

Comparative Study on Expression of Emotions in Art Forms Like Sculpture and Bhradham

S. Shevaani
A. Durga Shree
V. Santhanalakshmi
Dr. D.P. Sivasakthi Balan

Grade 12, Commerce, KRM Public School

ABSTRACT

This study aims at comparing the mudras of sculptures with the mudras used to express various emotions in Bharatanatyam.

Sculpture is a form of visual art that involves shaping or carving materials such as stone, metal, wood, clay, or modern materials like resin or plastic to create three-dimensional forms. It depicts our culture with meaningful expressions. Bharatanatyam is one of the oldest classical dance forms of India, originating in Tamil Nadu. It combines expression (abhinaya), rhythm (tala), and pure dance (nritta).

Around 10 different mudras from natyasastra and shilpasastra are compared. On comparison, out of the 10 mudras 4 mudras depict different meaning (patakam and Varada mudra, hamsasyo and Vyakhyana mudra, alapadma and alapallava mudra, ardhapatakam and kapata mudra) and rest 6 mudras are similar and partially similar.

Keywords: Natya sastra, Silpasastra, mudra, Poses.

INTRODUCTION

The Natyasastra is an ancient Indian treatise that serves as a foundational text on the performing arts, including drama, dance, and music. Attributed to the sage Bharata and composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE, it presents a detailed framework for classical theatrical performance. The text is written in Sanskrit and comprises around 36 to 37 chapters, covering a wide range of subjects such as stage design, acting techniques, dance movements, musical structure, costumes, and audience response. One of its most influential contributions is the rasa theory, which explains how different emotional states such as love, anger, compassion, and wonder are evoked in the audience through performance. It also outlines the concept of abhinaya, or expression, categorizing it into physical gestures, speech, costume, and internal emotions. The natyasastra not only shaped classical Indian art forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak but also laid the groundwork for Indian aesthetics and literary criticism. Its influence extends beyond performance, offering insights into the cultural and philosophical outlook of ancient India.

Shilpasastra refers to the traditional Indian treatises that provide guidelines for various forms of art, craft, and architecture. The term combines shilpa (art or craft) and sastra (science or treatise), denoting a systematic body of knowledge. These texts cover a wide range of subjects including sculpture, temple

architecture, iconography, painting, and ornamentation. They emphasize not just technical skills, but also philosophical and spiritual aspects, promoting harmony with cosmic and natural principles. Among the most important texts are the Manasara, Mayamata, and Visvakarma Vastusastra, which offer detailed prescriptions on measurements, proportions, materials, and rituals. These treatises are traditionally attributed to ancient sages and craftsmen, with Visvakarma—regarded as the divine architect—often considered their mythical originator. The Shilpasastra tradition has deeply influenced classical Indian architecture, particularly in temple design and icon-making practices (Kramrisch, 1946; Dagens, 1985). In the Natyasastra mudras are defined as symbolic hand gestures that play a vital role in the art of expression (abhinaya) within classical Indian dance and drama. These gestures serve as a non-verbal language that enables performers to communicate various emotions, objects, actions, and concepts to the audience. The natyasastra categorizes mudras into two main types: asamyukta (single-hand gestures) and samyukta (double-hand gestures), each with specific meanings and uses. Mudras are integral to conveying the narrative and enhancing the emotional experience by helping to evoke different rasas or aesthetic sentiments. Through precise and codified use of mudras, performers bring stories and characters to life, making them an essential element of Indian classical performing arts (Bharata Muni, Natyasastra, trans. Ghosh, 1951).

Mudras hold great significance in Indian classical performing arts as they serve as a powerful means of non-verbal communication, allowing performers to convey complex emotions, ideas, and narratives effectively. Through specific hand gestures, artists can express detailed meanings ranging from everyday objects to abstract feelings, making the storytelling more vivid and accessible to the audience. In classical dance and drama, mudras work alongside facial expressions and body movements to enhance the emotional depth and clarity of a performance, helping to evoke the desired rasa or aesthetic experience. Their codified nature, as outlined in texts like the Natyasastra, ensures consistency and shared understanding across performers and spectators, making mudras an indispensable tool for preserving and transmitting the rich cultural heritage of Indian performing arts (Bharata Muni Natyasastra, trans. Ghosh, 1951).

HYPOTHESIS

This study is based on 10 selected mudras that are described in the Natyasastra and seen in temple sculptures guided by the Shilpasastra. The hypothesis is that, even though these mudras, appear in different forms one in dance and the other in sculpture, they share similar meanings and messages. By comparing these 10 mudras, the study aims to show how both performing and visual arts express the same cultural and spiritual ideas through hand gestures.

