

REVIEW ARTICLE

Mudra Therapy and Its Application in Prevention and Management of Contemporary Lifestyle Disorders

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ABSTRACT

Lifestyle disorders, including hypertension, diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, asthma, arthritis, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, depression, anxiety, and cancer, constitute an escalating global health crisis. *Mudra* therapy is a classical Indian science of deliberate hand and body gestures that offers a non-pharmacological, evidence-aligned therapeutic paradigm rooted in ancient *yogic Samhitas*. To systematically review the role of *mudra* therapy, as described in the *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Goraksha Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita*, and *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad*, in the prevention and management of major lifestyle disorders. Narrative review using PubMed/MEDLINE, Google Scholar, Scopus, and authenticated classical textual sources with PRISMA guidelines. Specific *mudras* modulate the autonomic nervous system (ANS), endocrine axes, metabolic pathways, immune function, and psychoneuroimmunological networks. Disease-specific *mudras* demonstrate evidence-supported therapeutic benefits grounded in *Panchamahabhutic* (five-element) theory. *Mudra* therapy is a pure, cost-free, side-effect-free adjunctive intervention warranting integration into public health programs and clinical trials.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global epidemiological landscape of the twenty-first century is increasingly dominated by non-communicable diseases, which account for approximately 71% of all global deaths annually, with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancers at the forefront.^[1] Pathophysiological mechanisms include chronic sympathetic hyperactivation, insulin resistance, systemic inflammation, hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis dysregulation, and immune dysfunction, all consequences of modern sedentary, high-stress living. Contemporary pharmacotherapy, while effective, carries significant adverse effects, polypharmacy burden, and cost, underscoring the urgent need for reliable adjunctive interventions.^[2]

Mudra science is an ancient science that connects certain energy that flows in the mind, body, and the system. The literal meaning of *mudra* is the expression of internal feelings by way of different postures of fingers, palms, hands, feet, and body.^[3] *Mudra* involves the entire

body, and by doing subtle hand and finger movements make important connections in the nervous system and stimulates specific energy pathways. These *mudras* (hand postures) have potential benefits for physical, mental, and emotional well-being.^[4]

The theoretical foundation rests on the *Panchamahabhutic* (five-element) paradigm shared by *Ayurveda* and *Yoga* philosophy, which includes *Agni* (fire), *Vayu* (air), *Akasha* (space), *Prithvi* (earth), and *Jal* (water). These elements correspond spatially to the five fingers that are thumb (fire), index finger (air), middle finger (space), ring finger (earth), and little finger (water), which transforms the hand into a microcosmic map of elemental energetics.^[5]

1.1. Aim and Objective

The aim of the study is to evaluate the potential of *Mudra* in preventing and managing contemporary lifestyle disorders such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and stress-related anxiety.

The objective of the study is:

- To identify and critically analyze the description, classification, and therapeutic application of *Mudras* as documented in major

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classical Yogic Samhitas, namely the Gheranda Samhita, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Goraksha Samhita, Shiva Samhita, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, and Yoga Chudamani Upnashid

- To examine the role of specific *Mudras* in the prevention and management of contemporary lifestyle disorders, including hypertension, bronchial asthma, arthritis, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), depression, anxiety, and cancer.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Electronic databases, including PUBMED/MEDLINE, Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and the Cochrane Library, were searched. Classical Indian textual repositories, including the Digital Library of India and Ayush Research Portal, were consulted for primary sources. Search terms included – “*Mudra*,” “*Yoga mudra*,” “*Hatha mudra*,” combined with disease-specific terminology and *Samhita* names.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Cardiovascular Disorder: Hypertension

Apana Vayu Mudra is also described as the *Hridaya Mudra* (heart mudra). *Hridaya Mudra* practice shows statistically significant reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure following. The mechanism involves vagal nerve activation through finger pad mechanoreceptors, inducing parasympathetic dominance, heart rate reduction, and peripheral vasodilation.^[6] *Gyan Mudra* increases cerebral blood flow, reduces cortisol, and activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), attenuating stress-induced hypertension.^[7] *Prana Mudra* rejuvenates the cardiovascular system by activating the *Mooladhara Chakra* and improving peripheral circulation, reducing vascular resistance.^[6] *Nabho Mudra*, as described in the *Gheranda Samhita*, activates the PNS rest-and-digest mode, controlling anxiety and stress levels, slowing the heart rate, and reducing blood pressure.^[8]

