

Yoga Through Mantra and Mahāmantra – A Very Brief Introduction

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Yoga is the science of the union of the human being with the Divine dwelling within. The Yoga journey traverses eight steps, starting with *yama* (ethical rules) and *niyama* (personal regulation) in order to make the body fit for the higher journey. It is necessary to purify the *nādis* (subtle hollow channels) so that the sleeping *chakrās* may awaken. When psychic purification of the luminous arteries is done, the vital fluid, the *prāna*, goes upward to the higher centres.

This purification is facilitated by special postures, including *siddhāsana*, *vajrāsana*, *moolbandhāsana*; by various *mudrās* (esoteric hand gestures connecting the physical and spiritual bodies) such as *yonimudrā* and *khecharimudrā*; and by other elements such as *uddiyāna bandha* and different forms of *prānāyama* (roughly, breathing exercises), such as *anuloma-viloma* or alternate nostril breathing.

When the mind focuses upon a point or an object, real or imaginary, this process is called concentration or *dhāranā*. For example, the *Vijñānābhairava Tantra* outlines a comprehensive list of 112 *dhāranās*. When the mind is fully concentrated on one fixed object, it is called *dhyāna*. When the mind can identify itself with the Divine presence in every human being—*ātmā*—the *sādhaka* then reaches the ultimate state of *samādhi*. The state of *samādhi* can be reached through *hāṭha*, *rāja*, *bhakti*, or *laya-mantra yoga*.

Mantra yoga is an exact science (*mananāt trayate iti mantraḥ*, “that which by constant thinking protects and releases from the rounds of birth and death, is *mantra*). *Mantra* also allows you to enjoy the four *puruṣārthas*, or goals of human life, namely: *dharmā*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa* (loosely, ‘right living’, ‘right livelihood’, ‘controlled pleasures’, and ‘final liberation from birth and death’). *Japa* is the repetition of any *mantra* over and over again (for example, 108 times, 1008 times, 125,000 times, etc.) *Mantra-japa* has been called the royal road of *sāadhanā* during the present era of *kaliyuga*.

Many *mantras* commence or end with the holy syllable *auṃ* or *om* (ॐ). *Om* is *shabda-brahma*, or *nāda-brahma*, that is, the Ultimate in the form of letter (*shabda*) or sound (*nāda*). *Om* contains all sounds, all colours, all mathematical processes, all organs, all planetary systems, all universes and anti-universes. It is the past, present, and the future. *Om* transcends time. *Om* is both *ātman* and *Brahman*.

Each *mantrā* has six elements: *ṛṣi* (seer), *rāga* (melody), *devatā* (presiding deity), *bīja* (seed sound), *shakti* (power), *kilaka* (pillar). Mantric powers were intended for the good of humanity. *Mantras* could be chanted aloud, whispered, repeated mentally, or written daily on paper. Only a realized *guru* has truly harnessed the power of *mantra*. When the *guru* transmits the *mantra*, the *mantra* becomes alive and full of positive vibrations.

There are three types of *mantras*:

1. *Sāttvic mantras* have ascending force. They awaken consciousness, bringing peace, joy, harmony, health and happiness to all living beings. Examples of *sāttvic mantras* are *om* (ॐ), *hring* or *hreem* (ॐ), *shanti mantra*, *namokar mantra*, *gayatri mantra* and some of the *bīja mantras* for the *cakras*.
2. *Rājasic mantras* have an expansive, dynamic force. They increase activities, impulses and desires. They are recited to get rid of physical and mental problems; to enjoy the pleasures of life manifold; to attract prosperity; and to increase success in daily life. These *mantras* facilitate personal evolution and open the doors to Heaven. Examples of *rājasic mantras* are the *bīja mantras lum* (ॐ), *vum* (ॐ), *aim* (ॐ), the *hanuman chālisā*, *lakṣmī stotra*, etc.
3. *Tāmasic mantras* have descending force. They are full of darkness, inertia, and idleness. They are meant to control, enslave, hurt, and kill other living beings. Needless to say, they are not good for the average *sādhaka*—or for any person for that matter. It is best to stay far away from them, for after death, they will bring you down to lower life forms or to various hells. Examples of *tāmasic mantras* are *grast*, *vaśikaraṇ*, *stambhan*, *uchchatan*, and any 6 or 8 letter *mantra* ending in *phat*, *thaḥ thaḥ*, etc.

