



## The Therapeutic Effect of Ten Classical Mudras in the Perspective of Selective Hatha Yogic Texts: A Review Study

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### Abstract

Hatha Yoga is an important branch of yoga that emphasizes psycho-physiological and subtle energy practices for holistic health and higher consciousness. Among its techniques, mudras and bandhas are considered powerful tools for regulating pranic energy, balancing bodily functions, and promoting spiritual awakening. This review study examines the therapeutic significance of ten classical mudras described in major Hatha Yoga texts, including the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, Shiva Samhita, and Hatha Ratnavali. The selected mudras include Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechari Mudra, Uddiyana Bandha, Moola Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha, Viparita Karani, Vajroli Mudra, and Shakti Chalini Mudra. Comparative textual analysis reveals consistency in their described benefits, such as improved digestion, endocrine regulation, circulatory efficiency, respiratory function, nervous system activation, vitality, and longevity. The texts also associate these practices with kundalini awakening, preservation of bindu, and higher meditative states. Contemporary interpretations suggest possible neuroendocrine and psychophysiological mechanisms underlying these effects. The study concludes that classical mudras serve as an important bridge between physical regulation, mental balance, and spiritual transformation in both traditional and modern wellness contexts.

**Keywords:** Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, Shiva Samhita, Hatha Ratnavali, Mudra, Bandha, Therapeutic Yoga

### 1. Introduction

Mudras and bandhas constitute an essential component of classical Hatha Yoga. They are sophisticated psycho-physiological practices designed to regulate pranic energy, influence neurophysiological processes, and facilitate spiritual evolution. In traditional yogic literature, mudras are not merely symbolic hand gestures; rather, they are dynamic internal practices that redirect the flow of prana through the subtle energy channels (nadis) and awaken dormant spiritual potential. The Sanskrit word *mudra* literally means “seal,” “gesture,” or “attitude.” In the context of Hatha Yoga, mudras are regarded as methods for sealing or directing vital energy within the body. Bandhas, often translated as “locks,” are closely associated practices involving neuromuscular contractions that regulate the upward movement of prana. Classical yogic texts frequently classify several bandhas under the broader category



of mudras because of their energetic and spiritual significance. The principal Hatha Yoga scriptures, including the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita*, and *Hatha Ratnavali*, collectively emphasize ten major mudras commonly referred to as *Mudra Dashaka* (the ten mudras). These include Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechari Mudra, Uddiyana Bandha, Moola Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha, Viparita Karani, Vajroli Mudra, and Shakti Chalini Mudra. These practices are described as highly potent techniques capable of removing diseases, delaying ageing, preserving vitality, awakening kundalini, and ultimately facilitating liberation.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, composed by Swami Svاتمarama around the fifteenth century CE, describes these mudras as destroyers of old age and death (*jara-marana-nashanam*). Similarly, the *Shiva Samhita* and *Hatha Ratnavali* reiterate their importance in preserving vitality and attaining siddhis (higher yogic accomplishments). The *Gheranda Samhita* expands this framework by discussing twenty-five mudras and emphasizing their therapeutic and spiritual applications. In modern times, growing scientific interest in yoga therapy has encouraged researchers to investigate the physiological and psychological effects of mudras and bandhas. Studies suggest that these practices may positively influence autonomic balance, endocrine functioning, digestion, respiratory efficiency, emotional regulation, and mental concentration. However, a comprehensive comparative review of the therapeutic descriptions of the ten classical mudras across major Hatha Yoga texts remains limited. Therefore, the present study aims to critically examine and compare the descriptions, therapeutic claims, and spiritual implications of the ten classical mudras mentioned in selective Hatha yogic scriptures. By integrating textual analysis with modern interpretations and available scientific literature, this review attempts to provide a structured understanding of the therapeutic significance of mudras in both classical and contemporary contexts.

## 2. Objectives of the Study:

1. To identify and analyze the ten classical mudras described in major Hatha yogic texts.
2. To compare the therapeutic descriptions of mudras in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita*, and *Hatha Ratnavali*.
3. To examine the physiological, psychological, and spiritual significance attributed to these mudras.
4. To correlate traditional yogic explanations with modern scientific interpretations and research findings.
5. To evaluate the relevance of mudras in contemporary therapeutic yoga and holistic wellness.

## 3. Methodology:

The present study is qualitative and descriptive in nature and is based on a comparative textual review of selective classical Hatha Yoga scriptures. Primary data were collected from authoritative editions and translations of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita*, and *Hatha Ratnavali*. Relevant Sanskrit verses related to the ten classical mudras were identified, translated, and analyzed. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, research papers, and contemporary yogic commentaries related to mudras, bandhas, neurophysiology, and yoga therapy. Comparative analysis was employed to identify common themes, similarities, and differences among the texts with respect to therapeutic effects, spiritual objectives, and physiological interpretations. The study also incorporated modern scientific perspectives wherever possible in order to bridge the gap between traditional yogic concepts and contemporary understanding.