3.2. Metabolic Disorders: Diabetes Mellitus and Obesity

Classical texts attribute these to *Agni* (fire element) imbalance, either excess (*Tikshna Agni*) or deficiency (*Manda Agni*), resulting in impaired digestion, toxin accumulation (*Ama*), and tissue wasting. *Surya Mudra* is the premier anti-obesity *Mudra*. By reducing the Earth element and increasing fire, *Surya Mudra* accelerates basal metabolic rate, promotes thermogenesis, and facilitates lipolysis. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*'s description of *Maha Mudra* addresses *Gulma* (visceral fat) and *Medoroga* (lipid disorders). It shows significant improvements in fasting blood glucose, HbA1c, and lipid profiles in diabetes patients practicing *Yoga*, including *Mudras*.^[9] *Apana Mudra* regulates diabetes by improving pancreatic function and enhancing glycogen synthesis. This *Yoga* exercise therapy improves lipid profile and reduces oxidative stress in T2DM.^[10]

3.3. Endocrine Disorders: Hypothyroidism and Hyperthyroidism

Thyroid disorders are driven by an imbalance of the *Akasha* (space) element governing the *Vishuddha* (throat) *Chakra*. *Akash Mudra* stimulates specific nerve centers, improves calcium-PTH-Vitamin D interactions, and activates pressure points regulating thyroid secretion.^[3] *Shunya Mudra* reduces excess space element, benefiting hyperthyroid states. *Viparita Karani Mudra*, described in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Shiva Samhita*, directs blood flow to the thyroid gland, stimulates the HPT axis, and is indicated for the regulation of body heat and metabolism.^[11] *Surya Mudra*'s thermogenic effect

benefits hypothyroid patients by compensating for reduced metabolic rate.

3.4. Respiratory Disorder: Asthma

In *Ayurveda*, *asthma* (*Tamaka Shwasa*) is a *Vata-Kapha* disorder reflecting combined *Vayu*, *Jal*, and *Akasha* elemental imbalances. *Apana Vayu Mudra*, *Prana Mudra*, *Bronchial Mudra*, and *Asthma Mudra* in asthma show significant improvements in Peak Expiratory Flow Rate (PEFR), Forced Expiratory Volume in 1 Second (FEV1), Forced Vital Capacity (FVC), and reduced bronchospasm frequency.^[12] *Bronchial Mudra* relaxes bronchial tubes, clears toxins, and eases respiratory tract musculature. *Adhi Mudra* increases lung breathing capacity, enhances oxygen flow, and calms the nervous system, addressing both bronchospastic and anxiety components of acute asthma.^[13] The *Gheranda Samhita*'s *Maha Mudra* removes *Kapha* disorders, corresponding to reduced mucus hypersecretion.^[14] *Nadi Shuddhi Pranayama* with *Nasika Mudra* enhances lung capacity, purifies nasal passages, and removes mucus blockages.^[8]

3.5. Musculoskeletal Disorder: Arthritis

In *Ayurveda*, *Amavata* has *Ama* and *Vata* imbalance, and *Sandhi Vata* has *Vata* dosha in joints. *Vayu Mudra* is the primary *Mudra* for *Vata* imbalances manifesting as joint pain, stiffness, and deformity. It relieves knee and joint pain, improvement in spastic paralysis and Parkinson's disease, and alleviation of gas-related discomfort.^[2] *Prithvi Mudra* supplements the Earth element governing bone density and connective tissue. It heals cuts and wounds, addresses dry skin, fractures, bone density reduction, and brittle nails. *Prana Mudra* improves blood circulation, alleviates joint pain, and reduces mental tension. *Apana Vayu Mudra*'s anti-inflammatory mechanisms extend to arthritis through improved joint circulation.

3.6. Gastrointestinal Disorder: NAFLD

The *Gheranda Samhita*'s *Maha Mudra* specifically improves digestion and cures stomach disorders, neutralizes toxins, and removes *Kapha* disorders, all directly relevant to NAFLD. Its sympatho-parasympathetic balancing that aligns with emerging evidence that vagal nerve stimulation reduces hepatic inflammation and fat deposition.^[14] *Surya Mudra*'s enhancement of *Agni* addresses the fundamental metabolic dysfunction in NAFLD, reducing triglyceride accumulation and removing cholesterol from blood vessels. *Apana Mudra*'s regulation of the excretory system and removal of systemic waste before toxification constitutes a hepatoprotective mechanism.^[10] *Garuda Mudra* improves kidney, lung, heart, and stomach functioning with direct hepatoportal benefits through improved visceral circulation.

