

SKM YOGA

YOGA TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME

Sacred Sound and Vibrational Healing Series

MANTRA YOGA

The Complete Science of Sacred Sound

16 Types of Mantra • Mantra as Therapy • Class Mantras & Shanti Paath

Compiled & Authored by

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For SKM Yoga Teacher Training Students | For Educational Use Only

FOREWORD

Dr. Shivam Mishra | Founder, SKM Yoga Institute

Pranaam, Dear Students of the Sacred Science,

Sound is the primordial creative force of the universe. Before form, before light, before the first breath of creation, there was Nada — the primal vibration. From that infinite, undivided, omnipresent sound, the entirety of manifest existence precipitated, like crystals from a supersaturated solution. The Upanishads declare 'Nada Brahma' — Sound is Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. This is not mythology but the deepest statement of metaphysical physics: that reality, at its most fundamental level, is vibrational; that consciousness and sound are inseparable; and that the deliberate, skilled use of sacred sound — Mantra — is the most direct, most powerful, and most comprehensive path to the alignment of the individual with the universal.

This comprehensive treatise on Mantra Yoga has been compiled for you — the yoga teachers of the next generation — with the understanding that Mantra Yoga is not a peripheral or decorative addition to yoga practice but one of its most essential and most scientifically sophisticated dimensions. The sixteen types of Mantra presented in this text represent the complete typological spectrum of the Mantra tradition: from the primordial Bija mantras that encode the vibrational signatures of cosmic forces, to the therapeutic Aushadha mantras used in Ayurvedic healing; from the devotional Stotra mantras of the Bhakti tradition, to the contemplative Jnana mantras of Vedantic inquiry. Each type is a unique vehicle for a specific dimension of human transformation.

The second section of this book — Mantra as Therapy — presents the emerging and ancient understanding of mantra's therapeutic dimensions, drawing on both the classical textual evidence from Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Atharva Veda, and the Yoga Sutras, and the growing body of modern research documenting mantra's measurable psychophysiological effects. The specific therapeutic protocols provided here are designed to be practically applicable in yoga therapy contexts.

The third and final section — Class Opening Mantras and Shanti Paath — is perhaps the most immediately useful for your teaching practice. Every yoga class should begin and end with sacred sound — both to establish the appropriate consciousness for practice and to seal the practice's benefits in a spirit of universal peace and goodwill. The mantras provided here, drawn from the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutras, and the great Stotra literature, represent the most important and most widely used mantras in the yoga teaching tradition.

Receive these teachings with the understanding that Mantra is not magic — it is science. The science of consciousness, vibration, attention, and transformation. The more you practice these mantras with genuine understanding, correct pronunciation, sincere intention, and sustained regularity, the more you will discover for yourself their extraordinary power to align, heal, expand, and ultimately liberate the consciousness that is your deepest nature.

Nada Brahma — Sound is the Divine

Dr. Shivam Mishra

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PART ONE

FOUNDATIONS OF MANTRA YOGA

“Mantra hi prathamam devah — The Mantra is verily the first deity. All creation proceeds from the vibration of the primordial Mantra.”

— **Mantra Mahodadhi**

Chapter 1: What is Mantra? — Etymology, Ontology, and Sacred Science

1.1 The Etymology of Mantra

The word 'Mantra' is a compound of extraordinary precision and depth, derived from two Sanskrit roots that together define the complete function and purpose of this most ancient of spiritual technologies. The first root is 'Man' — from the Sanskrit verbal root 'Manas' (mind), carrying the meanings of 'to think,' 'to contemplate,' and 'to attend.' The second root is 'Tra' — from 'Trana,' meaning 'to protect,' 'to liberate,' 'to save,' and 'to cross over.' The complete word thus yields the foundational definition: 'That which protects/liberates the one who contemplates it.'

However, the semantic richness of 'Mantra' extends considerably beyond this primary derivation. The great Sanskrit lexicographer Hemachandra provides an alternative etymology: 'Manah trayate iti mantrah' — 'That which saves/crosses the mind is Mantra.' In this reading, the mantra is understood as the vehicle by which the practitioner's consciousness is carried across the ocean of mental fluctuation (Chitta Vritti) to the shore of silence, clarity, and liberation. The Brihad Yogayajnavalkya Smriti further elaborates: 'Mananath trayate yasmat tasmad mantrah prakirtitah' — 'That by whose contemplation one is saved from the cycle of birth and death is called Mantra.'

