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- *Mudra* is the final stage of practice in the systematic approach of *hatha* yoga. There are five categories of *mudra*: gestural, facial, pelvic, postural, and *bandha mudra*.
- Gestural—probably the most well-known of the *bandhas*. These are the various hand positions, using the fingers to heighten and balance *prana*
  - in part, the gestural *mudras* are influenced by the fact that your thumb and four fingers are directly related to the first five *chakras*
- Facial—in which you utilize eyes, tongue and/or points on the roof of the mouth in very specific ways to access, stabilize, collect or even suspend the movement of *prana*.
- Pelvic—i.e. *ashvini mudra* (contraction of the anal-sphincter muscles), *vajroli mudra* (contraction of the urogenital muscles associated with controlling and transforming sexual energies).
- Postural—these involve the whole body or parts of the body to anchor or materialize specific aspirational states of consciousness.
  - similar practices, with similar intent are found throughout the world, such as: the practice of prostration as well as circumambulation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, kneeling during prayer and other embodied rituals in Christian as well as Muslim traditions, davening in the Jewish tradition



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- *Bandha mudra*—involves an intensive and synergistic combination of *bandha*, *asana* and *pranayama*; these are considered the culminating physical practices of *hatha*—the most powerful and profound. Be mindful of the contraindications: menstrual cycle, any and all eye disorders, pregnancy, women with IUD's, emotional instability, recent withdrawal from drug addiction, etc.
  - *bandha mudra* practices are intense, even without long holds, they need to be approached with an appreciation for wise progression, and consideration for the capacities of the individual
  - for *maha mudra* begin with slow, steady breathing—no *kumbhaka*—simply lengthening inhale and exhale, later introduce retention and/or suspension; gradually increase breath variations and lastly graduate to longer holds
  - this progression needs to be cultivated over time—be gentle, don't overdo...often times, less is more

## Vayu Mudras for Meditation (See PDF)

- In addition to the individual mudras that we have already reviewed and that can be applied during *pranayama* to strengthen or balance any one of the five *vayus*, you can also apply other gestural mudras as well as *mantra*, *kriya*, and *bhava* (specific and intentional feeling states) to build or balance *vayu* during meditation.



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- *Apana*
  - *mudra*: thumb, index and middle finger touch
  - *mantra*: *om apanaya swaha*
  - *yantra*: dark blue triangle pointing downward, lightning grounded into earth
  - *bhav*: feel grounded and stable
- *Samana*
  - *mudra*: thumb, little and ring finger touch
  - *mantra*: *om samanaya swaha*
  - *yantra*: multi-colored spiral behind navel
  - *bhav*: balance, complete stillness, assimilative power
- *Pran*
  - *mudra*: thumb, middle, ring fingers touch
  - *mantra*: *om pranaya swaha*
  - *yantra*: see brain absorbing white light and energy
  - *bhav*: complete renewal, senses recharged
- *Udana*
  - *mudra*: thumb, index, middle, and ring finger touch
  - *mantra*: *om udanaya swaha*
  - *yantra*: Blue lotus in throat
  - *bhav*: Feeling of head floating off neck, energy ascending





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- Vyana
  - *mudra*: all fingers touching
  - *mantra*: om vyanaya swaha
  - *yantra*: orange wheel spinning, sending rays of orange light out of heart outward to the edges of the universe
  - complete expansion, boundlessness

## Transform Negativity Kriya Practice (See PDF)

- The Transform Negativity practice is a tantric meditative approach to transform *kundalini shakti* into *prana shakti*, while reducing the nine obstacles to yoga (as outlined in *Secrets of the Sutras*).
- The practice allows you to address each of one (or more) of the nine obstacles specifically as well as increase your capacity for non-attachment, both specifically and generally.
- Step 1:
  - select the specific emotion that you will work with
  - familiarize yourself with the color that is its antidote
- Step 2:
  - establish the negative emotion in the abdomen
  - take your time, allow yourself to experience the feelings and sensations you associate to it
  - while this step can be uncomfortable and may stir resistance, establishing the negativity you wish to transform is essential to transforming it

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- Step 3:
  - as you inhale, draw that negativity from the navel to the heart
  - pause after inhale, see or feel the healing color (and its associative qualities), dissolving your direct experience of your negativity
  - experience the color and the new positive attitude subsuming the negativity, during the pause
  - it is critical that you invest more energy (*vayu*) into the healing color than you have previously—and perhaps unconsciously—invested in the negativity (*karma*)
  - if at first this seems difficult, don't worry; in time your creative and intuitive energy will enliven the antidote/cure
  - surrender will be your guide into transformation
  - experiencing your resistance, seeing what you must release as well as embracing it is as much the basis for this practice as any part of it
- Step 4:
  - on exhale experience the color, which has subsumed the specific negativity, move up the spine and rise out of the top of the head
  - for an instant, sense the complete resolve and healing fully enlivened at the top of the head—the new positive emotion or feeling or attitude is fully realized above the crown of the head



