

Hinduism

Many Paths to One God

Mantras And Sacred Symbols

"The Vedas are mantric teachings. They consist of various mantric chants or hymns cognized by different seers or Rishis from the Cosmic Mind. They set forth Dharma or natural law, which is mantra in manifestation."

*Excerpted from: "The Mantric Approach of the Vedas,"
by David Frawley*

A mantra is a thought manifest in, or encapsulated by, a sacred utterance that possesses profound spiritual significance. Sound holds a key place in Hindu thought. Some writers believe that it preceded the creation of the universe, and its vibrations are thought to bind the atoms of the world. Mantras are sacred syllables that encapsulate particular forms of cosmic power (shakti). In Hinduism, a mantra is sacred and spiritually beneficial. By chanting a mantra repeatedly with love and devotion a person can become spiritually illumined. He develops a pure mind which enables him to see God.

Each mantra has a presiding deity over it who is supposed to be giving the results of chanting of mantra (mantra phala) .Mantra means which has to be repeated and understood. Literally it means the verse which explains the prescribed meaning: Man- to repeat (manana) and

tra - the power of trana.

There are different forms of mantra, such as the "seed" (bija) mantra, which is thought to be an energy pervading both the human body and the universe. The deities are believed to be manifestations of bija mantras: Shiva, for example, is linked with the mantra "hrim" and Kali is associated with the syllable "krim". There are mantras that accomplish many kinds of wondrous deeds simply by correctly chanting them. Other mantras help purify one's consciousness, give spiritual enlightenment, and put one in touch with the Supreme. Hindus also believe that a mantra received from a saint or holy man is far more effective than mantras picked from a book. A mantra that has already helped someone to have God-realization is believed to have great spiritual potency. Such a mantra is called a siddha mantra. There are two mantras that are especially recommended in the Vedic literature. One is **omkara or the om mantra**, and the other is **Hare Krishna Maha Mantra**. Hindus believe that these two mantras can deliver one to the realm beyond material existence.

Mantra-Yoga

Mantra-yoga is a tradition found in almost every spiritual path and religion in the world. It may involve the repetition or chanting of a prayer or mantra for one's own meditation, or it may involve the congregational singing of spiritually uplifting songs, prayers, or the sacred names of the Supreme Being. Mantra yoga helps a devotee to focus his/her mind on the Supreme, which helps spiritualize his/her consciousness.

Man means the mind,

tra means deliverance.

Therefore, a spiritual mantra is the pure sound vibration for delivering the mind from material to spiritual consciousness. This is the goal of any spiritual path. Mantra Yoga is said to be a gradual path to wisdom, on which the yogi can accumulate a host of siddhis (accomplishments). Many orthodox Hindus still see Mantra Yoga as a magical system which has origins in the intonations chanted by Vedic priests during sacrifices. These priests derived much authority from their claims to be able to summon the gods by uttering the correct sounds, thereby becoming more powerful than the gods themselves. In Bhagavad-gita God Krishna explains that He is the transcendental OM mantra and that the chanting of japa (chanting a mantra quietly for one's own meditation) is the purest of His representations and sacrifices. It is understood that by chanting japa and hearing the holy sounds of the mantra, one can come to the platform of spiritual realization. The energy in the sound vibration of the mantra prepares and opens one's consciousness to higher levels of reality. This is the process of mantra-yoga. Chanting the names of God brings a devotee in direct contact with God in proportion to the chanter's purity. This process of self-realization is the way of success for everyone. The Bhagavatam (2.1.11) discloses that the chanting of God's names in the manner of the great authorities is the doubtless way to spiritual success for everyone, no matter whether they are full of material desires or free of all desires, or self-satisfied because of their spiritual knowledge. Simply by relying on the chanting of the holy names of God, one need not depend upon other processes, rituals, paraphernalia, or persons. One does not even have to be initiated by a spiritual master to chant mantra. As the Caitanya-caritamṛta (Madhya-lila, 15.108) says, one does not have to take initiation, but only has to chant the holy names. Thus, deliverance is available to all kinds of people.

Sound

There are generally believed to be four classes of sound (shabda):

1. Supreme sound (para shabda) is the most subtle of the four, and is the sound made by the base chakra.
2. Visible sound (pashyanti shabda) is associated with the heart and is manifested as the prime syllable Om.
3. Middle sound (madhyama shabda) incorporates the basic sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet and is the source of secondary mantras.
4. Manifest sound (vaikhari shabda) is the sound of human speech, and is considered the lowest of the four classes.

