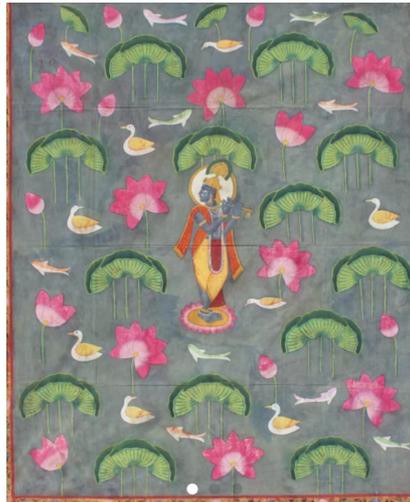


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I wanted to rewrite the introduction to this section because of what has been happening around us over the last few days. Over the years since I have been working by/for myself, a lot of my work is inspired by stories of courageous women or spirits of wise women who have come before me or work along my side. I have had beautiful teachers guide me in this knowledge and work and I'm grateful for their uncovering of this hidden passion in me.

So what is happening (or rather what might happen) in Afghanistan to my fellow women and girls invokes in me a sense of fear and hopelessness and a silent rage. It questions my staunch belief of a strong feminine spirit that takes care of women all over the world and it makes me wonder what is it about women that threatens men and the world so much? [This heartbreaking account](#) of a university student and working woman from Kabul, makes me want to invoke the fiercest of the Hindu goddesses and order the destruction of the forces that have caused her to be in this space of despair.

I then turn to certain readings and practices that help settle my fear-fuelled anger. From amongst these, I have shared a quote below on *Evolving Through Trust*.

This newsletter includes a short story of how I identified & got back in touch with gratitude recently and a booklet of mudras and their significance (please download these for better viewing). This booklet is a long standing request from some of you - thank you for reminding me :)

Evolving Through Trust ~ Amisha Ghadiali

Often in life we meet the same kind of challenges in different disguises. There is a powerful analogy of life like a spiral staircase. You are climbing up the staircase and you see the same wallpaper on the walls but simply from a different viewpoint. It is not the same yet it is familiar. Your challenges can feel like this. "**I thought I had already resolved this one**" ever had that kind of feeling? There is a fine line between getting stuck & repeating patterns unnecessarily and evolving through the pattern so you understand it differently each time.

Trust allows you to hold where you have come from and where you are going all in the present moment. It allows you to live with courage, resilience and sovereignty. Trust means that you connect to a happiness or a sense of peace in yourself that is not dependent on circumstances. You are able to trust in who you are, why you are here and what you are learning. You find the simple pleasure of being you, whether it's a 'good day', 'bad day' or a really mediocre one.

Your life isn't waiting for certain things to happen for you to be happy. You have cultivated a sense of joy, purpose and trust in your life from your intuition- and that makes every day count. From here life's mystery is an exciting place, you don't know what's going to happen but you trust in your role, your intuition will guide you to do whatever supports your truth.

This takes the fear out of life and worry out of what will happen and instead opens you up to living life beautifully. As you do this with true humility and grace you will be a sacred activist, stitching your threads into the weaves of our beautiful future.

[What a 3:30 am yoga class taught me about Gratitude.](#)



I was asked to teach a group of students in Singapore who were undergoing their teacher training with a very dear friend of mine. I expected it to be a straightforward yoga session - no frills: little bit of asana, some pranayama and some meditation. What I did not expect was this Q&A round where almost everyone seemed to have a question.

Now I am by nature a total introvert. Given a choice between hanging at home and going out, I'll choose the former any day. Don't get me wrong, I love spending time with people, but there are very few groups with whom I can hang out without feeling like I'm totally sapped of energy. Over the years, I have become very attuned to what serves me and nourishes my energy, instead of simply saying "Yes" to fit in.

All this to say that people asking me questions is not comfortable territory for me - not because I am not knowledgeable but because it takes a lot out of me to answer questions (especially at 5 am in the morning after having taught meditation).

Someone in that group asked me "how does it feel to be living your dream of doing your own thing & being a yoga teacher". I was taken aback - because I had never sat down and reflected on the fact that I was doing what I had always wanted to do. In the grind of life and the continuous (self-)shifting of the goalposts, as human beings we rarely stop and wonder at how far we have come and how the point we find ourselves at was something we deemed as a milestone at one point.

Of course this is good. This constant pushing ourselves is what keeps us alive as a race - the do better and be better attitude makes sure we are always evolving - but are we? We never seem to

our heads and hearts. It begs the question - will we ever arrive with this non-stop, ever-surviving mentality?

Until that question was asked of me, I would constantly wonder why I wasn't doing more, wasn't filling up my hours with more yoga reading or with writing more newsletters and why I wasn't promoting myself more as a business and why I wasn't thinking of the next big thing in the yoga world, why I wasn't doing well "enough" etc etc. I never stopped and marvelled at just how amazing this time is now. Just right now, just as it is.

A huge component of gratitude is to be aware of all the things that are going well for you. For me personally, this question taught me to view gratitude using a past-present comparison. I am not saying this works for everyone, but for me taking a few steps back in my own life and thinking about the days I was working hard to reach where I am today, makes me appreciate what I have right now. In this way, remembering the tough times, can help us to appreciate the good.