(The Hindu Temple by Stella Kramrisch, 1946, Bruno Dagens. Mayamata, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Scientific Research / IGNCA, 1985.)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Both **Shilpasastra** and **Natyashastra** are ancient Indian treatises that serve as comprehensive guides to art forms, deeply rooted in cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic principles. While Shilpasastra primarily focuses on the arts of sculpture, architecture, painting, and craftsmanship, and Natyashastra centers on the performing arts like drama, dance, and music, both texts share a common goal: to guide artists in creating works that harmonize form, function, and expression to evoke spiritual and emotional responses. Both emphasize precise rules and measurements, including the use of mudras (symbolic hand gestures),

proportions, and aesthetics, reflecting the belief that art is a sacred discipline connected to cosmic order and human experience. Moreover, they integrate theory with practice, blending technical instructions with philosophical insights on Rasa (emotional flavor) and Bhava (expression), underscoring the unity of various art forms in contributing to spiritual upliftment and cultural continuity.

(Kramrisch, Stella. *The Hindu Temple*, Volumes 1 & 2. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1976. Richards, Eric.)

Mudras, as outlined in the *Natyashastra*, hold profound significance in Indian classical performing arts, serving as essential tools for communication and expression. These symbolic hand gestures transcend mere physical movements; they act as a language that conveys emotions, narratives, and spiritual ideas without words. Mudras help performers articulate complex stories and sentiments through a codified system, allowing audiences to understand and connect with the performance deeply. Beyond their communicative function, mudras also embody cultural and ritualistic meanings, linking the performer to divine traditions and enhancing the spiritual atmosphere of the art form. The *Natyashastra* meticulously categorizes mudras into Asamyuta (single-hand) and Samyuta (double-hand) gestures, emphasizing their role in evoking Rasa—the aesthetic experience or emotional flavor essential to Indian drama and dance. Thus, mudras are not just artistic tools but are integral to the holistic aesthetic and spiritual experience envisioned by Bharata Muni.

(Bharata Muni. *Natyashastra*. Translated by Manomohan Ghosh, Calcutta University, 1967.)

Mudras in the **Natyashastra** primarily function as expressive hand gestures used in the performing arts, especially dance and drama, to communicate emotions, actions, and ideas to the audience. They are codified into Asamyuta (single-hand) and Samyuta (double-hand) mudras, forming a detailed symbolic vocabulary essential for storytelling and conveying Rasa (emotional essence) on stage. The focus here is on movement, expression, and narrative communication, where mudras are a language of theatrical and dance performance.

(Acharya Prasanna Kumar Acharya, *Indian Sculpture*, 1933.)

In contrast, the **Shilpasastra** discusses mudras more in the context of static art forms like sculpture and iconography. Here, mudras are symbolic hand positions carved or painted on deities and figures, embodying spiritual meanings and ritual significance. These mudras are meant to convey divine attributes, blessings, and cosmic principles, serving as visual metaphors within religious and architectural art. The emphasis is on symbolic representation, religious symbolism, and adherence to canonical proportions and aesthetics, rather than dynamic storytelling.

(Katrak, Kirit. "Mudras and their Psycho-Physiological Significance in Indian Dance," *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, 2011)

Thus, while both texts emphasize mudras as symbolic gestures, **Natyashastra** presents them as dynamic, communicative tools in live performance, whereas **Shilpasastra** treats them as fixed, symbolic motifs integral to sacred art and iconography.

The *Natyashastra* presents mudras not merely as artistic gestures but as scientifically structured elements of communication grounded in anatomy, psychology, and semiotics. Mudras involve precise hand and finger positions that stimulate specific energy points (similar to concepts in Ayurveda and Yoga), which are believed to influence the body's subtle energy channels (nadis) and chakras. This physiological effect enhances the performer's emotional expression and helps convey specific rasas or emotional states effectively to the audience. Psychologically, mudras engage both the performer and spectator in a shared symbolic language, facilitating non-verbal storytelling that transcends linguistic barriers. The codification

of mudras in the Natyashastra follows strict rules of proportion and movement to maximize clarity and aesthetic harmony, ensuring that each gesture elicits a predictable emotional response. This fusion of body mechanics, spiritual symbolism, psychological effect underscores the scientific sophistication embedded within ancient Indian dramaturgy.

In the Shilpasastra, mudras are not merely decorative hand gestures but are rooted in a scientific understanding of symbolism, aesthetics, and sacred geometry within sculpture and iconography. The treatise prescribes precise hand positions to embody specific spiritual meanings and cosmic principles, reflecting an integration of art and metaphysics. Each mudra is carefully designed following strict proportional guidelines, ensuring harmony between the physical form and symbolic content. These gestures are believed to activate certain energy centers or chakras within the body of the deity or figure, thus conveying divine attributes and spiritual power to the viewer. The scientific approach in Shilpasastra involves meticulous attention to anatomical correctness, balance, and the psychology of visual perception to evoke specific emotional and devotional responses. Through this system, mudras become a bridge between the material and the spiritual, underscoring the holistic vision of art as a science of cosmic expression.

(Saraswati, P.S. Natyashastra (Translated with commentary), 1985, Krishna, V. Dance, Health and Wellbeing: Insights from Indian Classical Dance Forms, Journal of Dance Studies, 2017.)

