

.the hand as microcosm

The word manifestation derives from the Latin for 'hand'; manus. That which is manifest may be sensed by the hand or has been created by the hand of the Divine. In some of the world's mystical traditions, particularly yoga, the manifestation of the state of self-realisation, or union with the Universal, is the sensation of a cool energy on the hands. This knowledge was expressed by William Blake in his epic poem on Milton: 'With cold hand Urizen stoop'd down and took up water from the river Jordan, pouring onto Milton's brain the icy fluid from his broad cold palm'.

Some contemporary spiritual healing organisations claim that heat felt on the hands is what the aspirant should be aiming for; however basic physics shows that heat is a result of friction or the interruption of flow in a system. Surely we would prefer the energies in our subtle body to be coursing freely; granted we might expect a little heat initially as psychic accretions are brillo-padded away, but we would hope to be cool in most situations, not just in a crisis or when appearing on stage with Jimmy Hendrix at Woodstock. The heat experienced during a fever is a pretty good sign that your body has been invaded by an organism (or perhaps a malevolent entity, if you belong to a traditional culture); the chemical reactions that happen in the stomach produce heat but who needs digestion to take place in their hands? Blake refers to the 'black flames of hell' which 'give heat but no light'. So why not 'chill-out'?



It is not surprising that the energies released by spiritual transformation should manifest themselves on the hands since many cultures have seen the hand as a key to what is happening in a person's body and life. In Eastern schools of thought it is believed that the seven psycho-spiritual centres are reflected on

the hands, just as the body itself may be a reflection of the macro-centres of the solar system; the planets which we see merely as enormous, decorative lumps of rock. These chakras, as they are known in Sanskrit, are located in parts of the body where there is a major plexus in the central nervous system and regulate the various organs of the body. The condition of these organs may, therefore, be felt on the hands if we are sufficiently sensitive and integrated. It is a relatively recent observation of medical science that pain in the little finger may indicate the onset of a coronary; Indian yogis have known this for centuries.

This vibratory awareness has been hinted at in Muslim scriptures for example the Koran predicts that at the time of Resurrection our 'hands will speak', 'That day, we set a seal on their mouths, but their hands will speak to us, and their hands bear witness to all that they did'. The Prophecies of the Twelve Imams is a collection of writings compiled by scholarly Muslims in the 9th century which refer to the time of the Last Judgement when the twelfth Imam, Mahdi (or Mahtadi), comes to save the world. The world religions, (and not just Islam), it is written, 'will be re-established in their original Truth and Purity by Mahdi.' The predictions go on to describe how Mahdi will integrate the religions by revealing the hidden unity behind them and there is also a reference to the vibratory awareness on the hands of the companions of the twelfth Imam (or realised souls); 'For decisions they have difficulty in taking, they will receive instructions and direction from the Imam who will write on the palms of their hands'.

The hands register the state of our chakras which is a direct result of our attitudes and actions; this suggests a scenario in which the individual judges himself via an inbuilt process, rather than being sorted like a battery egg by a vengeful Father God. Naturally this process would happen at a very deep stratum of the unconscious and would not involve the ego.

The hand is sometimes compared to the eye: it sees. This is an interpretation found in psychoanalysis where the hand appears in dreams as an equivalent to the eye.

Perhaps this identification of the hand with an organ of sense other than touch is due to the fact that the hands are governed by the Visshuddhi or cervical plexus (neck and shoulders) which is the subtle centre the most sensitive to etheric vibrations. This chakra and the hands are like a subtle radio receiver.

It was the wind that gave them life. It is the wind that comes out of our mouths now that gives us life. When this ceases to blow we die.
In the skin at the tips of our fingers we see the train of the wind, it shows us where the wind blew when our ancestors were created.
**IT WAS THE WIND,
NAVAJO, 19TH CENTURY**

China's Tao Te Ching records that the right hand corresponds to the principle of action, the left hand to wisdom or non-action; in India the left hand is associated with the lunar quality of desire and emotion, the right hand with the solar principle of action. The qualities are not considered to swap in left handed individuals and it is known that the vastly differing qualities of the two hemispheres of the brain, that each control the hand on the opposite side of the body, do not swap either.

This same polarity is also the basis of the Hindu and Buddhist mudras. Hasta mudras or hand postures have been used by yogis for centuries to regulate the flow of energy through the chakras of the hand (and thereby the whole body) in order to prevent diseases, which are believed to have their root in an imbalance in one or more of the chakras. Some schools of yoga also identify each of the fingers with one of the five elements: the thumb with fire, the forefinger with ether, the middle finger with water, the ring finger with earth or light, and little finger with air. There are some correspondences with the planetary designations of palmistry. It is said that there are twenty four mudras, one for each of the twenty four words in the famous Gayatri Mantra of Hinduism.

Mudras are a vital key to the interpretation of meaning in Hindu and Buddhist iconography; the hand of Buddha is open to say that it holds back no secrets from the disciple. In the bhūmisparśha mudra (attestation of the Earth) the hand is lowered, fingers touching the ground- the Buddha takes from the Earth a testimony to his Buddhahood. The añjali mudra is a gesture of adoration or prayer used also in Christendom; in another mudra common to East and West the forefinger and middle finger point to heaven while the others are folded, Christ is often shown making this gesture. In the dhyana mudra the palms rest on the knees upwards to receive the energy of the heavens.

The dance rituals of India and South East Asia have been called the dances of the hands; the positions of the hands and fingers symbolise interior attitudes and are capable of signing lengthy, wordless narratives.

The hand is a synthesis, exclusively human, of many differing energies; the binary polarity of masculine and feminine, the five elemental forces, the seven centres of consciousness and the thousand sensitivities

of the brain. An enormous quantity of energy flows through the hands; energy to heal, create, balance, communicate, and transform. They are our most powerful interface with others. To be held by the hand of the Divine is to receive the manifestation of its Spirit; hence the final words of Christ:

'In manus tuas Domine, commendo spiritum meum'



ABHAYA
assuring protection



VARADA
bestowing a favour



**AHAYA
VARADA**
beckoning to bestow



**KATAKA
MUKHA**
holding a flower



**KARTARI
MUKHA**
fingers held like scissors to hold a weapon



**KATYA
VALAMBITA**
making a gesture a little below the waist to signal the easing of sorrow



LOLA
going freely



**SUCHI or
TARJANI**
designating by name or inspiring terror



VISMAYA
suggesting astonishment



CHINMUDRA
instruction by silence of contemplation



ANJALI
adoration



**DANDA
HASTA**
gesture of Shiva indicating that the devotee should seek refuge under his lifted foot

Mudras