

About the book...

Hasthalakshanadeepika has been the reference guide for Mohiniyattam, just as it has been for Kathakali. Living languages have the inherent quality of constant evolution; so we should realize that their elementary guides also need to be developed accordingly.

Just as other classical arts, Mohiniyattam is also an evolving form of art. The mudras referred in *Hasthalakshanadeepika* as well as the other prevailing mudras in Mohiniyattam, have undergone a few changes today. *Hasthalakshanadeepika* became the sole reference guide for mudras in Mohiniyattam during Vallathol's time. Initially, there were only some *gramyamudras* and *tantrikmudras* in Mohiniyattam. Some of the *gramyamudras* and *tantrikmudras* are not prevalent today; some others which were not there are being used.

In such circumstances, what I, as a person who reveres this art form, can or should do is to document all mudras and their usages in book form and translate it into the international language, English. Only then can this art form be more accessible to Malayalees and non-Malayalees alike.

What I have done in this book can be broadly classified into four sections:

1. Describe all prevalent basic mudras and their usages in Malayalam slokas.
2. Divide these slokas into three:
 - * **Asamyuktamudras**
(single hand mudras or mudras shown using one hand)
 - * **Samyuktamudras**
(double hand mudras or mudras depicted using both hands)
 - * **Sankalanamudras**
(different mudras in each hand)
3. Transliterate Malayalam slokas so that non-Malayalees are able to understand them.
4. Describe all mudras and their usage in alphabetical order (according to the Malayalam alphabet) and translate them.

In the above-mentioned sections, I have discussed 24 basic mudras in slokas. There might be repetitions in these slokas because some usages may have only slight variations or because the same padams can be interpreted in many ways. Because their use is comparatively less, the remaining 11 mudras have been described according to how they are depicted.

Apart from these, I have also included *bandhuhasthas*, *devatahasthas*, *dashaavataarahasthas*, *sankhyaahasthas*, *nanaarthaas* and *hasthaas* for famous characters from our Epics.

When both Malayalees and non-Malayalees learn Mohiniyattam, they have to do so in Malayalam. It becomes easy when they have a transliterated book to refer. Moreover, because it also has English translations of all *mudrapadams*, it is easy to learn those by heart. For the convenience of those who need to find a particular mudra, all mudras have been listed in alphabetical order (Malayalam).

I do not claim that this book is a complete guide to the mudras used in Mohiniyattam. Just as Malayalam has variations according to the different regions it is spoken in, mudras might also vary in how they are interpreted. I have tried to share what I know of them in this book. Many have been asking me to do this for a long time. I feel that I would be shirking my duty if I do not do this at this time.

Acknowledgements:

This effort has been through numerous iterations from its inception to the current stage and has been in the works for the past five years. Development cycle of this effort is largely the interplay between the theoretical work and the application in its presentation (mainly visualization). This iterative cycle helped the final moulding of each mudra. It would not have been possible without the constant interaction with my students, contemporaries and other well wishers. I would like to express my deep gratitude to all those who helped me complete this book.

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Dedication:

This is my salutation to my gurus, my beloved parents. I thank my great fortune to be their child and their premier student. Their unconditional passion for their respective art forms has been my guiding spirit. I offer my pranams and dedicate this effort to their memory.

Sreedevi Rajan