



The Real Power of Mantra

by Simon Chokoisky

*Amantram aksharam nāsti, nāsti mūlam
anaushadham*

*Ayogyah purusho nāsti, yojakas tatra
durlabhaha*

*There is no syllable that is not a mantra, no
root that is not medicine;*

*There is no person who is not born with a use,
but it takes skill to find these things*

IN EVERYONE'S HOROSCOPE, there are key sounds, or *mantras*, that reflect various aspects of their personality. This is based on the individual placement of planets at the time of their birth. Vedic astrology makes use of these (what are sometimes called sacred or 'primordial sounds') for naming people and businesses, for meditation, and even for finding compatible partners.

Such short 'seed syllables' or *bija mantras* are practicable for Westerners because they are not particularly difficult to pronounce. But probing the heart of the Mantric tradition requires a deeper understanding of Sanskrit, because the majority of mantras in that language are lengthier and more complex than the single-syllable we are used to in the West. Want to get in touch with Ganeśa? His seed mantra, *om gam ganapataye namaha* is great, but the longer *ganapati atharva śīrsham*, a mantra that takes about ten minutes to recite, may introduce you to a deeper level of this deity.

Want to create understanding and harmony in your life? The *Vishnu Sahasranāma* can help, but you have to invoke the thousand names of Vishnu with some degree of intelligibility. It is true that *intention* is ultimately most important, but the power of a mantra really shines when it is also properly articulated. For example, *ananda* means "lack of joy, misery" while *ānanda* denotes the opposite: "rolling in joy, bliss." Do you think flipping these could have an effect on your spiritual practice?

In Sanskrit classes, we joke that the word *cakra* (pronounced 'chuh-kruh') is only a *shaakraah* in California. That is, there are variants in Sanskrit pronunciation wherever you go, even in different regions of India (think prakriti vs. prakruti). But attaining a rudimentary understanding of 'correct' pronunciation frees us to play and be creative when we like—to call a *cakra* a *shaakraah* with delight—and with the inside understanding that we know what to call it when the time is right.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF MANTRAS

In Āyurveda, there are mantras for healing various organs and systems in the body. For example, *brūm* is a *bija* mantra for the liver, while *rim* (or *rum*) works for the ears and *hrīm* for the eyes. A slightly longer version of these also exists, like *Om hrīm sūryāya namaha* for the eyes, and *Om dvam dvāra vāsinābhyām namaha* for the ears.

There are also longer mantras like the *mahā mṛtyunjaya* that are recited 108 times per day to help with difficult to treat diseases:

*Om tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim pushti
vardhanam*

*Urvā rukam iva bandhanān mṛtyor mukshīya
māmritāt*

This famous mantra actually comes from the Rig Veda and is embedded in the Shri Rudram, an ancient paen to Rudra and a powerful healing hymn that takes about thirty minutes to recite in its entirety.

There are also Tantric-based mantras like the *cakra bija* sounds:

Laṃ – 1st cakra

Vaṃ – 2nd cakra

Raṃ – 3rd cakra

Yaṃ – 4th cakra

Haṃ – 5th cakra

Ksham or Om- 6th cakra

There are also short, medium, and long mantras for each of the planets. Having trouble with Saturn? Try the Shani bīja: *om sham shanaishcarāya namaha*. Or his Purānic mantra:

*Om nīlānjana samābhāsam, ravi putram
yamāgrajam*

*Cchāyā mārtaṇḍa sambhūtam, tam namāmi
shanāishcaram*

Want to please all nine planets in one swoop? You can do that too, with long or short mantras like this one:

*Brahmā murāris tripurānta kārī, bhānuḥ
shashī bhūmi suto budhash ca*

*Gurush ca shukra shanī rāhu ketu, sarve
grahā shānti pradā bhavantu*

The mantra *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya* is a sacred invocation said to cleans all twelve houses of your horoscope with its twelve syllables. A concentrated form of the *Vishnu Sahasranāma*, thousand names of Vishnu, it invokes the sustainer of the universe to ensure peace and harmony in the home and in our relationships.

Probably the most popular and most numerous mantras are those dedicated to deities, like the aforementioned Ganesha and Vishnu, as well as mantras to the divine mother, avatars like Rāma and Krishna, and even natural forces like Vāyu and Agni, Wind and Fire personified.

Literally thousands of mantras exist to honor the various aspects of Nature and the deities that represent them, and to learn these takes dedicated study under a guru and a lineage. The common thread that unites them, however, is Sanskrit. And though few of us will become Sanskrit scholars, a little effort goes a long way towards making the words you speak mantras, and the mantras you say powerful and imbued with meaning. 🌀

For more on healing, planetary, and other mantras as well as the Sanskrit know-how behind them, refer to the Sanskrit Without Stress DVD program, details on page 16.



About the Author

Simon teaches Ayurvedic Studies Program, Levels 1 and 2 Sanskrit as well as ASP 2 Medical Jyotish. He was born to Bulgarian immigrant parents in Phoenix, AZ, where he attended Arizona State University. Dissatisfied with a French major, he turned to Ayurveda in 1998 and, with Jyotisha, began his study in the Vedic sciences.

Simon has studied Vastu Shastra, Sanskrit, Jyotisha, and Ayurveda, and worked professionally as a fitness consultant



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