Popular Mantras

Hinduism

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OM, AUM

The most sacred single syllable in the entire literature of Hinduism is OM. This word is constantly on the lips of devout Hindus from the cradle to the grave. It stands for [Brahman](#), both as personal and impersonal God.

Aum -Let us meditate on this syllable, which is the foundation of prayer.

The earth emerges from the waters; plants emerge from the earth; human beings emerge from plants; speech comes from human beings; and Aum comes from speech. Aum is the essence of all essences. It is the highest of the high. It is the ultimate.

Speech and breath combine to form Aum. Speech and breath are like a couple in coitus, and Aum is their offspring. Aum is the fulfillment of their desires.

The syllable Aum signifies assent, for we say it when we assent to something. And assent is nothing but fulfillment.

The syllable Aum is the call to knowledge. We sing the praises of this syllable, which is the key to every kind of knowledge.

Those who know the soul, and those who do not know the soul, stand side by side reciting this syllable. But knowledge and ignorance are quite different. Only when it is recited with knowledge and faith, and with awareness of the hidden connections, does it become truly potent.

Chandogya Upanishad I: 1.

Omkara (pranava) is considered to be the sound incarnation of the Supreme Personality of God and is identical with the Supreme Lord. The Narada-pancaratra states: "When the transcendental sound vibration is practiced by a conditioned soul, the Supreme Lord is present on his tongue." The Atharva-veda and the Mandukya Upanishad both mention the importance of omkara. Omkara is said to be the beginning, middle, and end, and is eternal, beyond all material restrictions. Omkara is unlimited, transcendental, and indestructible. OM represents the wholeness of the universe and the eternal vibratory sound of brahman (the universal soul) that permeates it. Indeed, Om is called shabda-brahman, the sound-form of brahman. All [Hindu mantras](#) generally begin and often also end with Om. It has been frequently mentioned in the Vedas and other scriptures of Hinduism.

Om is the mantra of assent. It means yes and affirms and energizes whatever we say after it. That is why all mantras begin with OM. OM is also the mantra of ascent and causes our energy to rise upward into the infinite. By reciting Om, a person gains access to the powers of the universe; and meditation on Om is said to lead to enlightenment and immortality. OM is expansive and increases the fire, air and ether elements, particularly ether. It also gives strength, protection and grace. It connects us with the guidance power of the inner Guru.

Aum is the supreme symbol of God. Aum is the whole. Aum affirms. Aum is the sound which expresses all truth.

The priest begins worship with Aum. Spiritual teachers begin their lessons with Aum; and their disciples open themselves to those lessons with Aum.

Those in whom Aum resides are unified with God.

Taittiriya Upanishad 1:8

The syllable Om, also known as Pranava, can also be spelled as AUM. According to one interpretation,

"A" stands for creation,

"U" stands for preservation, and

"M" indicates destruction or dissolution.

According to another interpretation, the three letters forming AUM indicate the three lokas (planes of existence) of this universe-both gross and subtle-Svarga (heaven), Martya (earth) and Patala (netherworld).

The following brief passage is one of the clearest of the countless references to OM which can be found anywhere in the Hindu scripture.

The goal which all the Vedas declare, which all austerities aim at, and which men desire when they lead the life of continence, I will tell you briefly: it is OM. This syllable OM is indeed Brahman. This syllable is the Highest. Whosoever knows this syllable obtains all that he desires. This is the best support; this is the highest support. Whosoever knows this support is adored in the world of Brahma.

Katha Upanishad I, ii, 15-17

Om reveals all and contains all and, like the Vedas, Om is revelation that comes through [shruti \(hearing\)](#). According to the Mandukya Upanishad, Om is both atman and brahman: it is the past, the present and the future, as well as all that transcends time.

The chanting of OM is generally practiced by impersonalists and those engaged in the mystic yoga process. By chanting OM and controlling the breathing perfectly, which is mostly a mechanical way of steadying the mind, one is eventually able to go into trance or samadhi. Through this system, one gradually changes the tendencies of the materially absorbed mind and makes it spiritualized. This process may take many years to perfect.

The Four Great Goddess Mantra

HRIM

HRIM (pronounced Hreem) governs over the cosmic magnetic energy and the power of the soul and causal body. It is the prime mantra of the Great Goddess and ruler of the worlds and holds all her creative and healing powers. HRIM is the mantra of the Divine Maya that destroys the worldly maya. It has a solar quality to it but more of a dawn-like effect.