Definitions of Mantra from Classical Sources

Mantra Mahodadhi: 'A mantra is a combination of sacred syllables that, when correctly uttered with the proper attitude, produces specific vibrations in the universe and within the practitioner, generating specific effects according to the specific mantra's encoded power.' | Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (I.27-28): 'His (Ishvara's) symbol is Pranava (Om). The repetition of that (Pranava) and contemplation of its meaning (should be practiced).' | Atharva Veda: 'A mantra is that sacred formula which, when contemplated and chanted by a qualified practitioner with the proper intonation, intention, and understanding, becomes the bridge between the individual consciousness and the cosmic consciousness.' | SKM Yoga (Dr. Shivam Mishra): 'A mantra is a precisely calibrated vibrational formula in which specific sound frequencies are arranged to create specific effects in consciousness — physiological, psychological, energetic, and spiritual — when practiced with correct pronunciation, suitable mental attitude, appropriate regularity, and the guidance of a qualified teacher.'

1.2 The Triadic Structure of Every Mantra

Every authentic mantra in the Vedic and Tantric tradition possesses three essential structural components without which it is not a mantra in the complete sense but merely a sequence of sounds. These three components are:

Component	Description and Significance
Rishi (Seer)	The Rishi is the seer — the great sage or realized master who 'heard' or 'received' the mantra in a state of deep meditative consciousness. The Rishi is not the author or inventor of the mantra but its discoverer — the one whose sufficiently purified and refined consciousness became transparent enough to the cosmic vibration for the mantra to reveal itself through. Knowing the Rishi of a mantra connects the practitioner to the lineage of realization through which the mantra has been transmitted and authenticates the mantra's vibrational potency.
Chhanda (Metre)	The Chhanda is the metrical structure of the mantra — the precise rhythmic pattern in which the syllables are arranged. This is not merely a poetic convention but an encoding of the mantra's vibrational pattern: the specific rhythm with which the syllables are sounded determines the specific resonance patterns generated in the practitioner's body and nervous system. The Vedic metrical tradition identifies seven primary Chhandas (Gayatri, Ushnik, Anushtubh, Brihati, Pankti, Trishtubh, and Jagati) and numerous sub-metres, each with distinct vibrational signatures.
Devata (Deity)	The Devata is the cosmic principle or deity to which the mantra is directed and whose particular vibration or quality of consciousness the mantra embodies. This is not mere mythology but a sophisticated metaphysics of resonance: each Devata represents a specific quality or aspect of universal consciousness (Agni = transformative power; Indra = sovereignty and strength; Saraswati = knowledge and creativity; etc.), and the corresponding mantra embodies the specific vibrational signature of that quality. Chanting the mantra with awareness of its Devata attunes the practitioner's consciousness to that specific quality.
Bija (Seed Syllable)	The Bija is the single-syllable seed sound that encodes the essential energy of the mantra. Not all mantras have a separate Bija (in many mantras the entire mantra IS the Bija), but in Tantric mantras the Bija is the most concentrated, most powerful, and most essential component — the point at which the vibrational formula achieves its maximum intensity and potency. Examples: 'Hreem' (Bija of the Divine Mother/Maya), 'Shreem' (Bija of Lakshmi/abundance), 'Kreem' (Bija of Kali/transformative power), 'Aim' (Bija of Saraswati/knowledge).

1.3 The Six Limbs of Mantra Practice (Shadanga Mantra Sadhana)

Classical Mantra Yoga prescribes six essential components of complete mantra practice, collectively known as Shadanga Mantra Sadhana. Without all six components, the practice remains incomplete and its full transformative potential is not activated:

1. Shraddha (Faith and Intention): The genuine, experientially grounded faith in the mantra's power and in the tradition from which it has been received. This is not blind belief but the

confident, open, and sincere intention to receive and embody the mantra's teaching. Without Shraddha, the practitioner's consciousness remains closed to the mantra's transformative influence.

2. **Shuddhi (Purification):** The physical, pranic, and mental purification that prepares the practitioner's instrument for mantra practice. Physical purification includes cleanliness, appropriate diet, and celibacy during intensive practices. Pranic purification involves pranayama practice prior to Japa. Mental purification involves the deliberate cultivation of Sattvic (pure, harmonious) qualities and the release of agitation, resentment, and desire.
3. **Asana (Posture):** The appropriate seated posture for mantra practice — stable, erect, comfortable, and sustainable. The traditional texts prescribe Padmasana, Siddhasana, Sukhasana, or Vajrasana as the primary Japa asanas. The physical stability of the asana is understood to support the stability of attention and the proper flow of prana during mantra chanting.
4. **Diksha (Initiation):** The formal initiation of a mantra by a qualified guru. While many mantras are available for general practice without formal initiation, the most powerful Tantric and Vedic mantras are traditionally understood to require formal transmission — the guru's breath of life (prana-pratishtha) into the mantra seed, activating its dormant power. Diksha is not a ceremony but a genuine transmission of consciousness.
5. **Pranayama (Breath Regulation):** The practice of pranayama before and during mantra Japa, which purifies the nadis (energy channels), deepens concentration, and amplifies the physiological and energetic effects of the chanting. The traditional prescription is to practice Nadi Shodhana for at least 10 minutes before beginning Japa.
6. **Japa (Repetition):** The actual practice of mantra repetition — either vocal (Vaikhari Japa), whispered (Upamshu Japa), mental (Manasika Japa), or written (Likhita Japa). The traditional prescription for most mantras is a minimum of 108 repetitions per session (one mala), with the understanding that 40 days of daily practice (the traditional Sadhana period) produces the first significant transformation.

