

Bharatanatyam Classical Indian Dance Single Hand Gestures from the Natya Shastra: Ancient Indian Dance Treatise

Bharatanatyam is a form of classical dance from Southern India with ancient roots. Bharatanatyam has two parts: movement, and theatre. Bharatanatyam dancers use gestures, like the ones shown here, to tell theatrically tell stories and to add intricacy to their movements. Bharatanatyam gestures can be used to communicate many ideas!



Source: Natyakriya

Pataka- Flag
Tripataka – Three parts of a flag
Ardhapatka – Half flag
Kartarimukha – Scissors face
Mayura- Peacock
Ardhachandra – Half moon
Arala – Crooked
Sukhatunda – Parrot’s Beak
Mushti – Fist
Shikhara – Spire
Kapitha – Wood apple
Kataka Mukha – Type of bird
Suchi–Needle
Chandrakala – Dark moon
Padmakosha – Half open lotus flower
Sarpashirsha – Serpent head
Mrigashirsha – Deer head
Simhamukha – Lion Face
Kangula – Bulb
Alapadma – Fully open lotus flower
Chatura – Smart /Square
Bramhara – Bee
Hamsasya – Wild Goose or Swan
Hamsapakshya – Wild Goose or Swan’s wing
Sandhamsa – Firefly
Mukula – flower bud
Thamrachudha – Rooster
Trishula – Trident (Emblem of Shiva)

See some of these gestures at work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0l19JUGSG4>

Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQSQTQ0WTUQ&t=88s>

Story and movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtHmwHzewS0>

Group: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQqYVp77cdo>