The regular practice of mudras in Bharatanatyam offers multiple health benefits beyond their artistic and communicative roles. These intricate hand gestures involve precise finger movements that stimulate nerve endings and pressure points linked to various organs, promoting better circulation and improved motor coordination. Engaging in Bharatanatyam mudras enhances fine motor skills and strengthens hand muscles, which can aid in dexterity and hand-eye coordination. Moreover, the focused mental concentration required to perform mudras helps reduce stress and anxiety, promoting emotional balance and mindfulness. From a holistic perspective, the rhythmic practice of mudras in Bharatanatyam aligns the body's energy flow, fostering physical vitality and mental clarity. Consequently, Bharatanatyam mudras serve as a valuable tool not only for artistic expression but also for maintaining overall health and well-being.

METHODOLOGY

The study on mudra comparing Natyasastra and Shilpasastra obtains data from previous researches and studies to compare analyse and to draw significance of 10 MUDRAS Hamsasyo and Vyakhyana, Alapadma and Alapallava, Anjalasya and Namaskara mudra, Pushpaputaka and Anjali mudra, Kartari hasta and Tripataka, Patakam and Abhaya mudra, Varada mudra, Suci and Tarjani mudra AND Ardha Chandra katyam and Kati mudra respectively.

The study majorly depends on secondary data collected from reliable resources.

NATYASASTRA NAME	MEANING	SHILPASASTRA NAME	MEANING
1. HAMSASYO	Hamsasyo is a hand gesture (mudra) used in classical Indian dance and	VYAKHYANA	Vyakhyana is a hand gesture (hasta) used in classical Indian dance and iconography, particularly described in the context of the Shilpasatra and

	<p>described in the Natyasastra and Abhinaya Darpaṇa. The term "Hamsasyo" means "swan's beak" or "like a swan," and the mudra resembles the delicate shape of a swan's mouth. It is formed by joining the tips of the thumb and index finger while keeping the other fingers extended. This hasta is used to depict delicate or refined actions such as showing a pearl, painting, drawing, tying a necklace, or plucking flowers. It symbolizes elegance and grace, much like the qualities associated with a swan. In temple sculpture, similar hand positions can be seen in depictions of deities and celestial beings performing gentle, artistic gestures.</p>		<p>related texts. The term "Vyakhyana" means explaining, teaching, or giving discourse. This gesture is formed by index finger and thumb finger joined extending other three fingers upwards. The position of the hand, typically near the chest or shoulder, reflects that the knowledge being shared is both personal and divine. This mudra reflects authority, learning, and discipline, and is often seen in depictions of gurus, sages, or deities imparting knowledge in sculptures and temple carvings. It highlights the teacher-student relationship and the value of guidance in Indian tradition.</p>
2. ALAPADMA	<p>Alapadma is a graceful hand gesture (mudra) mentioned in</p>	ALAPALLAVA	<p>SUPPORT, FOUNDATION , BASIS</p>

	<p>classical dance traditions and described in texts like the Natyasastra and Abhinaya Darpana. The term means “fully bloomed lotus”, and the gesture is formed by spreading all five fingers outward from the palm, creating a shape that resembles an open lotus flower. In the Natyasastra, Alapadma is associated with expressions of beauty, grace, offering, and divinity. It is used to depict a variety of delicate ideas such as the lotus, the moon, beauty, or showing astonishment. This mudra carries symbolic value and is often seen in temple sculptures where deities or celestial figures hold their hands in similar positions, linking dance with visual art. Through Alapadma, dancers convey elegance, openness, and</p>		
--	--	--	--

	reverence in performance.		
3.ANJALASYA	<p>SALUTATION</p> <p>In the Natyasastra, the Anjalasya Mudra is a symbolic hand gesture that signifies reverence, devotion, and respectful greeting. Derived from the Sanskrit word "anjali", meaning an offering or salutation, this mudra is used to depict acts of worship, humility, and honor in classical Indian dance and drama. It is performed by bringing both palms together with fingers extended and pointing upward, typically held in front of the chest or face. As a Samyuta Hasta (a gesture involving both hands), Anjalasya represents the devotee's expression of surrender, prayer, or respectful greeting toward</p>	NAMASKARA MUDRA	<p>SALUTATION</p> <p>In the Shilpasastra, the Namaskara Mudra represents a gesture of salutation, reverence, and devotion. It is formed by bringing both palms together in front of the chest, with fingers pointing upward—a gesture commonly recognized today as "Namaste."</p> <p>This mudra symbolizes humility, respect, and spiritual offering. In temple art and sculpture, it is often seen in depictions of devotees, sages, attendants, or even deities, showing reverence to a higher power or divine presence.</p>