Chapter 2: The Physics of Sacred Sound — Nada, Spanda, and Vibration

2.1 Nada Brahma — The Philosophy of Sound as Ultimate Reality

The Vedantic and Tantric traditions of India arrived, through the refined instrument of meditative inquiry, at an understanding of the relationship between sound and reality that contemporary physics is only now beginning to approach from its own investigative direction. The foundational philosophical statement is 'Nada Brahma' — Sound is Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. This is not merely a poetic metaphor but a precise philosophical claim: that the ground of all existence is vibrational in nature; that matter, energy, space, time, and consciousness are all, at their most fundamental level, different frequencies and patterns of the same primordial vibration.

The Nada Yoga tradition identifies two fundamental levels of sound: Anahata Nada (unstruck sound) and Ahata Nada (struck sound). Ahata Nada is all the sound we normally hear — the sound produced by two physical objects striking each other or rubbing together. This is the level of ordinary acoustics, music, and speech. Anahata Nada is the subtler, unproduced sound that the tradition identifies as the primordial vibration of consciousness itself — heard not with the external ears but with the refined inner auditory faculty that develops through deep meditation. This Anahata Nada is the Sanskrit equivalent of what contemporary theoretical physics calls the 'quantum vacuum' — the non-zero, omnipresent vibrational field from which all physical reality emerges.

Level of Nada	Description and Significance for Mantra Practice
Para Nada	The transcendent, absolute level of sound — pure undivided consciousness before the first movement of creation. This is the silence that contains all sound, the potentiality before actualization. Para Nada is experienced only in the deepest states of Samadhi (meditative absorption), as the background awareness from which all thought, sensation, and perception emerge.
Pashyanti Nada	The first movement from undivided to differentiated consciousness — the 'seeing' sound, so named because at this level the practitioner can 'see' (perceive with inner vision) the vibrational intention before it becomes articulated sound. This is the level of divine inspiration, creative intuition, and the Rishi's reception of Vedic mantras — the direct, immediate, non-verbal apprehension of the cosmic message.
Madhyama Nada	The 'middle' sound — the level at which vibrational intentions become organized into mental forms: thoughts, images, inner speech. This is the level of the subconscious mind and of the vivid inner sound that practitioners hear during deep meditation. At this

	level, mantras exist as distinct patterns of inner sound prior to their physical articulation.
Vaikhari Nada	The 'spoken' sound — the grossest level of sound vibration, at which internal intentions and mental patterns are finally translated into physical air vibrations through the vocal apparatus. This is the level at which ordinary speech and audible mantra chanting operate. Even at this grossest level, carefully crafted sacred sounds (mantras) carry the resonance of all the subtler levels above them.

2.2 The Spanda Principle — Consciousness as Vibration

The Kashmir Shaivite philosophy — one of the most sophisticated philosophical systems in human history — provides the most rigorous account of the relationship between consciousness and sound through the doctrine of Spanda: the 'vibration' or 'pulsation' that is the fundamental nature of consciousness itself. Spanda is not sound in the ordinary acoustic sense but the primordial pulse or pulsation of consciousness — its inherent dynamism, its continuous oscillation between rest and activity, contraction and expansion, silence and sound.

From the Spanda perspective, every sound in the universe — from the finest subatomic vibration to the grossest thunder — is a particular expression of this universal Spanda. The mantras are understood as those particular expressions of Spanda that, by their specific vibrational signature, resonate with and amplify the subtler, deeper levels of Spanda in the practitioner's consciousness. The mantra works not by introducing something foreign into the practitioner's consciousness but by activating what is already there — awakening the dormant resonances of deeper levels of consciousness by supplying the specific vibrational key that opens them.

2.3 Modern Science and Mantra Vibration

Contemporary physics and neuroscience are beginning to provide independent empirical support for what the yoga tradition has known experientially for millennia about the relationship between sound and consciousness. The discovery of Cymatics — the study of the visible effects of sound waves on matter — demonstrates that specific sound frequencies produce specific, beautiful geometric patterns in matter, providing a visual demonstration of the mantra tradition's claim that specific sounds produce specific effects in the material substrate. The Chladni figures produced by different frequencies correspond strikingly to the geometric Yantra patterns traditionally associated with specific mantras in the Tantric tradition.