Do the *japa* – chanting, repetition of the *mantra* with reverence and positive feelings. Know the *mantra*. This will invoke Divinity. Feel the presence of *Īśvara* when chanting. The repetition of the *mantra* removes *karmic* dirt and debris, such as lust, anger, jealousy, greed, etc. from mind and body. Chant *mantras* with *śraddhā* (faith), *bhāva* (feeling), and *dhāraṇa* (one-pointed concentration) and you will enjoy everlasting peace, infinite bliss, abundant prosperity, and freedom from death—immortality. Let *mantra* become the song of your soul.

A human being is a ray of the Supreme Light. The perfect Divine power *śakti*—*kuṇḍalinī*—*prāṇa-śakti* is present in a latent form in each human. *Kuṇḍalinī-śakti* within man is boundless. She fills our world and universe. She is the root of *rāja-yoga*, *haṭha-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, *karma-yoga*. The spiritual path becomes easy when this energy is awakened. Man becomes self-realized and Divine. For such a person, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* occur spontaneously.

Mantra japa is a relatively easy and accessible means of bringing about immediate physical, mental, financial, and spiritual results for a person. The sound of the *mantra* mixes with *prāṇa* and goes to the heart. From there, it merges with the *āyurvedic* seven constitutions and seven *cakras* of the body. The *mantra* creates electric and magnetic currents in the *panca prānas* (five external vital airs) which in turn purifies *nādis*, organs, body and mind.

If any *mantra* contains *bījākṣaras* of the *cakras*, then that *mantra* earns the honorific of being a *mahāmantra*, or great *mantra*. A *bījamantra* consists of one to nine letters, or Sanskrit *akṣaras*. A regular *mantra* has 10 to 20 letters; a *malamantra* has more than 20 letters, and a *mahāmantra* includes some *cakra bīja mantras*.

Cakra	Letter	Bījākṣara	Theme
Sahasrāra	An/am	Mmmmm	Imagination
Ajñā	Om	Aum	Intuition
Viśuddha	H	Hum	Conceptual
Anāhata	Y	Yum	Emotional
Manipura	R	Rum	Intellectual
Svādhistana	V,W	Vum	Social
Mulādhara	L	Lum	Shiva/Shakti; sex, Tantra

So now you know some basic theory about *mantras*. But *mantras* have been given to humans for very practical purposes. Here are some techniques you can start using for immediate benefit.

How to Chant Cakra Bīja Mantras

Remember: control of breath, specifically exhalation, eventually leads to control over death.

1. Inhale deeply from the abdomen. Upon exhalation, chant *lum(ॠ)* 15 times. This will give protection for one half-lunar cycle (15 days). Then, try chanting *lum* 30 times in one exhalation. Increase the number of times chanted to 45 and then to 60 in each exhalation.
2. Inhale deeply from the abdomen. Upon exhalation, chant *lum* 11 times in one exhalation; then 22 times, then 33 and 44 times. You will note that this is a variation of #1, changing the rhythm of the chanting. By activating the master numbers, it will give you control over all important things in life.
3. Do #1 and #2 four, five, eight, nine, or eleven times in one day.
4. Morning, noon, and evening are good times for chanting *mantra*. If you want to be more specific, chant in the 24 minutes before and after sunrise, 24 minutes before and after true noon, 24 minutes before and after sunset, and 24 minutes before and after true midnight. It is important to be regular in practice, and chant at the same times each day.

Personal Mantras For Immediate Use

<i>Physical</i>	<i>Mental</i>	<i>Emotional/ Spiritual</i>	<i>Social/ Material</i>
aam(<i>ām</i>)	eem(<i>īm</i>)	oom(<i>ūm</i>)	aha(<i>ahā</i>)

* If your name begins with a consonant, add the appropriate consonant at the beginning.

In Sanskrit, compound letters are considered to be one *akṣara* or letter. So, for example, in the name “Brian”, the first letter would be “Br”, not just “B”.

Here are some examples to help you understand:

<i>Names</i>	<i>Chant</i>
Anand, Ann, Umesh, Eknath	ām, īm, ūm, ahā
Balaraj, Betty	bām, bīm, būm, bahā
Damini, Dan	dām, dīm, dūm, dahā
Gayatri, Gail	gām, gīm, gūm, gahā
Pranav, Priti	prām, prīm, prūm, prahā
Harsha, Harry	hām, hīm, hūm, hahā
Nandana, Naresh	nām, nīm, nūm, nahā

How to Chant: Take a deep abdominal breath and use all the air to chant the four syllables. Do this three times—with faith, gratitude, and devotion.