	deities, elders, or noble characters.		
4.PUSHPAPUTAKA	Puspaputakha is a double-hand gesture (mudra) which is formed by bringing the tips of all five fingers slightly together, creating a soft, rounded shape. In the context of the Natyasastra, Pushpaputa hasta is used to show Lamp Offering, Children, Accept Fruits, Offering to the Sun in the evenings and Chant Holy prayers..	ANJALI MUDRA	This is a pose of offering flowers,grains,money,etc.it is carved by hands opened and facing the viewer,the two hands join each other and is held at the chest or below it.
5.KARTARI HASTA	Kartari or Kartarimukha is a hand gesture (mudra) explained in the natyasastra, representing a scissor-like or forked shape , as the name "Kartari" means "scissors" in Sanskrit. It is formed by extending the index and middle fingers apart while the thumb supports them, with the ring and little fingers bent. In the natyasastra, Kartarimukha is	KARTARI MUDRA	Kartarimukha , as understood through the lens of shilpasastra , appears in sculptural representations as a symbolic hand gesture that reflects movement, division, or alertness . While the shilpasastra texts may not always name the mudras exactly like in the natyasastra, similar hand positions are found in temple sculptures, especially in depictions of gods, guardians, or celestial beings. The gesture, which resembles a pair of open scissors or a forked shape, is often seen in icons to express separation of elements, watchfulness, or dual aspects , such as day and night or good

9

	traditional Indian dance forms.		
7.SUCI	<p>Suci Mudra in Natyasastra means "needle" or "pointing" and is formed by extending the index finger while all other fingers are folded into the palm. It resembles the action of pointing sharply or precisely. This mudra is used to represent number one, a person, a city, the Supreme Being, and sometimes anger or emphasis. It is often used in dance to identify a character, highlight direction, or refer to singular objects. Suci conveys focus, clarity, and directness in storytelling and expressive movement.</p>	TARJANI MUDRA	<p>Tarjani Mudra means "pointing gesture" and is formed by extending the index finger while the other fingers are bent. It is used to express warning, anger, instruction, or emphasis. In classical dance and sculpture, it shows actions like scolding, cursing, or commanding attention. The gesture conveys strong emotion and authority.</p>
8..ARDHA CHANDRA KATYAM	<p>In Natyasastra, one of the uses of Ardha-chandra hasta is for "Kātyam", which means placing the hand on the waist. This gesture is</p>	KATI MUDRA	<p>Kati Mudra in Shilpasastra means a gesture where the hand is placed on the waist or hip. It symbolizes grace, readiness, or feminine beauty. This mudra is commonly seen in sculptures of goddesses, dancers, and apsaras. It adds a</p>

9.ARDHAPATAKAM	commonly used to depict a graceful or relaxed standing posture . The Ardha-chandra hand, shaped like a crescent with fingers together and thumb extended, rests gently on the waist. It adds elegance, charm, and natural body movement in classical dance. This usage is often seen in tribhanga and decorative poses in Bharatanatyam and other forms.		sense of elegance and rhythmic posture to the figure. The pose is often part of tribhanga or other dynamic standing postures.
	Ardhapataka , meaning “half-flag,” is a single-hand gesture (mudra) described in the Natyasastra and other classical dance texts. It is formed by keeping the ring finger and the little finger bent while the other fingers remain extended, creating a distinctive shape. In the Natyasastra Ardhapataka is associated with various meanings such as leaves, a	KAPATA MUDRA	Kapata Mudra , described by the Shilpasastra : The term "Kapata" means door or shutter , and the gesture is formed by bringing both hands together with palms facing outward and fingers slightly curved, resembling closed doors. In temple sculpture guided by Shilpasastra principles, similar hand positions are observed in depictions of guardians, protectors, or divine beings where the gesture may symbolize secrecy, concealment, or protection . Thus, Kapata Mudra in sculpture reflects the narrative and emotional intent behind the deity's role, aligning visual representation with spiritual storytelling.
			Nagarddha , as referred to in the context of Shilpasastra , is a sculptural gesture or pose that visually resembles the curved, serpentine movement of a snake . Though not always labeled explicitly in all texts,

<p>10.NAGABANDHA</p>	<p>dagger, a riverbank, or a tower depending on the context in which it is used. This mudra plays an important role in abhinaya (expression) by helping dancers convey specific objects or ideas in storytelling.</p> <p>Nagabandha is a symbolic hand gesture mentioned in the Natyasastra representing the form or binding of a snake. The term combines naga (snake) and bandha (binding or entwining), and the gesture is often used in paired-hand movements to depict the coiling or intertwining of serpents. In performance, it is used to express themes such as protection, entanglement, or union, especially in scenes involving</p>	<p>NAGAYARDHA</p>	<p>the term combines naga (serpent) and arddha (half), indicating a graceful, semi-circular form often seen in the torso or hand positioning of deities and celestial figures in temple art. Sculptures based on Shilpasastra guidelines use such flowing, curved poses to convey elegance, rhythm, and subtle motion, even in still stone images.</p>
----------------------	---	-------------------	---

	mythological serpents or divine beings. Nagabandha conveys a sense of controlled energy and circular motion , aligning with the visual language of classical dance.		