► **Scientific Research on Mantra Effects**

Heart Rate and HRV: Multiple studies demonstrate that chanting Om and other mantras at frequencies of 5-6 repetitions per minute produces significant increases in Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and parasympathetic activation — identical to the cardiovascular benefits of slow yogic breathing. | Brain Wave Patterns: EEG studies of experienced mantra meditators show significant increases in alpha and theta brainwave activity during mantra practice, corresponding to states of deep relaxation, enhanced creativity, and improved memory consolidation. | Cortisol and Stress Hormones: Controlled studies demonstrate significant reduction of salivary cortisol following 20-30 minutes of mantra chanting, with effects lasting several hours post-practice. | Neurological Effects: fMRI studies show that mantra chanting activates bilateral limbic system structures, the default mode network, and the prefrontal cortex simultaneously — a unique activation pattern not produced by ordinary speech or music.

Chapter 3: The History and Tradition of Mantra in India

3.1 Mantra in the Vedic Tradition

The history of Mantra in India is coextensive with the history of Indian civilization itself — stretching back at least 3,500 years to the composition of the Rig Veda, the oldest continuously recited text in human history, and almost certainly considerably further in the oral tradition that preceded the composition of the Vedas. The Vedas themselves are, in their very substance, collections of mantras: the Rig Veda's 10,552 verses are all mantras; the Sama Veda is the Rig Veda's mantras arranged for musical chanting; the Yajur Veda is a collection of mantras for ritual use; and the Atharva Veda — the most ancient and in many ways the most practically applicable of the four Vedas — is a treasure of mantras for healing, protection, prosperity, love, and every dimension of human life.

The Vedic tradition understands the Vedas not as compositions by human authors but as eternal truths (Apaurusheya — 'not of human origin') that were 'heard' (Shruti — 'that which is heard') by the great Rishis in states of profound meditative absorption. The precise preservation of Vedic mantra pronunciation — including accent, tone, duration, and intonation — was recognized from the earliest periods as essential to their efficacy, leading to the development of the extraordinarily sophisticated science of Vedic phonetics (Shiksha) and the tradition of oral transmission that has maintained the Rig Veda in continuous chanting for over three thousand years.

3.2 The Tantra Tradition and the Expansion of Mantra Science

While the Vedic tradition provided the foundational framework of mantra science, it was the Tantric tradition — beginning to crystallize its distinctive textual corpus between approximately the 5th and 12th centuries CE — that expanded, systematized, and most fully developed the practical science of Mantra Yoga. The Tantric texts — the Agamas, the Tantras, the Samhitas, and the Nigamas — provide the most detailed and comprehensive accounts of mantra typology, mantra therapy, mantra initiation, and the complete range of mantra practices.

The Tantric understanding of mantra is distinctive in its insistence on the identity of the mantra and the deity it invokes: 'Mantra eva devatah' — the Mantra is the deity. This is not metaphor but a statement of experiential reality: the specific vibrational pattern encoded in the mantra IS the specific quality of consciousness that the deity represents. When the practitioner chants the mantra with sufficient depth of practice, concentration, and purification, they do not merely invoke the deity from

outside but actually become the specific quality of consciousness the deity embodies — because that quality, in the Tantric understanding, is the deepest nature of the practitioner's own consciousness. This is the meaning of the Tantric teaching 'Shivoham' — I am Shiva.

PART TWO

THE 16 TYPES OF MANTRA YOGA

“Mantras are the keys to the doors of consciousness. Each type of mantra opens a different door, reveals a different room in the mansion of the Self.”

— Dr. Shivam Mishra, SKM Yoga

Type 1: Bija Mantra – Seed Syllables of Creation

Bija Mantras (from 'Bija' = seed, 'Mantra' = sacred formula) are the most fundamental, most powerful, and most condensed units in the entire Mantra tradition. They are single-syllable sound formulas — sometimes as brief as a single vowel combined with an anusvara (nasal resonance) — that encode the complete vibrational signature of a specific cosmic principle, deity, or quality of consciousness. The term 'Bija' (seed) is profoundly apt: just as a tiny seed contains the complete information for the entire tree, a Bija Mantra contains the complete vibrational essence of an entire deity or cosmic principle in a single syllable.

Bija mantras are considered Swayambhu (self-existent, self-manifested) — not composed by any human intellect but existing as eternal sonic realities in the fabric of consciousness itself. The Tantric tradition holds that each Bija Mantra was 'heard' in deep meditation by the great Tantric Rishis, who recognized specific single syllables as the concentrated vibrational keys to specific dimensions of cosmic reality. The power of Bija mantras is understood to be intrinsic to the precise combination of phonemes of which they are composed — not symbolic or conventional but genuinely causal in the relationship between the sound vibration and its effect on consciousness.

OM (AUM)

Om — A-U-M — Pranava

“Meaning: The primordial sound representing the totality of existence. 'A' represents the waking state (Jagrat) and creation; 'U' represents the dream state (Svapna) and preservation; 'M' represents deep sleep (Sushupti) and dissolution. The silence after 'M' represents Turiya — the transcendent fourth state of pure consciousness.”