## **4. Mudras in Classical Hatha Yoga Texts:**

### **4.1 Mudras in Hatha Yoga Pradipika :**

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* describes ten principal mudras and attributes extraordinary therapeutic and spiritual benefits to them. The text states: “Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechari, Uddiyana, Moola Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha, Viparita Karani, Vajroli, and Shakti Chalana — these ten mudras destroy old age and death.” The text emphasizes that mudras regulate prana, awaken kundalini, preserve bindu, and facilitate higher consciousness. The descriptions frequently integrate physiological effects with symbolic spiritual interpretations.

#### **Therapeutic Perspective**

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* associates mudras with:

- Improvement of digestion and metabolism
- Regulation of endocrine functions
- Nervous system balance
- Enhancement of respiratory efficiency
- Preservation of vitality and reproductive energy
- Delay of degenerative ageing processes
- Activation of higher states of awareness

The text also highlights the role of mudras in balancing ida, pingala, and sushumna nadis, which is considered essential for spiritual awakening.

### **4.2 Mudras in Gheranda Samhita:**

The *Gheranda Samhita* expands the scope of mudra practice by describing twenty-five mudras. It presents mudras in a systematic and practice-oriented manner and emphasizes both therapeutic and spiritual benefits. The text explains that mudras help activate prana, awaken kundalini, improve bodily functioning, and attain siddhis. Compared to the mystical orientation of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Gheranda Samhita* adopts a comparatively anatomical and structured approach.

#### **Therapeutic Perspective**

The *Gheranda Samhita* attributes the following benefits to mudras:

- Improvement of digestive functioning
- Regulation of thyroid and endocrine activity
- Balancing of sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems
- Relief from constipation, piles, bronchial disorders, and pelvic dysfunctions
- Increased mental concentration and meditative stability
- Rejuvenation and longevity

The text particularly emphasizes the psychophysiological influence of mudras on chakras, nadis, and glandular systems.



### 4.3 Mudras in Shiva Samhita:

The *Shiva Samhita* presents mudras within a broader framework of kundalini awakening and subtle body practices. Unlike the more systematic descriptions in the *Gheranda Samhita*, the *Shiva Samhita* emphasizes the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of mudra practice. Selected mudras such as Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechari Mudra, Uddiyana Bandha, and Moola Bandha are described as sufficient for awakening kundalini and attaining liberation.

**Therapeutic Perspective:** The text associates mudras with:

- Destruction of diseases
- Strengthening of digestive fire
- Increased vitality and longevity
- Purification of nadis
- Awakening of kundalini
- Regulation of pranic flow
- Prevention of physical and mental decay

The *Shiva Samhita* also attributes symbolic immortality and freedom from suffering to advanced mudra practice.

### 4.4 Mudras in Hatha Ratnavali :

The *Hatha Ratnavali* synthesizes teachings from earlier Hatha Yoga texts and presents mudras in a concise yet practice-oriented manner. The text highlights the close relationship between mudras, bandhas, pranayama, and kundalini awakening.

**Therapeutic Perspective :** The *Hatha Ratnavali* emphasizes:

- Enhancement of digestive fire
- Preservation of vitality
- Regulation of prana and apana
- Prevention of ageing
- Improvement in glandular and metabolic functioning
- Disease prevention
- Mental concentration and spiritual awakening

The text reflects continuity with earlier Hatha Yoga traditions while presenting mudras as practical tools for health and spiritual growth.

## 5. Comparative Analysis of the Ten Classical Mudras:

### 1. Maha Mudra

Maha Mudra is consistently described across all texts as a powerful technique for balancing prana, improving digestion, and destroying diseases. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita* particularly emphasize its effects on digestive disorders, constipation, piles, and glandular dysfunction. From a physiological perspective, Maha Mudra may improve circulation, stimulate autonomic balance,



and regulate abdominal organ functioning. Traditional texts also associate it with purification of nadis and awakening of higher consciousness.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Improves digestion and metabolism
- Relieves constipation and abdominal disorders
- Balances autonomic nervous system activity
- Stimulates pranic flow
- Promotes mental calmness and concentration

## **2. Maha Bandha**

Maha Bandha combines Moola Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha, and Jalandhara Bandha. Classical texts describe it as a method for directing prana into the sushumna nadi and awakening higher consciousness. Modern interpretations suggest that the combined muscular contractions may influence endocrine secretions, vagal tone, respiratory efficiency, and autonomic balance.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Balances endocrine functions
- Enhances circulation and respiratory coordination
- Supports emotional regulation
- Delays degenerative changes
- Facilitates meditative awareness

