach of the deer-like mind; and so the deer in the picture is placed near the legs. Natarāja wears the skin of a tiger which He Himself slew. Ahankara or the skin of egoism is that tiger; it is beastly and ferocious and fiercely fights when attacked, but it has to be killed and Natarāja or
Guru alone can kill it. On His head He wears the Ganges, i.e., Chit Śakti or wisdom which is most cool refreshing and the moon which represents the ethereal light and bliss-fulness of the Ātman. One foot is planted over and crushes the giant Mayalaka, i.e., Mahā Māya, the endless illusion which is the cause of birth and death, while the other foot is raised upward and represents the “Turiya” state, which is beyond and above the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep, and leaves behind, the mind, Māya and the world. The second right hand representing the idea of peace indicates the blessed calmness, which is the glorious privilege of wisdom. In one of the left hands, is held Agni (fire), i.e., the Guru brings in the Jyotis of the Ātman itself to attest the truth of His teaching. The idea is that the truth of the Guru’s teaching can only be fully understood on practical realization in experience (Anubhāva). The place of the dance, the theatre, is Thillaivanam, i.e., the body (of the individual as well as of the Cosmos) spoken of as vanam or forest on account of the multitude of its components. The platform in that theatre is the cremation ground, i.e., the place where all passions and the names and forms that constitute the vision of the world have been burnt away; pure consciousness devoid of attachment to anything outside and devoid of illusion.

“Another conception of Śiva is that of ‘Ardhanāreeswara’-half male and half female. The latest researches in psychology reveal that every man has a woman in his mind and each woman has a man inherent in her constitution. This is known as the principle of Animus and Anima.

To speak in the language of the ancient symbolism each individual is Brahma i.e Prajāpati or the creator unto himself and creates for himself a mind-born daughter who functions as his energy for all creativity. She typifies the principles of intelligence (Buddhi) by which the individual obtains his extension that may be termed as the “Mandalā” of his life. This female energy or the principle of intelligence and intellection is the element that makes up the Ardhanāreeswara form of each individual”. [9]
29. Non-combined and Combined gestures of Nātya

Hastās are divided into two categories:

1) Asumyuta and  2) Samyuta

Asumyuta hastās are shown by single hand.

Samyuta are those in which both hands are used jointly in depicting an idea. The same classification is also applicable to mudrā. An idea is expressed either by single hands or both hands. The communication by hastās has resulted in the dictionary of hastas. Hastās are further classified as Nritta and Nrityā according to function and meaning. Nritta hastās are purely decorative and can have no specific meaning, whereas Nritya hastās narrate and interpret text of drama and poetry for depiction of moods. Some of the hastās have three functions e.g. the patāka hastā is held in a particular way to symbolize and analyze i.e the Kartā (subject), the Karmā (activity), kriyā (subsequent movements).

Hastās differ according to persons, movement, expression and nature of movement or guna. Each hastā stands for manifold concepts. The accompanying movements of the body and face also differ according to the meanings.

In āngika abhinaya the hand movement is called Sākha, like the branches of the tree, the hand spreads out in every direction. The fingers move like tender leaves or open out like petals. The hastās are the most characteristic feature of āngika abhinaya. With the emergence of dance and dance drama, everything had to be represented in terms of gestures. The Natya Śāstra allows new hastās to be incorporated to convey emotions.