— *Mandukya Upanishad, Yoga Sutras I.27*

HREEM (Hrim)

Hreem — H-R-EE-M

“Meaning: The Bija of Maya, the Divine Mother's power of illusion and creation. 'Ha' represents Shiva (absolute consciousness); 'Ra' represents Prakriti (primordial nature); 'Ee' represents Mahamaya (the great creative power); 'M' (anusvara) represents the dissolution back into unity. Hreem is the Bija of the Lalita Sahasranama, the thousand-names of the Divine Mother, and is considered the most potent of all Shakti Bijas.”

— *Devi Bhagavata Purana, Lalitopakhyana*

SHREEM (Shrim)

Shreem – SH-R-EE-M

“Meaning: The Bija of Lakshmi, the goddess of abundance, beauty, prosperity, and auspiciousness. 'Sha' represents Mahalakshmi; 'Ra' represents wealth; 'Ee' represents satisfaction and contentment; 'M' (anusvara) represents the cosmic dissolution. Shreem brings abundance at all levels — material, relational, spiritual — and is one of the most widely used Bija mantras in everyday devotional practice.”

– *Lakshmi Tantra, Sri Sukta*

KREEM (Krim)

Kreem – K-R-EE-M

“Meaning: The Bija of Kali, the goddess of time, transformation, and liberation through the dissolution of ego. 'Ka' represents Kali; 'Ra' represents Brahman/ultimate reality; 'Ee' represents Mahamaya; 'M' represents the bringing together of opposites into unity. Kreem is the most powerful of all the transformative Bija mantras, producing rapid dissolution of all that is false and revelation of the eternal Self.”

– *Kali Tantra, Mahanirvana Tantra*

Bija Mantra	Deity / Principle	Elemental Association	Primary Effect
OM (Aum)	Brahman / All Deities	All five elements (Pancha Bhuta)	Universal, cosmic alignment; liberation
HREEM	Mahamaya / Lalita	Akasha (space) + Tejas (fire)	Creative power; reality perception; Shakti awakening
SHREEM	Lakshmi / Abundance	Water (Jala) + Earth (Prithvi)	Prosperity, beauty, contentment, nourishment
KREEM	Kali / Transformation	Fire (Tejas) + Air (Vayu)	Transformation, ego dissolution, liberation
AIM	Saraswati / Knowledge	Air (Vayu) + Space (Akasha)	Knowledge, wisdom, eloquence, creativity
KLEEM	Kamadeva / Attraction	Water (Jala) + Fire (Tejas)	Attraction, love, union, fulfillment of desires
GLAUM	Ganesha / Beginnings	Earth (Prithvi) + Water (Jala)	Removal of obstacles, auspicious beginnings
DUM	Durga / Protection	Fire (Tejas) + Earth (Prithvi)	Protection, strength, victory over obstacles
HOOM (Hum)	Shiva / Destruction of Negativity	Fire (Tejas)	Purification, protection, destruction of ego
TREEM	Tara / Liberation	Water (Jala) + Space	Liberation,

		(Akasha)	fearlessness, crossing obstacles
HAUM	Sadashiva / Grace	Space (Akasha)	Divine grace, higher consciousness, moksha
SOHAM	Atman / Breath of life	All five elements equally	Identity with the Self; breath meditation
SRIM	Rama / Righteousness	Earth (Prithvi)	Dharma, stability, righteousness, peace
RAUM	Surya / Solar Power	Fire (Tejas)	Vitality, health, courage, solar energy
BHRAAM	Brahaspati / Wisdom	Space (Akasha) + Air (Vayu)	Wisdom, prosperity, guru principle
STREEM	Tvarita / Speed	Air (Vayu) + Fire (Tejas)	Rapid accomplishment, swift results

► **Benefits and Practice of Bija Mantra**

Bija Mantras are among the most powerful tools in yoga therapy and personal transformation practice. Their benefits include: profound neurological effects from the specific resonance patterns each Bija creates in the cranial cavity and chest; direct activation of specific chakras through the elemental correspondences of each Bija; purification of specific energy channels (Nadis) associated with each Bija's deity; development of concentration and one-pointedness through their brevity and sonic clarity; and, in advanced practice, the direct recognition of the cosmic principle each Bija embodies. Practice protocol: Begin with Om for at least 3 months before adding other Bija mantras. Practice 108 repetitions per day (one mala). Use a mala (108 beads) to count, beginning after a period of pranayama.

Type 2: Saguna Mantra — Mantras with Divine Form

Saguna Mantras (from 'Sa' = with, 'Guna' = quality, 'Mantra' = sacred formula) are mantras that invoke, praise, or identify with specific divine forms — deities understood as personifications of specific qualities, powers, and dimensions of the universal consciousness. The term 'Saguna' (with qualities) contrasts with 'Nirguna' (without qualities) — the formless Absolute. In the Saguna path, the practitioner uses a specific divine form as the focus of devotion, meditation, and mantra practice, with the understanding that all divine forms are ultimately expressions of the one, formless, limitless Reality.