HRIM awakens us at a soul or heart level, connecting us to Divine forces of love and attraction. It is charming and alluring, yet purifying. Through it we can control the illusion power of our own minds.

In Vedic terms HRIM is a mantra of the Sun, particularly in terms of illumination. It increases our aspiration and receptivity to Divine light, wisdom and truth. It opens the lotus of the heart to the inner Sun of consciousness. It is a mantra of the region of heaven or the consciousness space in which all the worlds exist.

KRIM

KRIM (pronounced Kreem) governs over prana as lightning or electrical energy. KRIM grants all spiritual faculties and powers - from the arousing of kundalini to opening the third eye. It has a special power relative to the lower chakras, which it can both stimulate and transform. It helps awaken and purify the subtle body. KRIM is the great mantra of Kali, the Goddess of energy and transformation. It is also the mantra of Indra, the supreme deity of the Vedas, the Divine as the cosmic lord and enlightenment force. KRIM is the thunderbolt or vajra that destroys the serpent of the ignorance and releases the light of absolute truth. As a mantra of work and transformation, KRIM is the mantra of Kriya Yoga, the Yoga of practice. It is the main mantra of the Yoga Shakti. KRIM carries the supreme life force. It is a strong mantra; use it with care.

Source: The Mantric Approach of the Vedas by David Frawley

HUM

HUM (pronounced Hoom) is a Vedic mantra of Agni or fire. It is the mantra used to make offerings into the sacred fire. It is also used to call or invoke the fire and to make it flame up more brilliantly. HUM is a mantra of the inner fire or thermogenic force. It represents the soul hidden the body, the Divine immanent in the world. It both calls the divine down into us and offers our soul upward to the Divine for transformation in the sacred fire of awareness. HUM is a Shiva mantra; but it is also a mantra of Chandi, the fierce form of Kali. It is used to destroy negativity and creates great passion and vitality. It governs the earth and the material sphere in general. HUM is a powerful mantra; hence it should be used carefully. However, it can be used in a more gentle manner to invoke divine grace and protection. Through it we can offer ourselves or our afflictions into the Divine for purification and transformation.

Source: The Mantric Approach of the Vedas by David Frawley

SHRIM

SHRIM (pronounced Shreem) is a mantra of love, devotion and beauty. SHRIM is a Lakshmi mantra, the Goddess of Beauty and divine grace. Yet SHRIM works at a deeper level than merely to give us the good things of life, including health. It takes us to the heart and gives faith and steadiness to our emotional nature.

SHRIM allows us to surrender to, take refuge in, or be immersed in whatever we offer the mantra to. It is the mantra of beauty and delight and has a pleasing lunar quality. It also relates to the head and can be used to flood the senses with divine beauty and delight. It promotes health and aids in fertility and rejuvenation.

Source: The Mantric Approach of the Vedas by David Frawley

The Four Great Goddess Mantra

HRIM, KRIM, HUM, and SHRIM are four great Goddess mantras that govern the prime forms of energy as magnetic force, electrical force, heat, and delight. These four mantras can be used together with OM to get an extremely powerful mantra:

OM HRIM KRIM HUM SHRIM!

This brings about an integral development of body, mind and soul in harmony with the Divine or inner Self.

The Gayatri Mantra

The Gayatri Mantra, also known as the Savitri Mantra, is one of the most important mantras in the Hindu scriptures. It is found in the Rig-Veda (Rig-Veda III/62/10).It is perhaps the greatest Vedic mantric chant.

This mantra is chanted at sunrise, noon and sunset. At dawn it is called

Gayatri, the youthful form of the Goddess, consort of Lord Brahma, the creator. It is called Savitri, the mature form, at noon, the consort of Lord Shiva. It is called Sarasvati, the elderly form, at sunset, the consort of Lord Vishnu.

The Gayatri Mantra was first cognized by the Rishi Vishwamitra. Rishi Vishwamitra is the embodiment of tapas or ascetic force and his mantra carries that power of light, energy and transformation. Through it one can be born again (dwija) or twice born in truth, in the heavenly stream of Divine wisdom.

This great mantra consists of three parts. The first is the chants to the seven worlds. The second is the mantra proper of twenty-four syllables. The third is a summary of the mantra's energies. The following is a brief explanation of the mantra as presented in the Mahanarayana Upanishad.