The Nātya Śāstra lists the following hastas, along with their meanings

Asamyuta = "non-combined", single hand gestures

These are single hand gestures as they can be used by one hand independently from the other.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patāka</td>
<td>Flag, Striking, driving, joy, pride, etc.</td>
<td>prowess, graciousness, moonlight, strong sunlight, knocking, meaning of the seven cases, wave, entering a street, equality, applying sandal paste, one's self, taking an oath, silence, good king, palmyra leaf, slap, touching, saying &quot;such and such&quot;, the sea, the way of good deeds, addressing (a person some distance away), going in front, the form of a sword, month, year, season, day, sprinkling water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rain, shower of flowers, beginning of dance, cloud, forest, forbidding things, bosom, night, river, world of the gods, horse, cutting, wind, reclining, walking,</td>
<td>drawn on the face or body, turning round, union of woman and man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripatāka</td>
<td>King’s Crown, beckoning, sending away, saluting on forehead - or touching auspicious objects wiping tears crossed over chest - saluting elders</td>
<td>three parts of a flag crown, tree, the bearer of the vajra (Indra), screw-pine flower, light, rising flames, cheek, patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardhapatāka</td>
<td>half-flag tender shoots, panel for writing or drawing, bank of a river, dagger, knife, flag, saying &quot;Both&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kartarimukha</td>
<td>mountain summit, arrow shaft face, the forefinger and little finger are out spread, opposition or overturning, stealing, the corner of the eye, death, forgetting, vomiting, disagreement, lightning, sleeping alone, weeper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayura</td>
<td>peacock the peacock's beak bird of omen, vomiting, stroking the hair, forehead, brow-spot,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardhachandra</td>
<td>crescent moon, small trees, pot, woman's girdle or waist, half moon, the moon on the eighth day of the dark fortnight, a hand seizing the throat, a spear, consecrating an image, a platter, waist, anxiety,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arāla - dignity of men and self-admiration by women, drinking poison, drinking</td>
<td>one's self, meditation, prayer, touching the limbs, greeting common people sweeping, clasping the waist, elephant’s ears</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śukatunda-</td>
<td>lover's anger, jealousy, parrot's beak shooting an arrow, throwing a spear, mystery, expressing contempt and rebuking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Muṣṭi</td>
<td>holding of weapon, striking fist</td>
<td>holding a sword or things fingers on top of thumb - wrestling, beating the sides</td>
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<td></td>
<td>steadiness, grasping the hair, wrestling thumb on top of fingers - running, beating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śikhara-</td>
<td>who is it - questioning, pointing lips and legs, spire of the God of Love, bow, pillar, silence, husband, tooth, recollection</td>
<td>intimate suggestion, untying the girdle, embrace, lover, sound of a bell, ringing of bells, pressing or rubbing the body, throwing a spike or a javelin,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kapittha</td>
<td>holding a rope</td>
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<tr>
<td>suggests weapons</td>
<td>offering incense or lights, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>elephant apple</td>
<td>affirmation, releasing a disc (wheel),</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lakshmi, body, Sarasvati, winding,</td>
<td>discharging weapons after meditating (by placing on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holding cymbals, milking cows, collyrium,</td>
<td>forehead), some birds and their flight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>holding flowers at the time of dalliance,</td>
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<tr>
<td>grasping the end of the robe, veiling the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>head,</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Katakāmukha