The Saguna approach to mantra is particularly effective for practitioners in the early and middle stages of spiritual development, because the human mind naturally functions through forms, images, stories, and relationships. The divine form provides a specific, relatable, emotionally engaging focus for consciousness that both concentrates the attention and gradually reveals the universal through the particular. As the practitioner's practice deepens, the form becomes increasingly transparent — the specific qualities of the deity are recognized as aspects of one's own deepest nature — until, in the most advanced stage, the distinction between the worshipper, the form worshipped, and the act of worship dissolves into the non-dual recognition that is the ultimate goal of all mantra practice.

Om Namah Shivaya

Om Namah Shivaya — The Panchakshara Mantra

“Meaning: The five-syllable Mantra (Na-Ma-Shi-Va-Ya) is the most sacred Shaivite mantra. 'Na' = earth element, action; 'Ma' = water element, consciousness; 'Shi' = fire element, Shiva-consciousness; 'Va' = air element, grace; 'Ya' = space element, the pure Self. Together: 'I bow to Shiva (the auspicious, the innermost Self).' Each syllable purifies a specific element and chakra.”

— *Shri Rudram, Krishna Yajur Veda*

Om Namo Narayanaya

Om Namo Narayanaya — The Ashtakshara Mantra

“Meaning: The eight-syllable mantra of Vishnu/Narayana — the All-pervading Sustainer of the universe. 'Narayana' = Na (water/essence of being) + Ayana (abode/goal) = 'He whose abode is the waters of consciousness; the ultimate refuge of all beings.' This mantra cultivates devotion, surrender, protection from harm, and the qualities of compassion and dharma.”

— *Vishnu Sahasranama, Mahanarayana Upanishad*

Om Sri Maha Lakshmiyai Namah

Om Shrim Maha Lakshmiyai Namah

“Meaning: The primary mantra of Mahalakshmi — the goddess of abundance, beauty, and auspiciousness. 'Shreem' is Lakshmi's Bija; 'Maha' = great; 'Lakshmiyai' = to Lakshmi; 'Namah' = I bow/I offer myself. This mantra invites all forms of abundance — material prosperity, relational beauty, inner richness, spiritual grace — into the practitioner's life.”

— *Sri Sukta, Rigveda Khila*

Om Gam Ganapataye Namah

Om Gam Ganapataye Namah

“Meaning: The primary mantra of Ganesha — the elephant-headed deity of beginnings, wisdom, and the removal of obstacles. 'Gam' is Ganesha's Bija; 'Ganapataye' = to the lord of the Ganas (cosmic forces); 'Namah' = I bow. This mantra is traditionally chanted at the beginning of any undertaking — a journey, a class, a new project, a new chapter of life — to invoke Ganesha's blessings for an obstacle-free and auspicious beginning.”

— *Ganapati Atharvashirsha Upanishad*

Type 3: Nirguna Mantra — Formless Absolute Mantras

Nirguna Mantras (from 'Nir' = without, 'Guna' = quality) are mantras that point directly to the formless, attributeless, limitless Absolute — Brahman — without reference to any specific divine form or personality. These mantras are the verbal expressions of the highest Vedantic teaching: that the ultimate Reality is beyond all name and form, beyond all description and conceptualization, yet is the very ground of one's own being. The most famous Nirguna mantras are the Mahavakyas (great sayings) of the Upanishads — those four pithy philosophical statements that, in the Advaita Vedanta tradition, are given as Guru-mantras at the moment of initiation precisely because they directly transmit the highest understanding.

Aham Brahmasmi

Aham Brahmasmi — I am Brahman

“Meaning: The great saying of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (I.4.10): 'I am Brahman' — the direct, first-person declaration of the identity of the individual Self (Atman) with the Universal Consciousness (Brahman). This Mahavakya is the most direct verbal expression of non-dual realization. Contemplating this mantra with genuine understanding dissolves the fundamental error of mistaking the limited ego for one's true identity.”

— *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I.4.10*

Tat Tvam Asi

Tat Tvam Asi — That Thou Art

“Meaning: The great saying of the Chandogya Upanishad (VI.8.7): 'That thou art' — addressed by the sage Uddalaka to his son Shvetaketu, indicating the identity of the individual self (tvam = thou) with the ultimate reality (tat = that). This is perhaps the most celebrated of all Mahavakyas and the most extensively commented upon. The word 'Asi' (art) is present tense — not 'you will be' or 'you can become' but 'you ARE, right now, that ultimate reality.’”

