How to Sound the Bija Mantras for the Chakras

“With the syllable Aum as their sole support, the wise person attains that which is peaceful, unageing, deathless, fearless - the Supreme.” - Atharva Veda, Prasna Upanishad 5.7.

The Yogatattva Upanishad (slokas 83–101) states that the five lower chakras are related to the five elements. There are said to be five great elements (bhutas) that make up the world; earth (prithivi), water (apas/jala), fire (tejas/agni), air (vayu) and ether (akasha).

Each element has a bija mantra associated with it, when this mantra is sounded it resonates in the chakra and purifies the nadis (subtle channels of energy). The nadis the link the higher spiritual aspects of our being with our mind, emotions and our body.

The third eye chakra is created from ‘Mahattva’, the great or supreme element out of which all the other elements are formed. The bija mantra for the Third Eye Chakra is AUM.

The Crown Chakra is beyond all elements and contains all sounds. The mantra AUM is generally used for this chakra as it is the source of all sounds and is the primal cosmic sound Anahata Nada.

LAM for Muladhara the Base Chakra - Earth Element  
VAM for Swadhisthana the Sacral Chakra - Water Element  
RAM for Manipura the Solar Plexus Chakra - Fire Element  
YAM for Anahata the Heart Chakra - Air Element  
HAM for Vishuddha the Throat Chakra - Akasha Element  
AUM for Sahasrara the Crown Chakra  

The bija mantras for the chakras are formed from the semi-vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet YA, RA, LA, VA. They are called ‘antahstha’ or intermediate sounds in Sanskrit.

David Frawley says – “Intermediating between vowels and consonants in their energetic quality, semi-vowels reflect prana or energy that mediates between the formless realm and the realm of form.”

“These Prana mantras are employed in ‘Prana-Pratishta’ a ritual performed in Hindu temples in order to bring the actual spirit of the deity into the object of worship.”

Sanskrit Alphabet
The semi-vowels are produced using the five tongue positions used in the Sanskrit Alphabet. As we sound the bija mantras the five different tongue positions stimulate the five elements balancing the chakras.

In yogic philosophy it is said that there are 72,000 nadis (subtle energy channels) in the body. When we chant in Sanskrit we are stimulating the 84 reflex points in the
mouth. There are said to 64 reflex points in the hard palate and 20 in the soft palate, these relate to the various nadis. When we chant in Sanskrit we awaken dormant parts of the brain and circulate energy through the body.

1. **Guttural** – The sound comes from the back of the throat. The back of the tongue is placed against the lower soft palate (this position is also called Velar).

2. **Cerebral** – The tip of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth (this tongue position is also called Retroflex or Lingual).

3. **Palatal** – The tongue is placed flatly against the upper soft palate.

4. **Dental** – The tongue is placed behind the upper teeth.

5. **Labial** – The sound is made by the lips (this tongue position is also called Glottal).

Each of the semivowels has a different point of pronunciation: YA uses the hard palate, RA is a retroflex consonant, and LA uses the teeth. VA mainly uses the lips, but it also requires the use of the teeth. VA is halfway between the English "va" and "wa." The sound HA comes from the back of the throat.

Harish Johari says that the addition of the NG sound to the semi-vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet turns them into bija mantras. The NG sounds are nasal, like the elephant’s sound, *Nishad or Ni* (one of the notes of the Indian Scale), that are produced by its trunk rather than its vocal chords.

The nasal sounds move energy upward to vibrate the outermost brain cortex where impressions are stored, which carry the wisdom and knowledge that bring liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

**Bija Mantras**
Each element is associated with a different symbol/shape. Visualising this symbol/shape helps to deepen our connection with the element.
LAM – Base Chakra
Visualise a square shape in the base chakra. The *bija mantra* (seed sound) for this chakra is LAM sounded as LANG. The ‘L’ sound in the *bija mantra* LANG is produced by placing the tongue behind the upper teeth. The *mantra* is made up of two sounds that are roughly equal in length LA and NG. The duration of the two sounds is the same for all the *bijas*. The NG sound is produced with a nasal intonation creating a resonant humming sound half way between an ‘M’ and a ‘N’. The *mantra* LANG is focused in the base chakra.

VAM – Sacral Chakra
Visualise a circular shape in the sacral chakra. The *bija mantra* for this chakra is VAM sounded as VANG. The ‘V’ sound in the *bija mantra* is VANG produced by the lips as though making a ‘FF’ sound before the VA. The *mantra* VANG is focused in the sacral chakra.

RAM – Solar Plexus Chakra
Visualise a triangular shape in the solar plexus chakra. The *bija mantra* for this chakra is RAM sounded as RANG. The ‘R’ sound in the *bija mantra* RANG is produced with the tip of the tongue curling up to touch the roof of the mouth. The main point of concentration when producing this seed sound is on the third chakra. The sound originates from the navel when repeated in a proper manner.

YAM – Heart Chakra
Visualise a six-pointed star in the heart chakra. The *bija mantra* for this chakra is YAM sounded as YANG. The ‘Y’ sound in the *bija mantra* YANG is produced with the tongue pressed against the soft palate at the front of the roof of the mouth. The *mantra* is focused in the heart chakra.

HAM – Throat Chakra
Visualise a crescent shape in the throat chakra. The *bija mantra* for this chakra is HAM sounded as HANG. The ‘H’ sound in the *bija mantra* HANG is produced at the back of the throat. The *mantra* is focused in the throat chakra.

AUM – Third Eye Chakra
Visualise a circle with two petals on either side. The *bija mantra* AUM is created from three sounds, A, U and M. The *mantra* AUM is focused in the third eye chakra.

AUM – Crown Chakra
The sounds associated with this chakra are all the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. The *mantra* AUM can be used for this chakra as it contains all the sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet. The *bija mantra* AUM is sounded in the crown chakra.
References

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