Abhinaya-darpana (English) (by Ananda Coomaraswamy)

DISCUSSION AND INTREPRETATION

1. In the **Natyasastra**, the **Pataka** mudra is one of the most basic and widely used **single-hand gestures (asamyuta hasta)**. The word Pataka means "**flag**", and the gesture is formed by **keeping all fingers extended and joined**, with the thumb bent slightly to touch the base of the index finger. This mudra is extremely versatile in **Bharatanatyam**, used to depict a wide range of ideas such as **clouds, forests, wind, river, denial, blessings**, and even to indicate the **beginning of a dance** performance.

In contrast, the **Abhaya Mudra**, found in **Silpasastra** and temple iconography, is not a dance mudra but a **symbolic hand gesture** used in sculpture. The term Abhaya means "**fearlessness**", and this gesture is formed by **raising the right hand with the palm facing outward and fingers extended upward**. It represents **protection, reassurance, and peace**, and is often seen in sculptures of deities like Vishnu, Buddha, or Shiva, offering comfort and spiritual security to the devotee. It conveys a divine promise: "Do not fear, I am here."

Another important sculptural gesture is the **Varada Mudra**, which represents **boon-giving, generosity, and compassion**. This gesture is formed by **lowering the left hand**, with the **palm facing outward and fingers pointing downward**. It is frequently seen in temple sculptures, where deities are shown **granting wishes or blessing devotees**, symbolizing kindness and the fulfilment of prayers.

To perform the **PatakaMudra**, the dancer extends **all five fingers straight and close together**, forming a flat palm. The **thumb is slightly bent** inward so that it gently touches the base of the index finger, while the other fingers remain upright and joined.

While **PatakaMudra** belongs to the expressive vocabulary of **classical dance**, used to describe nature and action, **Abhaya** and **Varada Mudras** are iconic postures in **sculpture**, used to represent **divine qualities** like **protection and benevolence**. Though the visual positions of the hands may appear similar at times, their **context, meaning, and purpose** differ between **performing arts and sacred art traditions**.

2. In the **Natyasastra**, the **Ardha-Chandra hasta** is used for several purposes, and one notable application is in the gesture called "**Katyam**", which involves placing the hand on the waist. This posture is commonly associated with standing poses that convey elegance and poise, especially in female roles.

In the **Shilpasastra**, a similar gesture is referred to as **Kati Mudra**, where the hand rests gracefully on the hip or waist. It is frequently seen in sculptures depicting goddesses, dancers, or attendants in relaxed yet refined stances.

In this mudra, the **thumb is extended outward**, while the remaining four fingers—index, middle, ring, and little—are **held together and fully extended**. The palm faces forward,

Both **Ardha-Chandra Katyam** in **Natyasastra** and **Kati Mudra** in **Shilpasastra** refer to the same physical gesture—placing the hand on the waist. However, they differ in terminology. This mudra is particularly expressive of **grace, readiness, and feminine beauty**, and is often part of stylized poses like **tribhanga** in Bharatanatyam and temple iconography.

3. Suci Mudra in the Natyasastra is a single-hand gesture that symbolizes a **needle**, or more generally, **pointing**. The index finger is extended while the other fingers remain folded, forming a sharp, focused gesture. This mudra is used in classical dance to indicate **the number one, a specific person, a city, or the Supreme Being**. It can also express emotions like **anger, warning, or command**.

In **Silpasastra**, the corresponding gesture resembles **Tarjani Mudra**, which also involves extending the index finger and represents **pointing**, often associated with **assertion, instruction, or divine command** in sculptures.

Suci Mudra and Tarjani mudra as described in the **Natyasastra** and **shilpasastra** respectively, is performed by extending the index finger outward while the remaining fingers are curled inward and held in place by the thumb. The palm faces forward or slightly angled, depending on the expression needed

Although both mudras share the same hand formation and basic function of pointing, **Suci Mudra** carries **additional symbolic meanings** in dance—such as **referring to a person, a needle, or even circular objects**—making it a more versatile gesture in expressive contexts

4. In the Natyasastra, Hamsasya Mudra is a **single-hand gesture (asamyuta hasta)** whose name is derived from the word "**hamsa**", meaning **swan**. Despite its name, the mudra is not limited to representing a swan; instead, it is used for a wide range of delicate and refined actions. This gesture is commonly used in Bharatanatyam **offering sandal paste, beginning a ritual or invocation, or showing graceful objects**. It may also represent actions such as **drawing a line, plucking flowers, or acts of adornment and decoration**, especially in contexts that require delicacy and elegance.

On the other hand, in the context of **Shilpasastra**, the term **Vyakhyana Mudra** refers to a **gesture of instruction or teaching**. The word **vyakhyana** means **teaching or guidance**, and this mudra is often associated with **sages, gurus, or deities** who are depicted **imparting knowledge** in temple sculptures or iconography. Though not always named explicitly, **Vyakhyana Mudra** may resemble known hand gestures such as or **Jnana Mudra** (gesture of knowledge), symbolizing **learning, wisdom, and discourse**.

