

Chapter 8

Mantras & Chanting



“**Japa** is the term used to describe internal or external mantra recitation. When japa begins to bear the fruit, the yogi need not continue to chant mantra: the mantra will chant the yogi. This will happen only after all the yogi’s pride and arrogance have been resolved into humility.

– *Jivamukti Yoga* by Sharon Gannon & David Life

The Secret of Mantra Chanting

By Bhanumathi Narasimhan

Mantras - Sound vibrations that permeate every cell of your being and allow your mind to dissolve and repose. But what are they? What do they mean? Where did they come from? There are so many questions surrounding these ancient syllables. Speaking about Mantras is the revelation of ancient secrets that have been kept sacred from several ages, secrets that continue to benefit humanity irrespective of its circumstances.

What are Mantras?

Mantras are impulses or rhythms of the consciousness. They create vibrations in the spirit. Their effects, influence, method and mode of working are all a mystery.

In Sanskrit, it is said, *Manana trayate iti mantra*. Mantra is that which saves you from repetitiveness. A repetitive thought is a worry. Mantras help to free you from your worries. Often we wonder why we chant some sounds without understanding their meanings? Can something beyond our understanding help us?

The meaning of every mantra is infinity. It is a sound vibration beyond the cognition of the mind. When the mind is unable to cognize, it simply dissolves and moves into a meditative space.

How Mantras affect the mind?

The mantra is like a seed. Every seed has the potential to become a tree. Similarly, these sound vibrations contain all the possibilities of creation. Some mantras are in the seed form, called the *bija* mantras. Others are fully expressed, i.e, the fruit of the mantra is also expressed, such as the Gayatri mantra.

Mantras are a secret. That which is kept a secret alerts the sub-conscious mind. The mantras work at the level of the consciousness. When we want a seed to sprout, it needs to be sown into the soil, hidden, a secret. If it is simply thrown around, birds may eat them up. We can read and learn about mantras and their uses from books and the internet but that will only satisfy the intellect and not translate into experience.

Mantra and Meditation

When we chant the mantras, or listen to them, we get purity of mind and word. This prepares



us for meditation. As a result of the sound vibrations, different patterns of the mind re-arrange themselves to become tranquil. Agitation is reduced, helping us to turn inward. For instance, when we laugh, our happiness increases. When we cry, the heaviness of our sorrow is released. Just the sounds of laughter and crying have helped. Mantras act in a similar manner. Repetition of the Mantras creates a psychological or mental response that is very deep and beyond the realm of words or expression. It can only be experienced. Speech falls short as it cannot go beyond the expression level into the experiential level.

When the mind is calm and centered, it can turn inward. Only a mind turned inward can experience the vastness and beauty of the Divine consciousness. When our focus is outward on the objects of the senses, our mind is scattered and racing behind one craving or another. Physical senses seek to know all about the external universe. Meditation is the tool for inner exploration.

Antarmukhi Sada Sukhi – one whose mind is turned inward is ever in bliss. Mantras are the tools which allow the mind to dissolve and repose in the Self.

Why should we repose in the Self? How is this going to help in our day-today life?

When the river is calm, the reflection is clearer. When the mind is calm, there is greater clarity in the field of expression. Our sense of observation, perception and expression improve. As a result we are able to communicate effectively and clearly.

Most of our problems or misunderstandings arise because of a lack of proper communication. When our mind is free from agitation, the way we interact and communicate is so much more pleasant and effective. Our efforts are not hindered by rifts caused due to communication gaps. This leads to a lot of positivity in our outlook and progress in life.

Mantras are as subtle as the air which creates ripples in the water as it gently moves over it. Air is all-pervading and at the same time affects specific regions. The field of the mantras is also such. It is all –pervading and also creates an impact on the one who is practicing.

(The writer is the sister of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and is the director of Women & Child Welfare Programs, The Art of Living.)



This symbol is pronounced "Aauumm" or "Ooommm." It is a Sanskrit symbol used in many eastern spiritual practices, representing the universe functioning as a whole unit.

A = beckoning creation

U = the evolution of individual souls

M = absorbing of all that is created.