<p>| pulling reins, wearing garments, holding the | pulling reins, wearing garments, holding the hem of |
| hem of garments, threading a pearl necklace,| garments, threading a pearl necklace, picking flowers, |
| picking flowers, a garland of flowers,      | a garland of flowers, drawing a bow slowly, |
| drawing a bow slowly, distributing folded   | distributing folded betel leaves, applying such things |
| betel leaves, applying such things as        | as musk or scent, glancing, holding an umbrella, |
| musk or scent, glancing, holding an umbrella,| grasping the hair and the noose |
| grasping the hair and the noose              |                                                     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sūchi</th>
<th>turned around - suggests (Chakra) or a crowd, one, Parabrahma, one hundred, sun, city, world, saying &quot;This&quot; or &quot;What?&quot;, &quot;He&quot;, threatening, the body, astonishment, braid of hair, umbrella,</th>
<th>circle, explanation, evening - using weapons, forbidding directing, threatening earring, turning of a wheel, good words, and swinging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chandrakalā</td>
<td>Used above Shiva and Ganesha’s head</td>
<td>to indicate the crescent moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padmakoes</td>
<td>worship of a god, showering of flowers, some fruits and a woman's breasts lotus bud fruit, wood- apple, curve, ball</td>
<td>the shape of a bell, the hole of a snake, a water-lily, an egg, taking the kapittha or bilva fruit, a downcast face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpasirśa</td>
<td>movement of snake's head, snake head sandal-paste, slowness, sprinkling, cherishing, etc., giving water to gods and sages,</td>
<td>pouring, drinking or offering of holy water facing downwards - waving movement, dwarves facing upwards -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrigasirśa</td>
<td>the concepts of &quot;here&quot;, &quot;now&quot;, wiping perspiration, deer head, women, cheek, traditional manners, fear, discussion, costume of an actor, place of residence, tete-a-tete, drawing three lines on the brow, patterns on the ground, massage of the feet, (combining the hands) house, placing the feet, calling the beloved, roaming facing downwards - wiping off sweat, beckoning, shading eyes from the sun facing upwards - colouring the face, throwing the dice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simhamukha</td>
<td>lion face, coral, pearl, fragrance, stroking the hair, a drop of water, salvation when placed on the heart, homa, hare, elephant, kusa grass, lotus garland, testing the preparation of medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāngula</td>
<td>sense of little, or child's face held up by chin, tail, breast of a young girl, white water-lily, areca-nut,</td>
<td>different types of fruits, small quantities, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alapadma</td>
<td>prohibiting or asking 'who are you?', full-blown lotus, elephant-apple, turning, breast, yearning for the beloved, mirror, full-moon, apraising oneself, maintain</td>
<td>enquirin 'who are you?', beautiful vessel, hair-knot, moon-pavilion, town, village, height, anger, lake, car, murmering sound, praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatura</td>
<td>grace, hope, affection, youth musk, a little gold, copper etc., wet, sorrow, aesthetic emotion, eyes, difference of caste, oath, playful converse, slow-stepping</td>
<td>, breaking to peices, seat, oil or ghi, etc. chanting prayers, a small quantity, doubt, Vedic discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhramara</td>
<td>picking flowers, removing thorns bee, parrot, crane, cuckoo, u</td>
<td>holding flowers with long stalks, palm leaves,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamsāsyā-</td>
<td>tying the marriage thread, initiation, certainty, horripilation, painting, drop of water, raising the wick of a lamp, examining, drawing lines, carrying garlands, singifying &quot;That am I&quot;, accomplishment of a task, Hands of deities meditation (Dhyānam)</td>
<td>small, little, delicate swan-face smoothness, softness kept steady - act of smelling flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamsapaksha-</td>
<td>offering water to the dead, feeding of Brahmins in suggest sorrow, holding the chin the number six, constructing a bridge, making marks with the nails, arranging color to the face, tying up the hair, accepting, friend (Sakhi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandamsa</td>
<td>taking out a thorn or picking delicate flowers brushing collyrium to the eyes when pearls are pierced, powdering things like camphor, taking betel leaf painting, drawing the eyebrows, stringing beads, decorating the eyelashes</td>
<td>grasping generosity, sacrificial offerings, tumour, insect, apprehension, worship, the number five</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mukūla</td>
<td>worship to gods, kissing lovers, touching breasts, bud, water-lily, eating, the God of Love, holding a seal, navel, plantain flower</td>
<td>obliquely and facing upwards, counting gold coins facing downwards -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palli and Vyāgra&lt;br&gt;haha</td>
<td>Weapons of&lt;br&gt;Gods, the vehicle&lt;br&gt;of goddess - lion&lt;br&gt;and tiger claws</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tāmarachuda</td>
<td>to beckon children, rebuke, etc. red-crest,&lt;br&gt;cock, crane, camel, calf, writing or drawing</td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triśula and Ardhasūči</td>
<td>inspiring confidence in children, in war, yawning and kings</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Samyuta = "combined", double hand gestures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>used to greet friends - held in front of the chest used to receive presents - held near the face used to make obeisance to deities held on the head</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>salutation saluting Deities, Elders (gurus) or Brahmans - hands held on the head for Deities, before the face for Elders, and on the chest for Brahmans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapota</td>
<td>ferocious approach with inimical intention, bowing down and talking to a venerable man, held on breast by women to represent cold and fear</td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>indicates having ideas, expressing possibilities, or showing anxiety dove, taking oath, conversation with elders, humble acquiescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karkata</td>
<td>Bee's wax, massaging the limbs, yawning after getting up from sleep, a huge body, supporting the chin, holding arm of friend or crab, hands may be turned inwards or outwards</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>group stoutness, blowing the conch, stretching the limbs, bending the bough of a tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consort</td>
<td>&quot;Svastika literally, means crossed, many hand-positions represents directions of clouds, the firmament, jungles, oceans, the earth and other vast things as well.</td>
<td>crocodile, timid speech, dispute, praising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katakāvardhamanaka</td>
<td>kataka name of single hand mudra is crossed here with both hands holding katakamukha, wooing a lady, or bowing down to a venerable person, coronation, ritual, marriage blessing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kartarīsvastika</td>
<td>arrow-shafts trees, the boughs of tress,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesture</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Utsanga</strong>&lt;br&gt;Both hands held mriga sirsra and crossed</td>
<td>feeling of touch also for anything with excessive effort, acts of anger and indignation, women's envious acts and squeezing of something.</td>
<td>embrace, modesty, armlet, education of children, enslaved, servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dola</strong>&lt;br&gt;Both hands hang on sides holding patakas</td>
<td>haste, sadness, loss of sense, swooning, drunkenness, excitement, illness, and weapon-inflicted wounds, walking gait of lady</td>
<td>swing, beginning an expressive dance-story, describes the position as &quot;hands in pataka on thighs&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puṣpapūta</strong>&lt;br&gt;In sarpasirsas join the side of the palms</td>
<td>Usually used as an offering, indicates receiving, carrying, etc. holding rice,</td>
<td>flower-casket offering lights, twilight water-offering, flower-spells, children receiving fruits, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Śakata</strong></td>
<td>Held near mouth to indicate frightful teeth of the gestures of the Raksasas (demons)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Śankha</strong></td>
<td>conch. The gesture is described as the thumb of the left hand held by right in Shikara and joined with the right thumb closing in on middle finger of the left.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chakra</strong></td>
<td>Ardhachandra hands one above another (vertical &amp; horizontal)</td>
<td>discus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Samputa</strong></td>
<td>Clasp hands with</td>
<td>casket concealing things,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāśa</td>
<td>Index fingers clasped</td>
<td>noose, enmity, noose, manacles, battle, Yama’s (God of Death) hands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilaka</td>
<td></td>
<td>bond, affection, the conversation of lovers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>shark, fish, and flesh eating animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurma</td>
<td>One hand (palm down) on the other (palm upward)</td>
<td>tortoise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varāha</td>
<td>One hand on another (both palms down)</td>
<td>boar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garuda</td>
<td>Ardachandra Swastika hands, thumbs clasped</td>
<td>Garuda is an eagle, Vishnu's mount -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastam</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nāgabhanda</strong></td>
<td>Carrying of bride and groom, excessive weight, clasping a pillar and the extermination of a hill or a boulder</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image of Nāgabhanda Hastam" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Khatva</strong></td>
<td>Touching tips of ring and middle fingers held in Gajamukha hastas</td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image of Khatva Hastam" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Berunda</strong></td>
<td>Kapittas in swastika</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image of Berunda Hastam" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Śivalinga</strong></td>
<td>Right hand shikara hasta on left hand in pataka</td>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image of Śivalinga Hastam" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. **Nṛtta hastās**:

The nṛtya hastās are used only for decorative purpose and are not intended to represent either in emotion or character or situation. In Nṛtta item either these hastās are moved in different directions, upward, downward, to the right, to the
left, in front etc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Name of the Mudrā”</th>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Patāka</td>
<td>The Supreme</td>
<td>Brāhmin</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tripatāka</td>
<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Ksatriya</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kartarimukha</td>
<td>Visnu wielding</td>
<td>Ksatriya</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discuss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ardhachandra</td>
<td>Mahādeva</td>
<td>Vaisya</td>
<td>Smoky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ārāla</td>
<td>Vāsudeva</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Śukatunda</td>
<td>Mārici</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Muṣti</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Śudra</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Śikhāra</td>
<td>Kāmadeva</td>
<td>Gandharva</td>
<td>Dusty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kapittha</td>
<td>Padma Garbha Visnu</td>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Katakāmukha</td>
<td>Raghurāma</td>
<td>Deva</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Suchi</td>
<td>Visvakarman Visnu</td>
<td>Deva</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Padmakosa</td>
<td>Bhārgava</td>
<td>Yaksakinnara</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sarpa Sirśa</td>
<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Deva</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Deity</td>
<td>Specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Mriga Sirśa</td>
<td>Mahesvara Śiva</td>
<td>Rsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Kāngula</td>
<td>Padma</td>
<td>Siddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Alapadma</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Gandharva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Chatura</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Bhramara</td>
<td>Garuda</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Hamsāsyā</td>
<td>Brahma</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Hamsapakṣa</td>
<td>Kāmadeva</td>
<td>Apsaras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Sandamsa</td>
<td>Valmiki</td>
<td>Vidyādhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Mukula</td>
<td>Candra</td>
<td>Sankirna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Urnanābha</td>
<td>Indra</td>
<td>Deva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Tāmara Chuda</td>
<td>Incarnation as Ksatriya</td>
<td>Red tortoise” [10]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following purāṇas and anecdotes indicate the practical use of mudrās and we can understand evolution of the hastās from them.