3.7. Mental Health Disorders: Depression and Anxiety

Gyan Mudra holds the most extensively documented evidence base for mental health applications. It controls stress, depression, anxiety, and fear while promoting mental health. This mudra stimulates the *Ajna chakra*, pineal gland, and pituitary gland, addressing the neurochemical substrate of depression. It also increases cerebral blood flow and creates metabolic changes, enhancing serotonergic neurotransmission.^[15] *Prana Mudra* decreases nervousness, improves self-confidence, fights chronic fatigue, manages emotions, including anger and restlessness, and enhances immune function. *Anjali Mudra* promotes mindfulness, calms the mind, relieves stress, and connects the brain's right and left hemispheres.^[3] *Nabho Mudra* activates the PNS rest-and-digest mode, controlling anxiety, slowing heart rate,

and overcoming insomnia.^[16] *Bhastrika Pranayama* with *Mudra* practice significantly reduces anxiety and improves brain functional connectivity.^[17]

3.8. Cancer

Mudra therapy can cure deadly diseases such as cancer, dementia, insomnia, diabetes, and depression by stimulating endorphins, changing mood, increasing vitality, and stimulating the brain. *Prana Mudra*, described in the *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* as the “mudra of life energy,” enhances immune function and corrects vitamin deficiencies that protect against mutagenic DNA damage. *Yoga* practice, including *Mudra* components, shows significant improvements in natural killer cell activity, cortisol regulation, and sleep quality in metastatic breast cancer patients.^[18] *Mudras* are also potential adjunctive treatments in high-inflammatory states, with implications for cancer immunotherapy augmentation.^[19] It also stimulates stem cell trafficking from bone marrow, supporting post-chemotherapy tissue repair and regeneration.^[20] The *Gheranda Samhita*'s claim that *Maha Mudra* awakens *Prana Shakti* and balances the sympathetic-parasympathetic nervous system corresponds neurobiologically to the vagal-mediated anti-inflammatory reflex arc, with documented anti-tumor activity through reduced interleukin-6, tumor necrosis factor-alpha, and nuclear factor kappa B pathway activation.^[9]

3.9. Summary of Key Mudras and Their Therapeutic Applications

Table 1.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Mechanistic Synthesis

The classical *Samhitas* attribute *Mudra* efficacy to three interrelated mechanisms, such as *Panchabhautic* equilibration, *Nadi* purification, and *Chakra* stimulation. Modern biomedicine provides convergent mechanistic explanations at multiple physiological levels. At the neurological level, *Mudra* hand positions create specific neural connections in the nervous system and stimulate energy pathways. The dense mechanoreceptor distribution in fingertips provides rich afferent input to the somatosensory cortex, whose cortical stimulation modulates limbic and autonomic pathways through cortico-limbic-autonomic projections.^[7]

At the autonomic level, *Mudras* demonstrably shift ANS balance from sympathetic predominance to parasympathetic dominance, documented through heart rate variability analysis, skin conductance measurements, and cortisol profiles.^[21] The vagus nerve, as the primary parasympathetic efferent, mediates anti-inflammatory effects through the cholinergic anti-inflammatory pathway, explaining *Mudra* therapy's broad anti-inflammatory benefits across cardiovascular, metabolic, musculoskeletal, and oncological conditions.

Using electrophotonic imaging technology, neural networks can classify electrophotonic images of *mudra* practices, providing objective biophysical evidence for energy state changes induced by specific *Mudras*.^[22]

4.2. Cross-disorder Efficacy: Shared Mechanisms

A critical insight is the cross-disorder efficacy of individual *Mudras*, explained by shared pathophysiological mechanisms: Chronic systemic inflammation, autonomic dysregulation, insulin resistance, HPA axis hyperactivation, and immune dysfunction. *Mudras* addressing

these common pathways, particularly *Gyan Mudra* (autonomic regulation), *Prana Mudra* (immune enhancement), *Apana Vayu Mudra* (cardiovascular-inflammatory axis), and *Surya Mudra* (metabolic activation), demonstrate therapeutic relevance across multiple disorder categories simultaneously. This polytherapeutic property represents a significant advantage over disease-specific pharmacotherapy.

4.3. Classical Texts Compared to Contemporary Evidence

Comparing the six *Samhitas* reveals a convergent therapeutic philosophy with textual differences reflecting historical context and intended audience. The *Gheranda Samhita* provides the most detailed procedural documentation. The *Goraksha Samhita* and *Shiva Samhita* emphasize energetic and *Chakra*-based mechanisms. The *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* situates *mudra* within the highest *Vedantic* liberatory framework. The *Hatayoga Pradipika* bridges practical technique and esoteric explanation.