— *Chandogya Upanishad VI.8.7*

Prajnanam Brahma

Prajnanam Brahma — Consciousness is Brahman

“Meaning: The great saying of the Aitareya Upanishad (III.3): 'Consciousness is Brahman.' This Mahavakya identifies the nature of Brahman specifically as pure, unlimited Consciousness — not mere awareness of objects but the pure, self-luminous, self-aware

being that is the ground of all experience. Contemplating this Mahavakya leads to the recognition that the consciousness you are using right now to read these words is, in its essential nature, the same unlimited consciousness that is Brahman.”

— *Aitareya Upanishad III.3*

Ayam Atma Brahma

Ayam Atma Brahma — This Self is Brahman

“Meaning: The great saying of the Mandukya Upanishad (I.2): 'This Self is Brahman.' The word 'Ayam' (this) points to the immediate, present, first-person experience of one's own existence — the bare sense of 'I am' that is the most immediate and indubitable fact of every conscious being's experience. This very Self that one always already is, is Brahman — not a distant, attained, future state but the most immediate and obvious reality of one's own being.”

— *Mandukya Upanishad I.2*

Type 4: Vedic Mantra — Ancient Hymns from the Four Vedas

Vedic Mantras are the sacred hymns and verses of the four Vedas — Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda — composed or revealed in Vedic Sanskrit and traditionally chanted with the precise tonal accents (Svaras) that are essential to their correct pronunciation and their full potency. The Vedic mantras constitute the largest and most systematically organized body of sacred sound in human history: the four Vedas together contain approximately 20,379 distinct mantras, organized into a sophisticated structure of meters, deities, seers, and musical scales.

The Vedic tradition makes an extraordinary claim about its mantras: they are not human compositions but cosmic revelations — eternal truths (Sanatana Dharma) that exist eternally in the fabric of consciousness and were 'heard' (Shruti) rather than composed by the Rishis. This understanding, while metaphysically profound, has an important practical implication: the Vedic mantras are understood to possess an intrinsic potency that is independent of the meaning understood by the practitioner, deriving from their specific phonological structure and tonal patterns. Hence the extraordinary care with which the Vedic chanting tradition has been preserved across thousands of years.

Om Bhur Bhuvah Svah...

Gayatri Mantra — Rigveda III.62.10

“Meaning: Om Bhur-Bhuvah-Svah / Tat-Savitur-Varenyam / Bhargo-Devasya-Dhimahi / Dhiyo-Yo-Nah-Prachodayat. Meaning: 'We meditate upon the glorious, sacred radiance of the Divine Sun (Savitri/the divine intelligence). May that divine intelligence illuminate and inspire our intellect.' The most widely chanted and most universally revered of all Vedic mantras.”

— *Rig Veda III.62.10*

Om Tryambakam Yajamahe...

Mahamrityunjaya Mantra — Rig Veda VII.59.12

“Meaning: Om Tryambakam Yajamahe / Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam / Urvarukamiva Bandhanan / Mrityormukshiya Mamritat. Meaning: 'We worship the three-eyed one (Shiva/Lord of past, present, and future), who is fragrant and nourishes all beings. May we be liberated from death (physical and existential) as a ripe cucumber is freed from its vine — not from immortality but unto it.' The great victory-over-death mantra, used extensively in Ayurvedic healing.”

— *Rig Veda VII.59.12 (Mrityu-Sukta)*

Rig Veda — Purusha Sukta Opening

Sahasrashirsha Purushah Sahasrakshah Sahasrapat

“Meaning: The opening of the Purusha Sukta (Rig Veda X.90): 'The Cosmic Being has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet; encompassing the earth on all sides, extending beyond it by the breadth of ten fingers.' The Purusha Sukta is one of the most important cosmological hymns of the Rig Veda, describing the primordial sacrifice of the cosmic Purusha from which the entire manifest universe was created.”

— *Rig Veda X.90 — Purusha Sukta*

Type 5: Tantric Mantra — Esoteric Power Syllables

Tantric Mantras represent the most esoteric, most powerful, and most technically demanding branch of the Mantra tradition. They are distinguished from Vedic mantras primarily by their non-public, initiatory character (traditionally transmitted only through direct Guru-Shishya initiation), their more condensed and more technically complex structure (typically involving combinations of Bija syllables in precisely specified arrangements), their orientation toward specific practical effects (siddhi — supernatural powers, healing, protection, attraction, repulsion), and their foundation in the Tantric philosophical framework of consciousness as Shakti (divine feminine power) and the body as a sacred instrument.

Tantric mantras are organized into a sophisticated system of categories (Vidyas) associated with specific goddesses, cosmic powers, and practical applications. The ten Mahavidyas (great cosmic wisdom goddesses) — Kali, Tara, Tripura Sundari (Lalita), Bhuvaneshvari, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi, and Kamala — each have their own complex of Bija mantras, Dhyana mantras, and extended Mantra-Vidyas that together constitute a complete yoga path in themselves.