## **3. Maha Vedha**

Maha Vedha is traditionally practised after Maha Mudra and Maha Bandha. It is described as a technique for stimulating psychic energy and enhancing pranic circulation. Texts associate Maha Vedha with rejuvenation, increased digestive fire, and activation of chakras.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Stimulates circulation and pranic flow
- Enhances concentration and meditation
- Improves endocrine balance
- Reduces lethargy and fatigue
- Supports psychophysiological integration

## **4. Khechari Mudra**

Khechari Mudra occupies a central place in all major Hatha Yoga texts. It is described as a superior mudra capable of controlling hunger, thirst, mental fluctuations, and even ageing. Modern interpretations associate Khechari Mudra with stimulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary axis, autonomic nervous system regulation, salivary gland stimulation, and emotional control.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**



- Regulates autonomic nervous system functions
- Reduces hunger and thirst sensations
- Promotes emotional stability
- Enhances concentration and meditative absorption
- Influences endocrine and neurophysiological functioning

## 5. Uddiyana Bandha

Uddiyana Bandha is regarded as one of the most important abdominal locks in Hatha Yoga. Classical texts describe it as a rejuvenating practice capable of conquering death. Physiologically, the abdominal vacuum created during the practice may massage internal organs, improve venous return, stimulate digestion, and enhance diaphragmatic mobility.

### Therapeutic Benefits

- Improves digestive functioning
- Strengthens respiratory muscles
- Enhances circulation
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Reduces anxiety and lethargy

However, caution is advised in individuals with uncontrolled hypertension, cardiovascular disorders, hernia, or pregnancy.

## 6. Moola Bandha

Moola Bandha involves contraction of the perineal region and is described as a method for directing apana upward to unite with prana. The practice is believed to influence pelvic nerves, endocrine functions, and psychosomatic balance.

### Therapeutic Benefits

- Strengthens pelvic floor muscles
- Relieves constipation and piles
- Supports reproductive health
- Reduces psychosomatic stress
- Enhances concentration and emotional stability

Recent studies suggest that Moola Bandha may positively influence autonomic regulation and pelvic health.

## 7. Jalandhara Bandha

Jalandhara Bandha involves contraction of the throat region by pressing the chin against the chest. Classical texts associate it with regulation of nectar flow, thyroid balance, and longevity. Modern interpretations suggest possible influence on thyroid function, carotid sinus stimulation, vagal tone, and respiratory regulation.



### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Regulates thyroid and parathyroid activity
- Improves respiratory control
- Balances metabolism
- Enhances concentration
- Supports cardiovascular regulation

### **8. Viparita Karani**

Viparita Karani is an inversion practice believed to reverse the downward flow of energy and rejuvenate the body. Physiologically, inversion improves venous return, enhances cerebral circulation, and reduces gravitational stress on abdominal and pelvic organs.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Improves circulation to the brain
- Relieves varicose veins and haemorrhoids
- Enhances mental alertness
- Reduces fatigue and stress
- Improves vascular tone and elasticity

### **9. Vajroli Mudra**

Vajroli Mudra is closely associated with preservation of bindu (vital essence) and control over reproductive energy. Traditional texts describe it as a practice that conserves vitality and supports higher consciousness. Although many traditional claims remain symbolic, modern interpretations relate Vajroli to psycho-sexual regulation and energy conservation.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Supports reproductive health
- Enhances self-control and emotional stability
- Reduces mental agitation related to sexual stress
- Conserves vitality and energy
- Promotes psychological discipline

### **10. Shakti Chalini Mudra**

Shakti Chalini Mudra is primarily associated with kundalini awakening and activation of the sushumna nadi. The texts describe it as a powerful psycho-spiritual technique that stimulates dormant energy and enhances consciousness.

### **Therapeutic Benefits**

- Enhances vitality and mental clarity
- Supports nervous system activation
- Promotes concentration and meditation