Om is the sacred sound of the universe. Om cleans, stabilizes and seals the aura. It brings in light, purifies, protects and connects with the universe. Om is chanted and visualized by individuals or in groups to be used for healing or psychic attunement. It is recognized as the primal sound, and represents the three manifestations of all life: creation, preservation and destruction.

From the Yoga Sutras (*Translation/discussion by Swami Satchidananda*)

I.23 Or (samadhi is attained) by devotion, with total dedication, to God (*Isvara*).

I.24 *Isvara* is the supreme *Purusha* (*the real Self*) unaffected by any afflictions, actions, fruits of actions, or by any inner impressions or desires.

I.25 In Him is the complete manifestation of the seed of omniscience.

I.26 Unconditioned by time, He is the teacher of even the most ancient teachers.

I.27 The word expressive of *Isvara* is the mystical sound OM.

There are hundreds of thousands of names for God but none of them conveys the exact idea of God. They may give a picture of one aspect of God, but not the fullness. God is, was and always will be – without beginning or end, infinite and omnipresent. For such a great One, there should be a name which conveys those same ideas.

The name "chair" can remind you of a chair but you can't sit on the name. God's name should not only denote the fullness of God and itself represent God, it should also manifest God within you. And such a name cannot be anything but OM.

Let us see why it is so. The name OM can be split into three letters: A, U, and M. Every language begins with the letter A or "ah." A is pronounced by simply opening the mouth and making a sound. That sound is produced in the throat where the tongue is rooted. So, audible sound begins with A. Then as the sound comes forward between the tongue and the palate up to the lips U or "oo" is produced. Then, closing the lips produces the M. So the creation is A, the preservation is U, and the culmination is M. A-U-M includes the entire process of sound, and all other sounds are contained in it.

Mantra, Kirtan Chants & Prayers

Om

Om is the primordial sound of the universe, the pranava. – Yoga Sutras

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

Peace, Peace, Peace

The Guru Mantra

Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheshwara
Guru sakshat param Brahma
Tasmai sri gurave namah

*Our creation is that guru; the duration of our lives is that guru; our trials, illnesses and calamities is that guru. There is a guru that is nearby and a guru that is beyond the beyond. I humbly make my offering to the guru, the beautiful remover of ignorance, which is within me and surrounds me at all times.**

The Gayatri Mantra

Om bhur bhuvah svaha
Tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo
Yo nah prachodayat

We meditate on the Divine Reality, the source of all on the physical, the astral and the celestial planes.

May this supreme Divinity enlighten our intellect & heart so we may realize the Supreme Truth.

The Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra

Om tryambakam yajamahe sugandhim pushti-varadhanam
Urvarukam iva bandhanan mrityor mukshiya mamritat

We worship Shiva, the three-eyed Lord who is fragrant and nourishes all beings. As is the ripened cucumber freed from its bondage to the stalk, may He liberate us from death for the sake of immortality.

Lam Vam Ram Yam Ham Om Om



Mantras for the Chakras 1-7

Om namah Shivaya

Invocation to Shiva, the Supreme Self, Ultimate Reality

Om namo Narayanaya

Invocation to Lord Narayana, a mantra for world peace

Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya

Invocation to Vasudeva, a mantra for liberation

Om gum Ganapataye namaha

Invocation to Ganesha, a mantra to help remove obstacles

Lokah Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu

May all beings everywhere be happy and free from suffering.

The Maha Mantra

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna

Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare

Hare Rama, Hare Rama

Rama Rama, Hare Hare

Radha calls to Krishna, as “the one who has captured my heart, mind, body and soul, my everything, my all!”

Krishna calls Radha, his beloved, the name Rama, which means “my queen, my delight”

*This is a love dialogue between the soul (Radha) and God (Krishna)**

The Maha Vakya Mantra

Om asato maa sad gamaya

Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya

Mrtyor maa amrtam gamaya

Lead me from reality to unreality.

Lead me from darkness to light.

Lead me from fear of death to knowledge of immortality.



**these translations are from the Jivamukti Yoga Chant book*

The Adi Mantra (Kundalini Yoga)

Ong Namō, Gurudev Namō.

I bow to the infinite creative consciousness; I call upon divine wisdom.