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- initially, any part of the practice may appear like little more than an abstraction, however, through repetition—over the course of a single practice and, even more so when the practice has been repeated say, for 30-40 consecutive days—you will become more and more identified with the new positive intention
- the old pattern will become less and less a part of you and your life
- After a single session, there is a likelihood that you will sense at least a lifting or partial dissolution of some of the negativity.
  - whatever negativity you are working on, it is important to remember that it has been a habit, thus it is deeply ingrained
  - this is why it is so important to repeat it consistently to achieve lasting change and positive results
- If you find it difficult to choose the specific negative quality, to focus on, refer to the positive attributes and determine which one would be the most helpful to you and your life. In other words, reverse engineer the process, determine the positive emotion that would be the most helpful, then select its negative counterpart upon which you will work.
  - it may be helpful to observe that the first two colors primarily address *avidya* and *tamas*—a lack of clarity as well as a lack of motivation to change
  - working with either one can help resolve a general lack of clarity or motivation to change





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- after you have additional clarity you may be able to “see” the next particular aspect of “negativity” that will be the most advantageous emotion/color upon which you will work
- each time you do the practice, continue with the practice longer than the initial sense of healing/transformation; this will help ensure that you become more fully established in the new, desired pattern
- if you don't “see” the colors, just feel or sense them: like all *kriya* practices—it's critical to enter the practice rather than trying to “imagine” it; the basis for doing this is *prana dharana*

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- The following is an overview of the possible outcomes of a practice:
  - general health, includes physical (muscular, skeletal, viscera, respiratory, etc.)
  - mental—target external or internal stress, mental clarity, mood states, psychological patterning, increased stability
  - fitness, strength, stamina
  - therapy—i.e. recovering from injury, acute or chronic physical condition
  - instructional, a class is used to increase understanding or skill
  - *asana* as a tool for insight: changing neuromuscular programming; building of intelligence/awareness
  - for the purpose of improving a particular pose
  - preparation for meditation (e.g. to access the light in the heart—*Yoga Sutra* 1:36—use a practice that increases sensitivity and builds *prana* in the heart to make meditation more fruitful)
  - as a tool of devotion or ritual
  - emotional cleansing or release
  - as preparation for *pranayama*, including work with *bandha* and *mudra*
  - as a means to awaken *kundalini shakti*





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- The possibilities are endless. The bottom line is:
  - be purposeful
  - be skillful
  - use your knowledge
  - be efficient
- You will be able to utilize and develop the knowledge you've collected through all of these trainings for your personal practice as well as your students' practice for the rest of your life.
- As you apply them to yourself, you will achieve greater balance and clarity.
- By meditating consistently and continuing to practice according to these principles, these teachings will continue to unfold and reveal their inherent wisdom. The teachings will be your guide to greater knowledge, power and self-mastery.
- Remember one of the first points in *Vinyasa Krama*: elegance—in other words, be efficient and purposeful.
  - apply the principles of VK to maximize the results of what you practice and the practices you teach
  - limit the number of poses, be selective about which poses you use to embody the theme you've chosen and lead to the culmination of the specific practice: deep relaxation and/or meditation
  - limit the number of variations (i.e. be mindful about the number of lateral poses, which are asymmetrical, or the number of poses on the same side)
  - as the body fatigues, students will become less conscious and their breath less and less refined, chances for injury increase, as does instability



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- Your intention is to get your students to a better place, every time they practice with you.
- Please be conscious of the use of the breath:
  - *asana* is meant to serve the breath (not the other way around)
  - the particular emphasis of the breath should support the overall theme of the class and your direction
  - be deliberate, applying the ideal breath pattern to accomplish your goal
- Integrate these first three principles together: one, limited number of poses two, variations of the same poses and three, use of the breath, to make significant impact on the quality of your class and practice.
- Consider the role of rest.
- The simplest thing that can make the biggest difference is, at least two to three instances in every class, ask students to pause and to return to awareness.
  - in a well-constructed class, awareness will deepen and become increasingly profound
  - thus, the nervous system repairs
  - *sattwa* is increased
- During the class be aware of:
  - heat producing versus cooling postures
  - transitions between poses and groups of poses
  - counter-posing from one group of postures while, at the same time, preparing for the next group of postures



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- Don't be arbitrary. Have a reason (rooted in time-tested principles) for teaching what you are teaching—move in a distinct direction and toward a defined outcome.
- Be aware of the cumulative stress on joints, nerves and muscles.
  - as fatigue sets in a joint or muscle group can be compromised, creating a higher risk of injury
- Your intention should be to lead a logical progression, ideally to create a series of seamless links through all of the practice: from external to internal, from gross to subtle, from material to mental to spiritual.
- Weaving and integrating all of these considerations creates a symphonic effect using *asana*, theme, *pranayama*, *savasana* and meditation.

## **The Three Phases of Life (a Vedic perspective, expounded by Krishnamacharya)**

- The first stage is sunrise—from childhood to mid to late 20's.
  - emphasis should be primarily on *asana*
- The second stage is midday—from late twenties to mid-50s or so.
  - focus increasingly turns away from *asana* toward *pranayama* with increasing dedication to meditation as you move deeper into this stage
- The third and final stage is sunset—from 60's to the end of one's life.
  - primary orientation should be on prayer, reflection and meditation





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- at least half of practice time is devoted to meditation and inner reflective practices, with as much as 25% for *pranayama* and perhaps and no more than 25% for *asana*
- With these principles as a final consideration, you are prepared to skillfully administer *vinyasa krama* to help your students achieve their goals, both as it relates to their practice and, more importantly, to their life outside of practice.