1. Patāka - Brahma made use of this Mudrā while making obeisance to Visnu. Patāka has reference to flags and banners.

2. Tripatāka – While holding the thunderbolt, Indra kept three fingers separate.
3. Kartari Mukha– Śivā is the sponsor of this Mudrā before slaying Andhakāsura.

4. Ardha Candra – Śivā in the form of Natarāja embellished his matted hair with Crescent moon.

5. Arāla – Sage Agastya made use of this Mudrā before drinking up the ocean

6. Śukatunda – Gauri was in the state of feigned anger with Śiva. She made use of this Mudrā

7. Muṣṭi– Lord Visnu was in the state of feigned anger with Śiva. She made use of this Mudrā at the time of slaying Madhu.

8. Śikhara – At the time of churning of the milk ocean the moon-crested Lord wanted to uproot Sumeru mountain when he made use of this Mudrā.

9. Kapittha – At the time of churning of the mild ocean Lord Visnu pulled out the celestial tree Mandāra and made use of this Mudrā.

10. Katakāmukha– While learning the science of archery from Lord Śivā, Kārtikeya made use of this Mudrā.

11. Suchimukha – Brahma made use of this hand gesture in order to reveal the principle “Ekoham” (I am one)

12. Padmakosa – In order to receive the discuss Sudarsana from Lord Śiva, Lord Vishnu made use of this Mudrā instead of floral offering.

13. Sarpa Sirśā – When the demon king Bālu was found the divine incarnation Vamana assuaged the grief of the Devas by using this hand gesture.
14. Mriga Sirṣā– Pārvati performed penance to gain the hand of Lord Śiva. She applied sandal paste over her forehead making use of this Mudrā.

15. Kāngula – Before swallowing the Kalakuta poison Lord Śiva made use of this Mudrā.

16. Alapallava – While stealing butter from the huts of the cowherdresses Lord Krishna made use of this Mudra.

17. Chatura – When Garuda went in search of Amṛta Sage Kasyapa gave him guidance making use of this Mudrā.

18. Bhramara – Sage Kasyapa made use of this Mudrā when he wanted to make the earings for Aditi.

19. Hamsāsyā – Lord Śiva in Daksināmurti form was instructing the sages in the principles of Absolute Philosophy beneath the Vatā tree. Then he made use of this Mudrā.

20. Hamsapakṣa – Tāndu who expounded the dance form Tāndava made use of this Mudrā.

21. Sandamsa – This is also known as Jnana Mudrā. At the outset this was made use of by the goodness of speech and musicology goddess Sarasvati.

22. Mukula – The monkey god Hanuman attempted to gulp the rising sun. He made use of this Mudrā.

23. Urnanabha – The divine incarnation of man-lion made use of this Mudrā before slaying Hiranyakasipu.

24. Tāmara Chuda – The three Vedas after being spelt out by Brahma made use of this Mudrā in making obeisance to him.
In Bharatanātyam and Kathakali, the Hasta Mudrās are more definite and firm while in forms as Kathak and Manipuri, the Hasta Mudrās are held softly and lightly.

With reference to the special practices in Bengal,

“Mudrās which are the sources of Hastas please the Devatas and destroy burdens of sins. The popular hand poses during Puja are Ankusha, Avagunthana, Avahanyadi pancha mudras (Samsthapani, Sannidhapani, Sannirodhani, Sammukheekarani), Kurma, Galine, Goyoni, Grasa, Cakrā, Jvālini, Tatva, Dhenu, Nāracha, Parameekarana, Prānādi pancha mudra (Prāna, Apāna, Vyāna, Udāna and Samāna), Matsya, Mriga, Yoni, Lelihana and Samhāra mudrā”.[11]

31. The Supreme dancer Śiva:

“How many various dances of Śiva are known to His worshippers I cannot say. No doubt the root idea behind all these dances is more or less one and the same, the manifestation of primal rhythmic energy. Śiva is the Eros Protagonos of Lucian, when he wrote:

“It would seem that dancing came into being at the beginning of all things, and was brought to light together with Eros, that ancient one, for we see this primeval dancing clearly set forth in the choral dance of the constellations, and in the planets and fixed stars, their interweaving and interchange and orderly harmony”.

