



Sandalwood Buddha Statue

For Prelims: Origin of Buddhism, Mudras, Principles of Buddhism, Sandalwood.

For Mains: Significance of Buddhism, Indian Literature, Spread of Buddhism in Ancient India.

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India gifts a **sandalwood Buddha statue** to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during the latter's two-day state visit.

- The statue depicts Buddha sitting in '**dhyana mudra**' under the **Bodhi tree**.

What is Sandalwood?

- **About: Santalum album**, commonly known as [Indian Sandalwood](#), is a dry [deciduous forest species native to](#) China, India, Indonesia, Australia, and the Philippines.
 - Sandalwood has been long associated with the Indian heritage & culture, as the country contributed **85% of the world' sandalwood trade erstwhile**. However, lately this has been declining at a fast rate.
- **Features:** This small tropical tree **grows to 20m high with red wood and a variety of dark colors of bark** (dark brown, reddish and dark grey).
- **Uses:** Because it is **strong and durable**, Sandalwood is mostly harvested for its timber.
 - Indian Sandalwood is one of the **most sacred herbs of Ayurveda**.
- **Distribution in India:** In India, sandalwood is mostly grown in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.
 - **Karnataka** is sometimes called as '**Gandhara Gudi**' or the **land of sandalwood**. The art of sandalwood carving has been an integral part of Karnataka's cultural heritage for centuries. Its earliest origins can be traced back to the 3rd century B.C. The state has also set up a **Sandalwood Development Board** to ensure that the resources are sustainably managed.
- [IUCN Red List Status](#): Vulnerable.

What is Mudra in Buddhism?

- In [Buddhism](#), **mudras are hand gestures or positions that are used during meditation** and other practices to help focus the mind, channel energy, and deepen one's connection to the teachings. Here are some of the mudras commonly used in Buddhism:
 - **Dhyana Mudra:** In this mudra, **the hands are placed on the lap, with the right hand on top of the left, and the thumbs touching**.
 - This mudra symbolizes meditation, concentration, and inner peace.
 - **Anjali Mudra:** This is the most common mudra used in Buddhism, and it involves pressing the **palms together in front of the chest, with the fingers pointing upwards**.
 - It represents respect, greeting, and gratitude.
 - **Vitarka Mudra:** This mudra is also known as the "**teaching mudra**" or "**gesture of**

discussion," and it involves holding the right hand up, with the thumb and index finger touching to form a circle.

- It represents the transmission of knowledge and the communication of the Buddha's teachings.
- **Varada Mudra:** In this mudra, **the right hand is extended downwards, with the palm facing outwards.**
 - It represents generosity, compassion, and the granting of wishes.
- **Abhaya Mudra:** This mudra involves **raising the right hand up to shoulder height, with the palm facing outwards.**
 - It represents fearlessness, protection, and the dispelling of negativity.
- **Bhumisparsha Mudra:** This mudra involves **touching the ground with the fingertips of the right hand, while the left hand rests on the lap.**
 - It represents the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment, and the gesture symbolizes the earth witnessing his attainment of enlightenment.
- **Uttarabodhi Mudra:** In this the **hands are held in front of the chest with the fingers of the left hand pointing upward and the fingers of the right hand pointing downward. The thumbs are then placed together in the center, creating a triangle shape.**
 - This mudra represents the union of wisdom and compassion, the balance of masculine and feminine energies, and the attainment of enlightenment through the integration of all aspects of thyself.
- **Dharma Chakra Mudra:** In this **the hands are held in front of the chest with the thumb and index finger of each hand forming a circle. The remaining three fingers of each hand are extended upwards,** representing the Three Jewels of Buddhism: **the Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings), and the Sangha (the community of practitioners).** The circle made by the thumb and index finger represents the wheel of the Dharma, which
 - This mudra represents the constant cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and the Buddha's teachings as the means to break free from this cycle.
- **Karana Mudra:** In this the **left hand is brought up to the heart, palm facing forward. The index and little fingers point straight upward. while the other three fingers are curled towards the palm.**
 - This gesture is often seen in depictions of the Buddha or bodhisattvas, as a symbol of protection and dispelling of negativity. The index finger is said to represent the energy of wisdom and the ability to overcome obstacles.
- **Jnana Mudra:** In this the **index finger and thumb are brought together to form a circle, while the other three fingers are extended outwards.**
 - This gesture represents the unity of individual consciousness with the universal consciousness, and the connection between the practitioner and the teachings of the Buddha.
- **Tarjani Mudra:** In this, the index finger is extended upward, while the other fingers are curled towards the palm. Tarjani Mudra, also known as the "threatening gesture"
 - It is used as a symbol of warning or protection against evil forces or harmful influences.



Bhumisparsha Mudra

Touching the earth as Gautama did, to invoke the earth as witness to the truth of his words.



Varada Mudra

Fulfillment of all wishes; the gesture of charity.



Dhyana Mudra

The gesture of absolute balance, of meditation. The hands are relaxed in the lap, and the tips of the thumbs and fingers touch each other. When depicted with a begging bowl this is a sign of the head of an order.



Abhaya Mudra

Gesture of reassurance, blessing, and protection. "Do not fear."



Dharmachakra Mudra

The gesture of teaching usually interpreted as turning the Wheel of Law. The hands are held level with the heart, the thumbs and index fingers form circles.



Vitarka Mudra

Intellectual argument, discussion. The circle formed by the thumb and index finger is the sign of the Wheel of Law.



Tarjani Mudra

Threat, warning. The extended index finger is pointed at the opponent.



Namaskara Mudra

Gesture of greeting, prayer, and adoration. Buddhas no longer make this gesture because they do not have to show devotion to anything.



Jnana Mudra

Teaching. The hand is held at chest level and the thumb and index finger again form the Wheel of Law.



Karana Mudra

Gesture with which demons are expelled.



Ksepama Mudra

Two hands together in the gesture of 'sprinkling' the nectar of immortality.



Uttarabodhi Mudra

Two hands placed together above the head with the index fingers together and the other fingers intertwined. The gesture of supreme enlightenment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Lord Buddha's image is sometimes shown with the hand gesture called 'Bhumisparsha Mudra'. It symbolizes (2012)

- (a) Buddha's calling of the Earth to watch over Mara and to prevent Mara from disturbing his meditation
- (b) Buddha's calling of the Earth to witness his purity and chastity despite the temptations of Mara
- (c) Buddha's reminder to his followers that they all arise from the Earth and finally dissolve into the Earth, and thus this life is transitory
- (d) Both the statements (a) and (b) are correct in this context

Ans: (b)

[Source : JE](#)

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