

The Power of Sanskrit Mantras by Simon Heather

Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages in the world. The word Sanskrit means 'perfected' or 'refined'. The hymns of the 'Rigveda' have been chanted in Sanskrit for 4,000 years. Sanskrit is said to have a sacred origin and is described as 'the language of the Gods'.

Vedic Philosophy states that the universe is composed of five great elements (*bhutas*); earth (*prithivi*), water (*apas/jala*), fire (*tejas/agni*), air (*vayu*) and ether (*akasha*). The human body is also made up of these five elements. Each element is subtler than the previous one. Each of the five elements serves a specific function within the body.

The *Yogatattva Upanishad* (slokas 83-101) describes the five lower chakras and says that each element is linked to a different chakra and a different sense organ. The Upanishad says that each chakra has an associated 'bija mantra' or 'seed sound' that is used to balance that chakra. (For more information on the 'bija mantras' for the chakras please go to the articles pages on my website).

When we chant mantras in Sanskrit, we use five different tongue/mouth positions to create the sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet. When we use the different tongue/mouth positions it stimulates the five elements. Chanting Sanskrit mantras affects our physical body and our subtle bodies. Each mantra has a different affect on us.

Chanting mantras connects us to spiritual energies and deities. The deities found in Hinduism are actually reservoirs of infinite spiritual energy that we can tap into and use for our own healing and transformation.

Sanskrit Mantra Workshop

A young woman came to one of my Sanskrit Mantra Workshops. On the workshop she learnt the sounds of the Sanskrit Alphabet and some Sanskrit Mantras. I suggested that she use the 'Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra' daily for her own healing. A few months later she contacted me to say that since using the mantra she had stopped self-harming!

Sanskrit Mantras have a powerful affect on our mind and emotions. I had long periods of depression after the tragic death of my father and the break up of a long-term relationship. I joined a devotional chanting group and found that when I chanted my depression would lift. I would also feel joyful when I chanted.

Other people that I talked to at the group had similar experiences. I was so interested in the power of mantra and chant that I travelled to India. Here I visited different ashrams and meet many spiritual teachers to try to find an explanation for my response.

How do Mantras Work?

Mantra is a Sanskrit word. Its root comes from the Sanskrit words, 'man' meaning 'to think', and 'tram' from 'tra' meaning 'to protect' or 'to free from bondage'. Hence the

word mantra means 'protecting the mind.' Chanting a mantra protects us from the self-destructive tendencies of the mind.

In the Upanishads it is said that the mind rides on the subtle energy of the breath, which moves through subtle channels in the body. When we chant a mantra, we are charging our subtle body with the energy of the mantra. This positive energy then flows into the physical body.

Sanskrit mantras, whether chanted out loud or inwardly recited, gradually awaken the chakras and leads us to deeper levels of consciousness. When an enlightened master gives a mantra to us we will receive the power of his or her enlightenment in the mantra. In India this is known as a 'spiritually charged mantra'.

In India it is understood that every sound has two aspects, the audible sound and the subtle sound. The subtle sound carries the inner meaning of the mantra. Different mantras create different vibrations that affect our body, our emotions and our mind.

Swami Sivananda says that each mantra creates a different energetic form. When we are chanting the name of a particular deity we are actually creates that form of God in subtle energy in our room.

A 'Devata' is the deity that presides over the mantra. When we chant 'Om Namaha Shivaya' we are invoking Lord Shiva, the destroyer of illusions. When we chant 'Om Kali Ma' we are invoking Goddess Kali who is a divine protector and the one who bestows liberation. Through chanting a particular mantra we develop a personal relationship with an aspect of God.

In India you would go to a guru to be given a mantra. The guru would give you a mantra that is specific to your needs and the level of your spiritual development. There are also 'Maha Mantras' like 'Om Namaha Shivaya' or 'Om Gam Ganapataye Namaha' that are suitable for anyone to use.

As human beings it is easier for us to focus on a particular form of God rather than a formless God. All gurus say that eventually all spiritual aspirants must go beyond the particular form that they worship.

When you chant a bija mantra you are sowing a seed. Within that seed is a hidden power. A tiny acorn can grow into a giant oak tree. Likewise a bija mantra if chanted regularly can totally transform our mind and our emotions. For this reason it is generally not good to keep changing your mantra. We need to water our seed rather than planting lots of new ones.

Once you have chanted a mantra for a certain period of time you will have generated a lot of spiritual energy. It is a little like putting money in the bank. After you have regularly deposited money in a bank you can start withdrawing your savings. When you have chanted a mantra for a while you will be able to draw energy from your chanting.

We can become trapped in seeing the appearance of things rather than seeing their essence. It is easy to feel that we are separate from each other, from other living

creatures and from God. By chanting a mantra the veils of illusion fall away and we re-experience our connection to all life, with all that is.

Five Levels of Mantra

In mantra practise it is recommended that we begin by chanting the mantra out loud, this helps to subdue the restless nature of the mind. After a while we can gradually move to chanting the mantra inwardly, using these five levels.

- 1) Singing Aloud
- 2) Whispered Singing
- 3) Singing in the Mind
- 4) Subconscious Singing
- 5) Super-conscious Singing

With subconscious singing the mind effortlessly repeats the mantra while we are doing or thinking something else. With super-conscious singing the mind unifies with the mantra, there is no longer any need to say the mantra there is only oneness. In India this is called 'Nada Yoga' or 'Shabda Yoga', union with the sound.

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Simon is the founder of the College of Sound Healing. The College of Sound Healing is a non-profit making organisation dedicated to promoting sound healing in the UK. Simon has an extensive background in the healing arts and is a qualified acupuncturist, sound healer and body-worker. He has studied with some of the world's leading spiritual teachers and sound healers.

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