The second well-known dance of Śiva is called Tāndava and belongs to His tamasic aspect as Bhairava or Virabhadra.

Thirdly, we have the Nādanta dance of Natarāja before the assembly (sabha) in the golden hall of Chidambaram or Tillai. Then ādi-Seshan worshipped Śiva, and prayed above all things for the boon, once more to behold this mystic dance; Śiva promised that he should behold the dance again in sacred Tillai, the center of the Universe”. [12]
The dance, in fact, represents His five activities (Panchakritya), viz: Sriṣṭi (overlooking, creation, evolution), Sthiti (preservation, support), Samhāra (destruction, evolution), Tirobhāva (veiling, embodiment, illusion and also giving rest), Anugraha (release, salvation, grace). These, separately considered, are the activities of the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshwara and Sadā Śiva.

Creation arises from the hand clap. It all started with sound drum: protection proceeds from the hand of hope, (abhaya) from fire comes destruction: the foot held aloft gives release from bondage. It will be observed that the fourth hand points to this lifted foot, the refuge of the soul. I shall protect you and so remain steadfast in devotion to the self. I shall show your self in me if you surrender your ego – Nātya proclaims.

32. The Sanskrit theatre form

The Chaturashrikarana or square or was a basic structure of the Indian temple, as in the theatre. Identifying the Yajurveda as the source of ritual and body-language with gestures, Vedic yajna as a performance act is considered as a base.

Brahma is constantly referred to as the principle of the central (focus) dimensions in the concepts of brahmamandala (on the stage), brahmasthana, brahmasutra, etc. on stage. So also is the case of Viṣṇu where he is considered as the principle of the triangle in vaisnavasthana, vaisnavakarana, etc. on stage.

The shape of the four sides is especially chosen because….

“Whereas the earth, as the surface of this world which supports the movements and weight of our bodies, is found, the earth held in the embrace of the sky and subject to its laws, is represented as fixed fourfold”. [13]

33. The relevance of these Symbolizing art forms

Nandikeshwara describes the dance of Śiva as being depicted in seven forms called the Tāndavas which are the vigorous, masculine, eternal dance which
depicts the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe. In this
background, It can be observed that the artistes rarely gave their signature or
copyrights as they were simple enough to admit the divine hand in the works of
art including poetry, music, dance, sculptures, temples, architecture, painting etc.
Folk tradition on one hand continuously portrayed the linguistic and ethnic
specialties, costumes with themes as nature and festivals and dance movements
akin to trade occupations. On the other hand, the classical era saw the
emergence of various styles, Bāni, Gharānas, schools and the wonderful Guru-
Śiṣya paramparas or lineage. One has to keep in mind one basic difference
between the ancient approach of the east and the modern outlook of west in the
world in the sense that the common perception of the orient, is that man is a soul
clothed by the body as against the body with a soul, being the occident. Hence,
we notice that corporeality, spatial movements, gymnastics, geography, aerobatic
skills, kinematics are terms more common in western dances while although we
have terms as spiritualize, geometry in movement and kinetics the predominant
principle is treating the body itself as the yogic macaroon with the five elements
the various koshās, doshās etc. The entire universe itself is within the nucleus of
man himself. Of course, these days inter-cultural movement has brought about a
rare path and a massive change in this scenario. The celebration of life through
music and dance is an example of achieving the goals of life –Dharma, Artha,
Kāma, Moksha – the 4 puruṣārthās. It can be also compared to the festivities
when people commemorate important legendary events with new clothes,
preparing and exchanging special dishes, sweetmeats, propitiating the Gods and
Goddess or the saints and giving alms to the needy.

Loftiest philosophies get translated through the media of both our arts and
festivals into simple, comprehensive and enjoyable experiences. Man rises above
narrow dogma and prejudice and unite in a spirit of brotherhood. Every little
symbol attached to dance programme venues and during festivals like Rangoli
designs, painting on the courtyard, lamps lit, lanterns hung, flags hoisted, the
paraphernalia adorning the stagehouse all signify the message of life filled with
love and joy. There is a metamorphosis of monism and dualism.