To perform the **Hamsasya Mudra, joining the tips of the thumb and index finger**, while the **other three fingers (middle, ring, and little)** are **extended and slightly spread apart**. The shape resembles a beak of a swan, which is why the name **Hamsasya** (meaning "swan-like") is used. The **joined thumb and index finger** should gently touch, without pressing too hard, to maintain a delicate appearance. The palm may face slightly upward, downward, or sideways, depending on the meaning being expressed in the dance.

While **Hamsasya** and **Vyakhyana** may appear visually refined, they differ in **origin, meaning, and usage**. **Hamsasya** in **Natyasastra** is linked to **refined physical actions and rituals** in dance, whereas **Vyakhyana** in **shilpasastra** is tied to **mental instruction and the spiritual act of teaching** in sculpture. The former represents external elegance, while the latter embodies internal knowledge transmission.

5. In Natyasastra, the hand gesture **Alapadma** represents the image of a **fully bloomed lotus flower**. The fingers are spread out gracefully and slightly curved, forming a circular shape that resembles a lotus in full bloom. This gesture symbolizes **grace, delicacy, and beauty**. It is commonly used in Bharatanatyam to portray elements like the **face, cheeks, or circular movements**, especially in expressions related to **love (sringara)** or **peace (santa)**. Alapadma is also used to symbolize the **lotus itself**, and by extension, it is associated with **goddesses like Lakshmi and Saraswati**, who are often linked to the lotus in iconography and dance.

On the other hand, **Alapallava**, as described in **shilpasastra**, does not refer to a hand gesture but rather to the **decorative foundation or visual support** within sacred art and sculpture. It refers to the **base, structure, or ornamental design** that enhances the appearance of divine forms. Alapallava plays a crucial role in **filling empty spaces**, creating balance, and **enriching the spiritual presence** of sculptures and temple architecture. It ensures that the artwork is not only beautiful but also filled with **symbolic and sacred value**, aligning with the spiritual goals of traditional Indian art.

To perform **Alapadma**, the dancer begins by **spreading all five fingers apart** and **curving them slightly outward**, creating a round, open shape that resembles a **fully bloomed lotus flower**. The fingers must be evenly spaced and gently bent to form a soft, circular outline. The thumb and little finger should not be too stretched or tense, as the mudra should appear **graceful and delicate**, not rigid. The **palm faces outward or upward**, depending on the usage in the dance. The wrist remains relaxed, and the hand is held with elegance to convey beauty and openness.

Though the terms **Alapadma** and **Alapallava** sound similar, they differ significantly in **meaning and context**. Alapadma is a **symbolic hand gesture** in dance representing a lotus, while Alapallava is a **decorative element** in sculpture that provides **foundation and artistic support**. One conveys movement and expression in performance, while the other enhances visual richness in still art.

6. According to the **Natyasastra**, **Anjalasya** is a symbolic hand gesture used to convey **reverence, devotion, and respectful salutation**. It is performed by joining both palms together with the fingers fully extended and pointing upward, usually held in front of the **chest, face, or above the head** depending on the context. The term Anjalasya is rooted in the Sanskrit word “**Anjali**,” which means an offering or act of salutation. This mudrā is used in classical dance and drama to represent **worship, humility, and honor**, especially when portraying a character expressing surrender or devotion toward a deity, elder, or noble figure.

In **Shilpasastra** a similar gesture known as **Namaskara Mudra** holds the same spiritual significance. The word Namaskara comes from the Sanskrit root “**namas**” (to bow or show respect) and “**kāra**” (to do), meaning “the act of bowing.” Namaskara Mudra is formed by bringing both palms together in front of the chest, with fingers pointing upward, just like Anjalasya. However, while Anjalasya is more prominent in **performing arts**, **Namaskara Mudra** is most often seen in **temple sculpture and iconography**.

To perform the **Namaskara Mudra**, bringing **both palms together**, with the **fingers aligned and pointing upward**. The palms are placed flat against each other, without any space between them. The **elbows remain slightly raised**, and the shoulders relaxed to maintain a graceful posture.

In visual art, Namaskara Mudra is frequently depicted in images of **devotees, sages, attendants**, or even deities, all shown offering respect to a higher power. It symbolizes **spiritual offering, inner peace, and respectful submission**. Though their names differ slightly, both gestures reflect a shared cultural meaning of **respect, devotion, and sacred greeting**, bridging the traditions of **dance and sculpture** in Indian heritage.

7. According to the **Natyasastra**, **Puspaputaka** is a **double-hand gesture** (samyuta hasta) where the palm is slightly cupped and the fingers are softly curved. This mudra is used in dance to represent actions like **offering flowers, smelling their fragrance, or applying sandal paste**. It carries delicate and graceful qualities and is often associated with portraying **feminine beauty, elegance, and soft emotions** in Bharatanatyam. In sculptures, this gesture also appears in depictions of divine or noble women performing gentle actions.

