

THE 25 IMPORTANT “SEALS” (MUDRA) AND “LOCKS” (BANDHA) OF HATHA YOGA

(from the *Gheranda-Samhita*, *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika*, and *Shiva-Samhita*)

There are twenty-five mudras, the practice of which gives success to the Yogis (*Gheranda-Samhita* 3.1).

The ten mudras listed in the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika* “annihilate old age and death. They have been explained by Shiva and give eight kinds of divine wealth (i.e. the great “powers”: becoming small, becoming large, becoming light, becoming heavy, coming within easy reach of everything, wish fulfillment, mastery and control over matter and Nature). These Mudras should be kept secret by every means, as one keeps one’s box of jewelry, and should, on no account, be told to anyone, just as a husband and wife keep their dealings secret” (*HYP* 3.7-9).

The *Gheranda-Samhita* describes 25 mudras and bandhas. The 10 mudras and bandhas described in the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika* are indicated with a star (*). The 10 mudras and bandhas described in the *Shiva-Samhita* are indicated with a cross (+).

GAZING (*drishti*) at the middle of the eyebrows is called *bhru-madhya-drishti* (“mid-brow gazing”) and is performed in mudras marked with an up-triangle(▲). “WATER-PIPE SEAL” (*jalandhara-bandha*) is performed in the mudra/bandha marked with a square (■).

NAME (Sanskrit) “English”	RESULT	METHOD
1. ASHVINI-MUDRA “Dawn-horse seal”	Invigorates the body, cures diseases of the rectum, and helps awaken Kundalini-shakti	Contract and dilate the anal sphincter muscle repeatedly
2. BHUJANGINI-MUDRA “Serpent seal”	Destroys all stomach diseases	Extend the neck a little forward and draw in air through the esophagus.
3. JALANDHARA-BANDHA*+ “Water-pipe lock”	Closes the 16 adharas (vital parts); destroys death; “he who practices for six months, becomes an adept without doubt”	Press the chin and the top of the sternum bone together. The 16 vital parts are the: thumbs, ankles, knees, thighs, prepuce, organs of generation, navel, heart, neck, throat, palate, nose, middle of the eyebrows, forehead, head, fontanelle (brahma-randhra).
4. KAKI-MUDRA “Crow seal”	Destroys all disease	Shape the mouth like a crow's beak and then suck in air.
5. KHECARI-MUDRA*+▲ “Space-walking seal”	Destroys disease, decay and death; the body becomes divine, it cannot be “burned by fire, nor dried up by the air, nor wetted by water, nor bitten by snakes, it becomes “beautiful”;	Sit in Vajrasana. Close the “holes of the nostrils opening into the mouth” with the tip of the tongue (thus stopping inspiration).

	samadhi is quickly attained	
The next three bandhas must be performed together (in the order 7, 6, 8). “These three are the great secrets” (<i>HYP</i> 3.30):		
6. MAHA-BANDHA *+■ “Great lock”	Destroys decay and death; “by virtue of this Bandha a man accomplishes all his desires”	Press the left heel against the anus, put the right foot on the left thigh; slowly contract the muscles of the rectum and base of the pelvis (perineum); restrain the breath with jalandhara-bandha.
7. MAHA-MUDRA *+▲■ “Great seal”	Cures all disease, destroys death, confers siddhis	Press one heel against the anus, keep the other leg straight; hold the big toe of the straight leg (like janu-shirshasana). Restrain the breath with jalandhara-bandha.
8. MAHA-VEDHA *+■ “Great piercer”	Destroys decay and death	Sit in maha-bandha and restrain the breath (after exhalation) with jalandhara-bandha. Then, with the support of the hands, lift off the ground and gently tap the ground with the buttocks several times.
9. MANDUKI-MUDRA “Frog seal”	The body retains “perpetual youth”	Press the tip of the tongue against the palette.
10. MATANGINI-MUDRA “Elephant seal”	Destroys decay and death, confers great strength “like an elephant” (Gheranda)	Stand in neck-deep water. First draw in water through the nostrils and expel it out the mouth; then draw in water through the mouth and expel it through the nostrils.
11. MULA-BANDHA *□ “Root seal”	Destroys decay; controls prana	Press the left heel against the anus and contract the rectum (ashvini-mudra); press the intestines near the navel against the spine; press the right heel against the pubis.
12. NABHO-MUDRA “Ether seal”	Destroys all disease	“In whatever business a Yogi may be engaged, wherever he may be, let him always keep his tongue turned upwards (towards the soft palate), and restrain the breath (Gheranda). Similar to khecari-mudra (5).
13-17. PANCHA-DHARANA (“Five concentrations”). These are listed in the order of density of elements, earth being the densest element, ether the most subtle:		
13. PARTHIVI-MUDRA “Earthy seal” (also called adho-dharana)	Conquers the “Earth” and causes steadiness	