Contemporary research validates classical textual claims with increasing mechanistic specificity. The *Gheranda Samhita*'s description of *Nabho Mudra* activating rest and digest mode is precisely mirrored by documented PNS dominance in neuroscience. The *Hatayoga Pradipika*'s description of *Viparita Karani* preventing decay and aging corresponds to documented improvements in hormonal profiles and antioxidant enzyme activities in *yoga* practitioners.^[20]

4.4. Practical Implementation and Safety

Mudra therapy offers extraordinary practical accessibility. *Mudras* can be performed by individuals of any age, gender, or religious background, without equipment, in any posture. The recommended practice is 15–30 min daily for specific curative *Mudras*, or 24 min continuously for general health maintenance. A structured 30 min health package (morning and evening) incorporating *Nadi Shuddhi pranayama* and targeted *Mudras*, with 83.1% of surveyed participants indicating willingness to adopt such a program.^[5]

Classical texts advise cessation if pain arises. Elemental *Mudras* should be performed bilaterally. The Bronchial *Mudra* is contraindicated in pregnancy. Advanced *Mudras* such as *Khechari* and *Vajroli* require qualified teacher guidance.

5. CONCLUSION

Mudra therapy, as systematically documented across six major classical *Yogic* *Samhitas* spanning nearly two millennia, the *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Goraksha Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita*, and *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad*, represents a coherent, comprehensive, and internally validated system for the prevention and management of lifestyle disorders across all eight major categories reviewed.

The mechanisms of action, including ANS modulation, neuroendocrine regulation, psychoneuroimmunological enhancement, elemental rebalancing, and anti-inflammatory pathway activation, are supported by growing contemporary biomedical research. *Mudras* such as *Apana Vayu Mudra*, *Gyan Mudra*, *Surya Mudra*, *Prana Mudra*, *Vayu Mudra*, and *Nabho Mudra* emerge as particularly versatile, evidence-supported, and disease-relevant therapeutic tools.

Given the global burden of lifestyle disorders, the limitations of pharmacotherapy in achieving population-level disease reversal, and the WHO's explicit call for integration of traditional medicine into national health systems, *mudra* therapy represents an exceptionally

promising, cost-free, and universally accessible adjunctive health intervention. Its integration into public health programs, preventive medicine curricula, and rehabilitation protocols warrants urgent policy consideration. Future research should prioritize large-scale randomized controlled trials with disease-specific biomarker endpoints and standardized intervention protocols.

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7. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors give equal contribution in making of this manuscript.

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9. ETHICAL STATEMENT

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it is a review study.

10. CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

11. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this review were obtained from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed articles, observational studies, and surveys accessible through databases.

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Table 1: Key *mudras*, positions, indications, and classical sources

Mudra Name	Hand position	Primary indications
<i>Apana Vayu Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb touches the tip of the middle and ring fingers, whereas the tip of the index finger touches the base of the thumb	CVD, hypertension, heart attack, respiratory, and arthritis
<i>Gyan/Chin Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb touches the tip of the index finger	Depression, anxiety, insomnia, hypertension, and memory
<i>Surya Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb touches the middle of the ring finger	Obesity, diabetes, hypothyroidism, and dyslipidemia
<i>Prana Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb is touched with the ring and the little finger	Cancer prevention, immunity, fatigue, and vitamin deficiency
<i>Vayu Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb should touch the middle portion of the index finger	Arthritis, joint pain, vata disorders, and Parkinson's
<i>Prithvi Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb finger touches the tip of the ring finger	Osteoarthritis, bone density, hypothyroidism, and tissue repair
<i>Akash Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb touches the tip of the middle finger	Thyroid disorders, calcium deficiency, sinusitis, and migraine
<i>Apana Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb touches the tip of the middle finger	Diabetes, constipation, NAFLD, piles, and excretion
<i>Shunya Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb touches the middle finger	Hyperthyroidism, ear disorders, and cardiac regulation
<i>Varuna Mudra</i>	The tip of the thumb finger touches the tip of the little finger	Dyslipidemia, skin disorders, and dry mucous membranes
<i>Nabho Mudra</i>	Fold the tongue and reverse it to touch on the top inside of the palate and eyes to the eyebrow center	Anxiety, hypertension, insomnia, and cardiac/pulmonary
<i>Viparita Karani</i>	Inverted body posture mudra	Hypothyroidism, metabolic disorders, and the HPA axis
<i>Anjali Mudra</i>	Bringing the hands together, the palms are placed gently against one another in front of the <i>anahata</i> (heart) chakra.	Depression, anxiety, stress, and brain hemisphere balance
<i>Bronchial Mudra</i>	4-finger complex folded around the thumb	Asthma, bronchitis, and airway obstruction
<i>Maha Mudra</i>	Seated forward bend with bandhas	NAFLD, constipation, tuberculosis, and digestive disorders

CVD: Cardiovascular disease, HPA: Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal, NAFLD: Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease