

# INTRODUCTION TO MANTRA – SRI SRI VEDANANDA

A booklet for introduction to Hinduism

# Mantra

In Hinduism, right from the Vedas upto hymns, almost all sacred books contain Mantras. It is believed that “mananath trayathe iti manthrah” meaning “that which is repeatedly chanted is mantra”. But, mantra is not of chanting. It was said “Manasa stira ita mantra” meaning “That which stabilizes mind is mantra”. All verses in Vedas are called as mantras.

Let us analyse the origin, power and the logic behind Mantra.

As far as Mantras in Veda are considered, it should not be taken as wild imagination of some individual Rishi. Rishis or Seers of ancient times who gave out these mantras term themselves as ‘Mantra Thrusta’ – Perceiver of Mantra and not ‘Mantra Kartha’ – Creator of mantra.

At the time of origin of cosmos (Truly, in Hinduism, there is no such origin. Everything is just manifestation. Hence, here this origin refers to the time when everything started to manifest from unmanifest form.) Vibrations came out. Those vibrations are not perceivable by senses.

Our ancient seers, by their extra-sensory perception, perceived such vibrations. They saw two vital points. 1. Those vibrations create the same state of tranquility in human mind, from which they came out. 2. In human body, even inner organs produce some sound while functioning which are similar to the perceived sound. As both the sounds are similar, when uttered, the perceived vibration or sound helped the smooth functioning of such parts.

While these vibrations or sound are of great help to humanity, while reducing them to writing, they seem to be meaningless. There is no literal meaning for these sounds. As those vibrations are perceived from the origin of cosmos, they are called ‘Bija mantra’ or ‘Seed Mantra’ which means that no literal meaning is available. For example, the sound “Aum, lim, kleem, kroom etc. have no literal meaning. They are Seeds.

Only the vibration of these mantras is important. Hence, the revelation is limited to Guru – disciple chain because, only by personal contact, the exact pronunciation could be transformed. Most of these ‘seeds’ form the base for personification of various gods and goddesses.

Then, our seers, compiled such sounds in some orderly form and formed some words, phrases or statements which have some literal meaning. They found that those words created positive vibration in human body and mind.

These words or statements can be classified into three. 1. Sutra. 2. Sastra. 3. Stotra.  
: Let us see them in detail:

Sutra: Sutra literally means ‘Formula’. As a scientist gives out a theory or formula about his discovery/invention to help any person to come to the same conclusion, our ancient seers gave out certain methodology, following which, any human being, can achieve the same spiritual status achieved by the Seer.

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Sastra are restrictions. While sutra creates the same result, the individual achieving such spiritual powers may misuse it. It may create Buddha and Hitler. Hence, these restrictions are placed as pre-requisite. These are for transformation of individual mind and attitude to positive and constructive mode.

Stotra are 'words of praise'. It is for praising the almighty for the grace and bliss showered. These are expressions from enlightened souls who, after enjoying the eternal equanimity, endorse such an experience. There are two major sub groups in this type. One type of experience is describing the experience from outside, i.e., not merging with such state of tranquility. The other one is insiders view. This insider view is called as 'Anubhudhi' in Hinduism.

While the insider view describes the state and its quality, the outsiders view describes the shape or structure. Normally, the latter view will be of two orders. The descriptions may be from 'Head to toe' or 'Toe to head'. This order has a purpose. Any one chanting this before a deity will mentally visualize his own body parts. Mental visualization of one's own body parts augments health.

Hinduism offers different types of Mantra and ways of worship for every deity. Freedom is the underlying point. But, for clarity regarding the deity he selects, a seeker needs a vibrant intellect. Though various mantras guide him, his understanding depends on his intellect. Hence, for such a vibrant intellect and for the grace of such god to reveal itself to him, a mantra called 'Gayatri' mantra is available for every deity. Bija or Seed mantra forms the base of the deity and Gayatri mantra is a prayer for vibrant intellect to perceive the secrets of the deity.

What is the purpose?

As explained earlier, Mantras are vibrations came out during the origin of cosmos. They create the same state of tranquility in human mind. Apart from mental equanimity, these vibrations are capable of modifying the vibration existing around one who utters them.

Modern science had discovered that water has a tendency to retain vibrations – More details can be had from 'Messagesfromwater' website by Dr. Muraso Urato.

Ancient Indian Seers had discovered it much earlier and they gave out a way to use this phenomenon for the welfare of living beings. They chanted those mantras and made them penetrate water. That energized water was given to suffering individuals to rescue them from ailment.

How to chant mantras?

We have seen that Mantras are based on vibrations alone. Hence, uttering or chanting of such mantra should not go unused. The individual should insulate himself against passing the vibrations to the earth. I.e. he should seat himself on some non-conductors such as wood, cloth, leather or leaf.

For facilitating his breath and thought pattern to be organized, he should sit with his spine erect. This posture serves another purpose. Thought waves normally move horizontally. If mantras are chanted while lying horizontally, the vibration effect of such

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mantras will be wasted along with the thought waves. Hence, to let the energy created by such vibrations to penetrate the entire body, sitting posture is stipulated.

However, ailing persons are exempted. They can chant some mantras lying on the bed. But their bedding should be leather, wool or silk.

To avoid disturbances, eyes shall be closed. Moreover, eye movement is directly related to oscillation of mind. So, closed eyes facilitates concentration of mind.

In the beginning, you can utter the mantra aloud. But in due course, chanting mentally should be practiced. Again, movement of tongue is directly linked with movement of thoughts. Hence, this too, goes for concentration of mind. Moreover, mental chanting requires more awareness than verbal chanting.

As mental state of tranquility is the aim, it is better to have a calm surrounding. This helps the individual to merge with the eternal sound "Aum". But, river beds, though they may be crowded, are more helpful. Waterbeds present friendly atmosphere. Sea shores are even better. Some trees also, it was found by our ancient seers, serve this purpose.

Count of chanting:

Any number of chanting is good. But, it is better to chant at least 108 times. This is only a base. Any number above this, is good. Chanting one lakh times per syllabi is considered supreme by our seers.

Why this 108?

A human being normally breathes 21,600 times in 24 Hrs. day. Half of this is inhale and half is exhale. Inhale infuses life and exhale exhausts impurities. Hence, vibrations enter while inhaling and such inhaling is done 10,800 times in a whole day. So, one percent of such 10,800 forms the base "108".

**This is only a bird's eye view about mantras in Hinduism. Sure, you would have found it useful. If you have any questions in this regard, please do mail me.**

- Sri Sri Vedananda