The Head of the Gayatri

OM Bhuh! - the physical realm or earth, realm of being or food

OM Bhuvah! - the vital plane or atmosphere, realm of becoming or breath

OM Suvah! - the mental plane, space or heaven, realm of illumination

OM Mahah! - the sphere of cosmic mind, realm of Dharma

OM Janah! - the realm of creation or bliss

OM Tapah! - the realm of consciousness-force

OM Satyam! - the realm of absolute truth

The Body of the Mantra

OM

Tat - That

Savitur - Of Savitar, the solar Creator

Varenyam - Supreme

Bhargo - Effulgence

Devasya - Of the God

Dhimahi - We meditate

Dhiyo - Intelligences, minds

Yo - Who

Nah - Our

Prachodayat - May direct

"We meditate upon the supreme effulgence of the Divine Solar Creator that he may direct our minds."

The Tail of the Gayatri

OM

Apo - the Cosmic Waters

Jyoti - the Cosmic Light

Rasomritam - the Immortal Essence

Brahma - the Absolute

Bhur - the physical

Bhuvas - the atmospheric

Suvar - the realm of space

OM - the four higher realms

"OM, the waters, the light, the immortal essence, Brahman, earth, atmosphere, heaven, OM."

The Supreme Self, Paramatman, or Savitar, is the conscious being within the cosmic sun or Light of lights. The mantra is his creative force, the Divine Word. Savitar is the master of all transformations and the director of all higher evolution. He is the Self of Brahman, the pure being of the Absolute.

The Gayatri Mantra releases the supreme solar power, the power of the inner sun of Self-realization and cosmic creation. Those wishing to bring about a new creation or

new dawn for humanity of this dark age, should chant this mantra. Those wishing to transcend this world of [Samsara](#) can also use the mantra as a stairway to the infinite. This mantra also grants intelligence, creative vision and healing powers. Used with the chants to the seven worlds it unfolds all the secrets of the universe outwardly and inwardly.

The Gayatri mantra is central to Yoga, Vedanta, Ayurveda and Vedic astrology. For Yoga it sets in motion the Divine will toward transformation, stimulating the Kundalini force.

For Vedanta it grants Self-knowledge, knowledge of the solar Self.

For Ayurveda it gives the power of the cosmic prana that is born of the sun.

For Jyotish (Vedic astrology) it gives knowledge of the movements of the heavenly bodies ruled by the cosmic sun.

The Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra

The Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra is a life-giving Mantra. It is a mantra that is said to rejuvenate, bestow health, wealth, a long life, peace, prosperity and contentment. It wards off death and accidents of all descriptions. Besides, it has a great curative power. It is a [Moksha](#) mantra also. It is [Lord Shiva's](#) Mantra.

By chanting this Mantra, Hindu's believe that divine vibrations are generated which ward off all the negative and evil forces and create a powerful protective shield. And it is said to protect the one who chants against accidents and misfortunes of every kind. It is a vibration that pulsates through every cell, every molecule of the devotee's body and tears away the veil of ignorance. It ignites a fire within us that consumes all our negativity and purifies our entire system. It is also said to have a powerful healing of diseases declared incurable even by the doctors. It is a Mantra to conquer death and connects the devotee to his/her own inner divinity.

Om trayambakam yajaamahe

Sugandhim pushti - vardhanam

Urva - rukamiva bandhanam

Mrytor muksheeya ma - amritaat

Om. We worship the Three-Eyed One (Lord Shiva), who is naturally fragrant, immensely merciful and who is the Protector of the devotees. Worshipping Him may we be liberated from death for the sake of immortality just as the ripe cucumber easily separates itself from the binding stalk. By your Grace, Let me be in the state of salvation (Moksha) and be saved from the clutches of fearful death.

Hindus believe that there is great power in the repetition of the Sacred Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra, the Mantra of Liberation.

Shiva Prarthana

This mantra is a prayer to Lord Shiva who is addressed as Sankara and Trayambaka.

Sankara means giver of blessings:

sana = blessings

Kara = the Giver

Trayambaka is the three eyed one (where the third eye signifies the giver of knowledge, which destroys ignorance and releases us from the cycle of death and rebirth).

Om Namastestu Bhagavan

Visvesaraya Mahadevaya

Trayambakaya Tripurantakaya

Trikagni - Kalaya

Kalagni - Rudraya Nil - Kanthaya Mrityunjaya

Sarvesvaraya Sadadhivaya

Sriman Mahadevaya Namah.

Om. I bow down to Lord Shiva, who is the creator and protector of the universe, who is the greatest among gods, who has three eyes, who is the annihilator of all the three worlds, one whose throat is blue, who is the conqueror of death, who is the Lord of all, who is propitious who is possessed of all marks of greatness and who is the greatest among Gods. To him my prostrations.