- Reduces psychosomatic disturbances
- Facilitates psycho-spiritual integration

**Comparative Therapeutic Table of Classical 10 Mudras**

Mudra / Bandha	HYP	GS	SS	HR	Primary Therapeutic Focus	Major Physiological Interpretation
<b>Maha Mudra</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed	Digestive disorders, vitality, anti-aging	Improves digestion, balances autonomic nervous system, stimulates pranic flow
<b>Maha Bandha</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Moderate	Moderate	Endocrine regulation, rejuvenation	Influences pineal-pituitary axis, enhances psycho-neuro-endocrine balance
<b>Maha Vedha</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Moderate	Moderate	Anti-aging, siddhi, energy activation	Stimulates endocrine glands and subtle energy pathways
<b>Khechari Mudra</b>	Highly Detailed	Detailed	Mystical-Detailed	Detailed	Neuro-endocrine regulation, hunger-thirst control	Influences hypothalamus, pituitary, autonomic nervous system
<b>Uddiyana Bandha</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed	Moderate	Digestive activation, respiratory efficiency	Improves diaphragm movement, circulation, visceral massage
<b>Moola Bandha</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed	Moderate	Pelvic health, kundalini awakening	Pelvic floor stimulation, autonomic regulation, endocrine effects
<b>Jalandhara Bandha</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Moderate	Moderate	Thyroid regulation, metabolic balance	Compresses throat region, modulates thyroid/parathyroid activity
<b>Viparita Karani</b>	Detailed	Detailed	Moderate	Brief	Circulation, anti-aging, brain perfusion	Enhances venous return, cerebral circulation, vascular elasticity
<b>Vajroli Mudra</b>	Highly Esoteric	Moderate	Moderate	Brief	Conservation of vitality, reproductive control	Reproductive energy conservation, psycho-sexual regulation
<b>Shakti Chalana</b>	Detailed	Moderate	Detailed	Moderate	Kundalini activation, disease reduction	Activates central nervous system and pranic pathways

**HYP- Hatha Yoga Pradipika, GS- Gheranda Samhita, SS- Shiva Samhita, HR- Hatha Ratnavali**



### Comparative Depth of Description across Texts

Text	Style of Description	Dominant Orientation
<b>Hatha Yoga Pradipika</b>	Extensive and psycho-physiological	Kundalini + endocrine + longevity
<b>Gheranda Samhita</b>	Structured and anatomical	Therapeutic + practical
<b>Shiva Samhita</b>	Mystical and symbolic	Liberation + subtle body
<b>Hatha Ratnavali</b>	Concise and practice-oriented	Practical synthesis

### 6. Discussion:

The comparative analysis of selective Hatha Yoga texts demonstrates remarkable consistency regarding the significance and therapeutic utility of the ten classical mudras. Although the language used in these scriptures is often symbolic and mystical, many of the described benefits correspond with modern understandings of neurophysiology, endocrinology, autonomic regulation, and psychosomatic health. A recurring theme across all texts is the regulation and upward movement of prana through the sushumna nadi. Practices such as Moola Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha, and Maha Bandha are consistently described as mechanisms for directing pranic energy upward and awakening kundalini. From a modern perspective, these practices involve coordinated muscular contractions, breath retention, and autonomic modulation, which may influence vagal activity, circulation, endocrine secretion, and emotional regulation. Similarly, Khechari Mudra and Jalandhara Bandha are repeatedly associated with endocrine balance and control of physiological drives such as hunger, thirst, and emotional instability. Contemporary interpretations linking these practices to hypothalamic-pituitary regulation and autonomic nervous system functioning provide a possible scientific basis for some traditional claims.

The inversion practice Viparita Karani is particularly significant from a physiological standpoint. Traditional claims regarding rejuvenation, improved circulation, and delay of ageing correspond with modern observations related to venous return, cerebral circulation, vascular elasticity, and relaxation responses. The classical emphasis on preservation of bindu in Vajroli Mudra reflects the yogic understanding of vitality conservation. Although literal interpretations remain controversial, the broader psychological implications of self-regulation, emotional discipline, and energy conservation remain relevant.

Despite these correspondences, many traditional claims such as immortality, conquest over death, and supernatural siddhis should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally. These descriptions likely represent heightened vitality, mental transcendence, and spiritual realization rather than physical immortality. Modern scientific research on mudras and bandhas is still developing. Preliminary evidence suggests beneficial effects on stress reduction, autonomic balance, respiratory efficiency, mental concentration, and psychosomatic disorders. However, more rigorous experimental and clinical studies are necessary to validate many traditional therapeutic claims. Overall, the classical texts present mudras not merely as physical techniques but as integrated psycho-spiritual practices aimed at harmonizing body, mind, and consciousness.

### 7. Conclusion:



The present review highlights the therapeutic and psycho-spiritual significance of ten classical mudras described in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, Shiva Samhita, and Hatha Ratnavali. A comparative analysis of these texts reveals remarkable consistency in describing mudras as powerful psycho-physiological practices that promote physical health, mental stability, and spiritual growth. The reviewed mudras are traditionally associated with improved digestion, endocrine balance, respiratory and circulatory efficiency, nervous system regulation, vitality, and longevity. They are also believed to facilitate kundalini awakening, preservation of vital energy, and higher meditative states. Contemporary interpretations suggest that many of these effects may be understood through mechanisms related to autonomic regulation, neuro-endocrine modulation, psychosomatic integration, and enhanced physiological functioning. Although some traditional claims remain symbolic and difficult to verify empirically, emerging scientific evidence supports the therapeutic potential of mudra and bandha practices in yoga therapy and holistic wellness. Overall, classical mudras may be understood not merely as symbolic gestures but as sophisticated mind-body techniques that bridge ancient yogic wisdom with modern health science. Further interdisciplinary and neuroscientific research is needed to validate and expand their therapeutic applications.

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