According to Shilpasastra. Anjali mudra is a pose of offering flowers, grains, money, etc. it is carved by hands opened and facing the viewer, the two hands join each other and is held at the chest or below it.

Both the mudras are similar in appearance but the **difference** between these two mudras lies in their **purpose**. **Pushpaputaka and anjali mudra share the similar purpose of offering flowers but puspaputaka hasta has various other meaning when performed such as smelling a flower, showing lamp, children, offering to the sun in the evenings, accept fruits and other things.**

8. According to Shilpa sastra, the **Kapata Hasta** is a gesture associated with the act of opening or holding a door. The word kapata means “door,” and the hand gesture imitates the flat, slightly curved position of a hand pushing or holding a doorway. This gesture is particularly prominent in **temple sculptures**, especially in depictions of **dvarapalas** (gatekeepers) or attendants at sanctum entrances. Their hands are often shown in a welcoming or revealing posture, suggesting entry, invitation, or spiritual access. Though meaningful in iconography, this hasta is **not formally listed** in the Natyasastra or used as a codified mudra in Bharatanatyam.

In contrast, the **Ardhapataka** mudra is a well-known **single-hand gesture (asamyuta hasta)** described in the Natyasastra and widely used in classical Indian dance. The name means “half-flag,” derived from ardha (half) and pataka (flag). This gesture is performed by bending the ring finger while keeping the other fingers extended. It carries multiple meanings in Bharatanatyam, representing objects like **leaves, knives, horns, towers, riverbanks**, and even **flags**. Ardhapataka is also used to depict actions such as **offering, separating, or cutting**, and is frequently seen in devotional contexts—for example, when symbolizing worship, performing āratī, or making respectful presentations.

To perform the **Ardhapataka** mudra, the dancer begins by forming the **Pataka** hand, where all fingers are extended and held close together with the thumb slightly bent to touch the base of the index finger. Then, to create Ardhapataka, the **ring finger and little finger is bent downward** at the middle joint while the other fingers (thumb, index, middle, and little fingers) remain fully extended.

While both gestures involve similar hand positions, their names and symbolic uses are **distinct**. **Kapata Hasta** relates to **doorways and access**, mostly in **sculpture**, whereas **Ardhapataka** functions within **performance** and carries a wide range of **narrative meanings**. Their overlapping forms can sometimes cause confusion, but their **context and intention** clearly differentiate them.

9. **Kartari mukha**, meaning "scissors face," is a single-hand gesture (asamyuta hasta) described in both the Natyasastra and shilpasastra. The mudra visually resembles an open pair of scissors, formed by stretching the index and middle fingers apart in a V-shape, while the ring and little fingers are folded into the palm and held down by the thumb. This hasta is not just a hand position but a symbolic tool used in both dance and sculpture.

In Natyasastra, Kartarimukha is used to depict actions like **separation, disagreement, lightning, a pair of eyes, or creeping movement of animals**.

In shilpasastra, Kartari mukha is also prominent, often seen in temple sculptures where divine figures hold objects like the chakra (discus), shankha (conch), parasu (axe), padma (lotus), or kamandalu (water vessel) in this hand pose.

Interestingly, the name and symbolic meaning of Kartari mukha remain consistent across both dance and sculpture traditions, highlighting the strong interconnection between performing and visual arts in Indian aesthetics.

10. Nagabandha and Nagayardha are visual expressions rooted in the symbolic representation of serpents within Indian classical art and dance. In **Bharatanatyam** and other traditional forms, **Nagabandha** is a double-hand gesture where the wrists are crossed and the fingers are shaped to resemble the hood of serpents. This posture signifies the intertwining of snakes and is often used to express themes of **duality, unity, protection, and cosmic energy**—particularly the **Kundalini** or divine serpent power. It frequently appears in dance sequences related to serpent deities, mystical transformations, or divine guardianship.

Sculpturally, it is seen in depictions of **Naga figures or Vishnu resting on Ananta**, where coiling forms enhance the sense of flow and ornamentation. On the other hand, **Nagayardha**, meaning “half-serpent,” is not a codified mudra but an interpretive pose. It describes a **partially coiled or serpentine movement** of the hands or limbs that imitate a snake's slither or energy.

To perform the **Nagabandha** (meaning “intertwined snakes”) mudrā, the dancer begins by using **both hands**. Each hand is shaped into the **Sarpashirsa** hasta, where all the fingers are extended and curved slightly like the hood of a snake.

Then, the dancer **crosses both hands at the wrists**, usually in front of the chest or at the level of the abdomen, so that the hands interlace or appear to be **entwined like two snakes**. The fingers may either remain slightly apart or curve inward, depending on the interpretive need of the performance.

While both terms reflect similar meaning—**entwined serpents or coiled energy**—Nagabandha is more structured and symbolic, whereas Nagayardha is **fluid and expressive**, used to convey movement, emergence, or transformation. Together, they emphasize the powerful serpent imagery in both performance and sculpture traditions.