Human nature is to want what we do not have and to dwell on the negatives - instead of celebrating what we DO have and focusing on what's going well. Being grateful has the power to block out negative emotions. You can't really pay attention to what's missing or what's not going well, if you only let your mind pay attention to what IS going well.

So I invite you today, to take some time to thank yourself for where you've arrived and truly arrive there with your whole mind and body. If appreciating the moment in itself is hard because it does not seem worthy of celebration or not "big enough", then think about when you used to dream about this space that you now occupy in time and give thanks to your journey & all that it has taught you.

[Hasta Mudras & Their Significance](#)



Mudras

Mudra means "seal," "gesture," or "mark." Yoga mudras are symbolic gestures often practiced with the hands and fingers. They facilitate the flow of energy in the subtle body and enhance one's journey within.

Our hands hold each of the basic elements:

- fire (thumb).
- air (index finger).
- space (middle finger).
- earth (ring finger) and
- water (pinky finger).

When we use these elements within our bodies, we are able to direct the flow of energy to the brain and even stimulate different emotions, spiritual connections or reactions from the body.

According to Ayurveda, if some of these basic elements are out of balance, the body can be too. And if the body has too much or too little of an element, disease can form.

Many of the elements do not interact well with each other. For instance, fire and water can cause an imbalance... too much fire in the body can lead to inflammation and too much water can douse the fire and lead to indigestion. Hasta mudras can be used to bring the balance back to the body by redirecting the elemental energy.



Gyan Mudra

Gyan mudra (chin mudra) is used to direct energy and maintain focus. Gyan is Sanskrit for 'knowledge' or 'wisdom,' and so this gesture is sometimes referred to as the Mudra of Knowledge.

Gyan mudra is traditionally practiced whilst in seated meditation, but can also be used during an Asana practice.

How:

- To perform this mudra, bring the tip of the thumb and index finger together on both hands, forming a circle. Keep the remaining three fingers outstretched with the palm facing upward.

Elements: Fire + Air



Prana Mudra

Also referred to as the 'life force seal,' prana mudra is specifically used to activate dormant energy within the subtle body, whilst balancing the elements of earth, water and fire within the physical body.

Prana mudra can be used as an energetic pick-me-up, as it increases vitality and helps to clear energetic blockages.

How:

Perform this mudra by touching your ring and pinky fingers to the tip of your thumb, while keeping the other two fingers straight.

Elements: Fire + Water + Earth



Shunya Mudra

Shunya mudra is designed to decrease the space element (akasha) in the body. The name of this mudra comes from the Sanskrit shunya, meaning 'emptiness,' 'openness' or 'spaciousness'.

How:

- In this mudra, the tip of the middle finger is placed at the base of the thumb, and the thumb presses gently on the middle finger just below the knuckle. The remaining three fingers stretch comfortably to the sky.

Elements: Fire + Space



Varun Mudra

Varuna mudra is designed to balance the water element in the body (derived from Varun, which is the name of the Hindu god of water). It's practice provides relief from a range of diseases and ailments that result from a lack of water in the body, including:

Digestive issues like indigestion and constipation Skin disorders such as eczema and psoriasis, osteoarthritis, anaemia and other blood-related problems, disorders related to the bladder and kidneys, dehydration

How: To perform this mudra, the tip of the little finger and the tip of the thumb touch with light pressure, and the other three fingers remain comfortably extended.

Elements: Fire + Water



Surya Mudra

Surya mudra is a hand gesture that increases the fire element and eliminates the earth element in the body. A Sanskrit term, surya means 'sun' and mudra means 'gesture.'

By a gentle pressure of the thumbs on top of the ring fingers, the earth element residing in the ring fingers is eliminated and the fire element residing in the thumbs is increased. It increases heat in the body and improves metabolism, promoting weight loss, helps in treating the flu, strengthens the eyes and improves vision.

How: Surya mudra is performed by bending both ring fingers and placing the tips of them on the bases of the thumbs.

Elements: Fire + Earth



Vayu Mudra

Vayu mudra is believed to help regulate and reduce the air element within the body. The name comes from the Sanskrit, vayu, meaning "air.". Practicing this Mudra helps relieve symptoms from aggravation of the "air" element in the body - excessive gas, bloating, arthritis, gout etc.

How: It is performed by placing the tip of the index finger inside the base of the thumb. The base of the thumb is then gently pressed into the tip of the finger. The rest of the fingers should all remain straight.

Elements: Fire + Air



Hridaya Mudra

Hridaya Mudra (Heart Gesture) benefits the heart and any problems related to the heart.

In Hridaya Mudra, the index finger (air element) helps to reduce the excess air in the body, while the other fingers- thumb (fire), middle (space), and ring (earth) when pressed increases the respective elements. Space element helps with the supply of oxygen to the heart, earth element helps to strengthen the muscles of the heart, and the fire element increases the heat, reducing the toxins, thereby bringing balance to all the elements.

How: Bend the index finger and place it at the base of the thumb. One should be able to feel the pulse. Touch the thumb to the middle and ring fingers. Let the little finger be relaxed.

Elements: Fire + Space + Earth + Air



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