14. AMBHASI-MUDRA “Watery seal”	Destroys all sorrows	
15. AGNEYI-MUDRA “Fiery seal”	Destroys death	
16. VAYAVI-MUDRA “Air seal”	Destroys decay and death	
17. AKASHI-MUDRA “Ethereal seal” (also called nabho-dharana)	Destroys death	
18. PASHINI-MUDRA “Bird-catcher seal”	Awakens Kundalini	Wrap the legs around the neck, like yoga-nidrasana (“Yoga sleep”).
19. SHAKTI-CALANI-MUDRA+ “Stirring-the-power seal”	Destroys decay and death	Sit in siddhasana. There are two different descriptions of this seal. Rub the body with ashes and wrap the loins with a soft, white cloth, one cubit long and three inches wide. Restrain the inhalation, perform ashvini-mudra. Completes yoni-mudra (Gheranda). Sit in vajrasana, inhale through the right nostril and restrain the breath. Hold the ankles (Svatmarama).
20. SHAMBHAVI-MUDRA*▲ “Shambhu”s seal”	“He who knows this Shambhavi . . . is Brahma (GS 3.66)	Fix the gaze between the eyebrows.
21. TADAGI-MUDRA “Tank seal”	Destroys decay and death	Sit in paschimottanasana and hollow the abdomen like a “tank.”
22. UDDIYANA-BANDHA* “Flying-up lock”	The “Great Bird” forced up into the sushumna; makes emancipation easy; conquers death	Forcefully contract the abdomen and press the viscera up towards the diaphragm and back towards the spine.
23. VAJRONI-MUDRA Sometimes VAJROLI “Thunderbolt”	Awakens Shakti, causes long life, emancipation	Sit with legs raised, hands on ground (looks like paripurna navasana with hands on floor).
24. VIPARITA-KARANI-MUDRA+* “Inverse action seal”	Destroys decay and death; yogi will not “perish even at Pralaya” (i.e. dissolution of the universe)	Perform Headstand. Sometimes describes as Shoulderstand.

<p>25. YONI-MUDRA “Perineal seal”</p>	<p>Never polluted by sins</p>	<p>Sit in siddhasana. There are two different descriptions of this seal. Yoni-mudra is used as another term for what we call shan-mukhi-mudra: close the ears with the thumbs, eyes with the index fingers, nostrils with the mid fingers, upper lip with the ring fingers, lower lip with the little fingers. Draw in the breath with kaki-mudra (4). Contemplate on Shiva/Shakti, and realize self-identity with Brahma, the “source” (yoni) within (Gheranda). Contract the perineum (yoni) (Shiva).</p>
<p>26. UDDANA-BANDHA “Upward lock”</p>	<p>Destroys sins, sorrows, disease and death; purifies the navel (and thereby the “winds”), and kindles gastric fire; gives vighraha-siddhi (“power over the microcosm”)</p>	<p>Described only in <i>Shiva-Samhita</i>. The viscera below and above the navel are brought to the left side above the navel.</p>