RESULT

Pataka and Abhaya Mudra share similarities, particularly in the context of expressing blessing. While Pataka, under its viniyogas (applications), can represent blessing, Abhaya Mudra directly symbolizes fearlessness and divine protection, which aligns with the idea of a blessing. On the other hand, Varada Mudra signifies boon-giving or generosity, which is not a meaning conveyed by Pataka. Additionally, Pataka carries several other meanings such as denial, wind, or forest, which are not associated with either Abhaya or Varada Mudra.

Ardha Chandra Mudra from the Natyasastra and Kati Mudra from the shilpasastra both convey similar meanings—typically referring to grace, posture, or placing the hand on the waist. However, they differ in name depending on the textual tradition.

SuciMudra and Tarjani Mudra also resemble each other in form and function. Suci denotes a needle or pointing gesture and is also used to express emotions like anger or to represent a person or singular object. Tarjani primarily conveys a pointing action or warning. While both mudras visually appear similar, Suci encompasses a broader range of meanings that Tarjani does not.

Hamsasya and Vyakhyana Mudras differ significantly in both name and meaning. Hamsasya represents a swan and is often used in delicate or graceful contexts, while Vyakhyana symbolizes teaching or instruction, frequently used in depictions of sages or teachers in sculpture.

Alapadma and Alapallava Mudras differ in both terminology and meaning, though their visual depiction may seem similar. Alapadma represents a fully blossomed lotus, often symbolizing beauty or divine femininity, while Alampana refers to a foundational or decorative support element in sculpture.

Anjalasya (from Natyasastra) and Namaskara Mudra (from Shilpasastra) both symbolize salutation and reverence, but are known by different names in their respective texts.

Puspaputakha and Anjali Mudra appear visually similar—both involving rounded palms and share primary meaning of holding or offering flowers but they differ in both name.

Kapata Mudra and Ardhapataka Mudra differ in both meaning and name. Kapata refers to the act of opening or holding a door, while Ardhapataka is used to represent objects like leaves or knives, with no overlapping meanings.

Kartari Mudra is consistent in both Natyasastra and shilpasastra in terms of name, visual depiction, and meaning. It resembles a pair of scissors or blades, symbolizing separation or cutting, and this is reflected clearly in its form.

Nagabandha and Nagardha Mudras differ in name, but they are identical in visual form and symbolic meaning—both represent two coiled serpents intertwined.

CONCLUSION

This research based on two texts. The **Natyasastra**, a text on performance arts, was composed around **200 BCE to 200 CE**, while the **Shilpasastra**, which includes multiple texts on sculpture and architecture, evolved between **500 BCE to 1500 CE**.

Both texts play a vital role in shaping Indian classical traditions. Even though they focus on different areas, **the Natyasastra on performing arts and the Shilpasastra on visual forms like temple architecture and iconography**. They share a common goal, to express deeper **spiritual, moral, and cultural values** through art.

The knowledge preserved in the Natyasastra has often been visually supported and sustained through **sculptural representations found in temples, created according to Shilpasastra guidelines**. These stone carvings, unlike fragile manuscripts, have **withstood the test of time**, keeping artistic traditions alive.

Protecting these texts and their connected traditions is crucial to preserving India's **cultural identity, mythology, and sacred beliefs**. This study aims to explore **ten specific mudras** that show a strong **link between the Natyasastra and the Shilpasastra**, Offering a lasting glimpse of an artistic or cultural heritage immortalized in both movement and stone.

RECOMMENDATION

Future studies should explore, A Semiotic Study of Hand Gestures in Shilpa Shastra and Natya Shastra" Policy makers need to consider, The Dynamic Meanings of Mudras in Sculpture and Performance.

Bibliography

1. Bharata Muni. **Natyasastra** Translated by Manomohan Ghosh, Asiatic Society, 1951.
2. Bharata Muni. **Natyasastra**. Translated by Manomohan Ghosh, Calcutta University, 1967.
3. Mudras and postures seen in iconography by Moni Gatha

4. Kapila Vatsyayan. Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts, Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1977.
5. Adya Rangacharya. The **Natyasastra**: English Translation with Critical Notes, 1996.
6. Kramrisch, Stella. The Hindu Temple, Volumes I & II, Motilal Banarsidass, 1976.
7. Dagens, Bruno. Mayamata: An Indian Treatise on Housing Architecture and Iconography, IGNCA, 1985.
8. Acharya, P.K. Architecture of Manasara, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1933 (Reprint).
9. Acharya, Prasanna Kumar. Indian Sculpture: Its Development and Characteristics, Motilal Banarsidass, 1933.
10. Saraswati, P.S. **Natyasastra** (Translated with Commentary), 1985.
11. Krishna, V. "Dance, Health and Wellbeing: Insights from Indian Classical Dance Forms." Journal of Dance Studies, 2017.
12. Katrak, Kirit. "Mudras and their Psycho-Physiological Significance in Indian Dance." Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge, 2011.