Siva dancing as Natarāja is a symbolic representation of his creative Movement; this universe is a product of his tāndava of which are seven varieties: Anada Tāndava (blissful); Sandhya (evening dance); Uma (dance with Uma); Gouri (dance with Gouri); Kālika (dance with Kāli); Triputa (dance of the destruction of three cities); Samhara (dance of destruction). Drawing attention to the close correspondence between the postures of the various limbs of Natarāja and the authentic movements in yoga, he writes: “The left leg has been raised in a graceful dancing posture. It is the effect of the upward movement of the Apāna which is its master impulse. The Apāna has moved towards the Muladhara Chakra and has passed beyond it. The very face that the left leg is in a state of poise indicates the emergence of the Mulabandha in the Deity. That is followed by the next Bandha, namely the Udyana Bandha above the Manipura at the navel, indicated by the flowing hand. The effect of both the Bandhas is to keep the Apāna in its upward course and prevent it from coming down. Consequently Apāna has moved towards the namely prana the unification of Prāna and Apana is indicative of the emergence of the state of yoga. It is a thing that takes place in the yogi’s heart and when it does, it brings about the complete cessation of all the activities of the mind. Natarāja indicates silently the mystery of transcendence of that harmonious state by the left arm which passes in front of his heart in a most graceful dancing posture”. [14]

Drawing examples from the world over, during the middle ages, the science of numbers were considered the common denominator binding artistic practices in an organic and unchanging manner.

Spatial proportions of geometry, latitudes and longitudes of forerunners with utopian creativity combined with laterally thinking minds surpassed the realm of
physical sight and sound. Semiotics utilized in musical writings also communicated a sense of fullness and concordance with laws of nature and the very same proportions ruled the repository of many a repertoire. This gave rise to the concept of mathematical metaphysics, synchronous and symmetrical. The arena of arts became so replete with effulgence that the acme remained boundless. The harmony in the orbital movement of heavenly bodies and spheres, the felicitious luminescence of the sun’s rays, potent during its pinnacle and as it plummets on our earth, the succession of the seasons are a simulacrum of dance and music and all integral interdisciplinary marvels. The cyclic movement of time as manifested in the twelve zodiac signs is a common symbol in painting and dance.

The science of tantrā serves spiritual elevation of mankind. It offers a yardstick to spiritually grasp and measure the properties of cosmos. As one collates the texts and manuscripts available on tantrā, one is awestruck by an inevitable web, neatly interwoven with varied components. This also includes bizarre elements. The grotesque images like skulls are not only associated with Tantrayāṇa or Vajra yāṇa Buddhism, but also western music and painting. The art of music had to contribute to the intersection of life and death.

“Often the indentification of music with death takes the shape of a skeleton playing violin, in Peter Bruegal’s – the elder’s triumph of death. According to the symbolism of alchemy, however, the skeleton does not imply a static death”. [15]

A realted study into the schools and branches of Tantra and Natya would reveal how the science and the art are embedded within the streams.
Notes and References


[3] One of the most ancient plan appears in chapter nine, Page 16, Kularnava Tantra, of the Kaulajnana Nirmaya, attributed to Siddha Matsyendranath, the progenitor of the Kaula school of tantra. This chakra system is eightfold. Each of the lotuses has eight petals and these represent the 64 yoginis, extolled in Kamarupa. http://www.shivashakti.com/matsya.htm


[7] Subramanya-Karthikeya by A.Parthasarathy ......IbidPg No.150/151

[8] Radha and Krishna ,Swami Chinmayananda ,.......Ibid....... pg 165

[9] Lord Shiva-The master of life and death by Anjani KR.Srivastava,

Ibid....... pages 176/178

[10] Natya Shastra-Translation into English by a board of scholars, Sri Sathguru Publications.... Page 152 to 154.

[11] Worship of Sri Ramakrishna by Sri Hitananda Swami,

Sri Rama Krishna Math , Chennai.


[14] The Divine Dancer : By Dr. S.V. Chamu, Ashtanga Yoga of Vijnana Mandira, Mysore............ Page No.142/143