The Mangala Charn Mantra

Ad guray nameh

Jugad guray nameh

Sat guray nameh

Siri guru devay nameh

This mantra is chanted for protection. It surrounds the magnetic field with protective light, and means "I bow to the primal Guru (guiding consciousness who takes us to God-Realization), I bow to wisdom through the ages, I bow to True Wisdom, I bow to the great, unseen wisdom." – this translation from KundaliniYoga.org.

Kirtan Chants

Hare Ram Sita Ram

Hare Ram Ram Ram

Sita Ram Ram Ram

Hare Ram Ram Ram

Jai Sita Ram Ram Ram

Ram & Mother Sita, chanting for divine love and grace

Sri Ram

Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai jai, Ram

Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai jai, Ram

Victory to Lord Ram, the righteous and the just, mantra for strength!

Govinda hare

Govinda hare

Gopala hare

Hey prabhu dinadayala Hare



Hey, you sweet Govinda, my closest friend, who loves me and allows me to love without inhibitions.*

Sri Krishna Govinda

Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare
hey Natha Narayana Vasudeva
hey Natha Narayana Vasudeva
hey Natha Narayana Vasudeva

*Beautiful Govinda, the one who is Lord of the senses and who destroys the demon Muri. Hey, you are the Lord Narayana, the first and last, the one who abides in all things as the sacred heart.**

Dedication Song

Twameva mata cha pita twameva
Twameva bandhu cha saka twameva
Twameva vidya dravinam twameva
Twameva sarvam mama deva deva

*Oh God, you are my mother, father, relative, friend, knowledge, wealth. You are my everything.**

Chants to Ma/Mother/Devis

Jai Ma, Jai Ma, Jai Ma.....

A call to the divine mother

Devi Ma, Durga Ma, Kali Ma, Lakshmi Ma

Invocations to female deities, a mantra for shakti power, abundance, strength, mother earth

Adi Shakti Mantra

Adi shakti, Adi shakti, Adi shakti, Namó Namó.
Sarab shakti, Sarab shakti, Sarab shakti, Namó Namó.
Prithum bhagawati, Prithum bhagawati, Prithum bhagawati, Namó Namó.
Kundalini, Mata shakti, Mata shakti, Namó Namó.

This mantra tunes into the frequency of the Divine Mother, and to primal protective, generating energy. Chanting it eliminates fears and fulfills desires. Adi Shakti means the "Primal Power," Sarab Shakti means "All Power", and Prithum Bhagawati means "which creates through God." –



this translation from KundaliniYoga.org

Other Chants

Invocation to Patanjali (Traditional invocation for Ashtanga Yoga as taught by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois)

Om. Vande gurunam charanaravinde
samdarshita swatma sukhavabodhe
nishreyase jangalikayamane
samsara hala hala mohashantieh

Abahu purushakaram
shanka chakrasi dharinam
sahasra shirasam shvetam
pranamami Patanjali Om.

Om. I pray to the lotus feet of the supreme Guru who teaches the good knowledge, showing the way to knowing the self-awakening great happiness; who is the doctor of the jungle, able to remove the poison of the ignorance of conditional existence.

To Patanjali, an incarnation of Adisesa, white in color with 1000 radiant heads human in form below the shoulders, holding a sword (discrimination), a wheel of fire (infinite time), and a conch (divine sound) -- to him, I prostrate.

Mantra for Lord Shiva (Invocation for Anusara Yoga)

Om Namah Shivaya Gurave Sacchidananda-Murtaye Nishprapanchaya Shantaya Niralambaya Tejase

Hail to Shiva, the Teacher, whose form is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. The Singular One, the Peaceful One, The Self-Supported One, The Lustrous One.

Om Mani Padme Hum (Buddhist chant)

Literal translation: the jewel is in the lotus

Interpretation: "The meaning of this mantra is: with 'OM' we are calling Avalokiteshvara [the Buddha of compassion], 'MANI' means the precious jewel of enlightenment, 'PAME' means liberation and 'HUM' means bestow. Together, the meaning is: 'O Avalokiteshvara, please bestow the precious jewel of enlightenment to liberate all living beings'. - *Geshe Kelsang Gyatso*