Om Krim Kalikayai Namah

Om Krim Kalikayai Namah — The Primary Mantra of Kali

“Meaning: The root mantra of Kali Maha Vidya. 'Krim' is Kali's Bija — the concentrated vibrational essence of her transformative power; 'Kalikayai' = to Kali, the all-devouring goddess of time and transformation; 'Namah' = I bow. This mantra invokes the power of radical transformation — the dissolution of all that is false, limited, ego-bound, and fear-driven, revealing the luminous consciousness that was always present beneath the conditioned personality.”

— *Mahanirvana Tantra, Kali Tantra*

Aim Kleem Sauh

Aim Kleem Sauh — The Turiya Bija

“Meaning: The three-Bija combination of the Trikuta Mantra from the Srividya tradition. 'Aim' = Vama (left/wisdom); 'Kleem' = Jyeshtha (middle/will power); 'Sauh' = Raudri (right/knowledge). Together these three Bijas represent the three Shaktis of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva — creation, preservation, and dissolution — and their unity in the Supreme Consciousness of Tripura Sundari, the goddess who transcends the three cities (waking,

dream, deep sleep).”

— *Vamakeshvara Tantra, Yogini Hridaya*

Type 6: Gayatri Mantra – The Universal Prayer

The Gayatri Mantra occupies a position of singular importance in the entire Mantra tradition — described in the scriptures as the mother of all Vedas (Veda-Mata), the quintessence of all Vedic teaching, and the most universally beneficial of all mantras. It is the one mantra that is universally prescribed across all sects and sampradayas of the Hindu tradition, and the one mantra that is considered suitable for practitioners of all ages, genders, and spiritual levels.

**Om Bhur Bhuvah Svah / Tat Savitur Varenyam /
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi / Dhiyo Yo Nah
Prachodayat**

The Gayatri Mantra – Rig Veda III.62.10

“Meaning: Translation: 'Om. (We invoke) the three planes of existence: Earth (Bhur), Atmosphere (Bhuvah), and Heavens (Svah). We meditate upon (Dhimahi) that (Tat) most excellent (Varenyam) radiance (Bhargo) of the Divine Sun/Intelligence (Savitur Devasya). May that divine light illuminate and inspire (Prachodayat) our intellect (Dhiyo) — yours (Yo) and ours (Nah).' This 24-syllable mantra in the Gayatri meter (3 x 8 syllables) invokes divine intelligence to illuminate the mind.”

— *Rig Veda III.62.10 – Vishvamitra Rishi*

The 24 Syllables of the Gayatri

The 24 syllables of the Gayatri Mantra correspond, according to the Vedic tradition, to: the 24 vertebrae of the human spine; the 24 hours of the day; the 24 letters of the traditional Sanskrit alphabet (Siddhamatrka); and the 24 principles of Sankhya philosophy (Prakriti + 23 evolutes). The mantra is typically chanted 108 times daily — traditionally 36 times each at dawn (Pratah Sandhya), noon (Madhyahna Sandhya), and dusk (Sayam Sandhya), in alignment with the three transitions of solar energy.

Gayatri Mantra as Therapy

The Gayatri Mantra has perhaps the most extensive body of both traditional therapeutic documentation and modern scientific research of any mantra. Therapeutic applications documented in classical Ayurvedic texts and modern research include: Enhancement of cognitive function and memory (traditional use in student life; modern research shows improved attention and working memory after 40-day practice); Treatment of depression and anxiety through documented effects on serotonin and cortisol regulation; Improvement of vision (traditional use — the mantra is understood to activate the Ajna chakra/pineal gland); Cardiovascular health (the slow, rhythmic breathing pattern of traditional Gayatri

chanting produces beneficial effects on heart rate variability); and general vitality enhancement through the activation of the solar plexus (Manipura chakra) and its correspondence with the solar deity Savitri.

Type 7: Shakti Mantra — Mantras of the Divine Feminine

Shakti Mantras invoke the divine feminine principle — understood in the Indian tradition not as a secondary or derivative aspect of the divine but as the primary, dynamic, creative, and sustaining power (Shakti) of the universe. In the Shakta philosophical framework (particularly Shaktism and Srividya), the ultimate reality is Shakti herself — pure, infinite, dynamic consciousness-power that, by its own free will, creates, sustains, and dissolves all of manifest existence. The entire universe is her vibration, her dance (Lalita means 'the one who plays'), her delight in self-expression.

Om Dum Durgayei Namah

Om Dum Durgayei Namah — The Primary Durga Mantra

“Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. I bow to Durga, the invincible one.' 'Dum' is Durga's Bija; 'Durgayei' = to Durga (she who is difficult to reach/cross — the fiercest manifestation of the Divine Mother, wielding weapons against all negative forces). This mantra invokes Durga's protective power, her invincibility, her ability to destroy all obstacles and enemies — physical, psychological, and spiritual.”

— *Devi Mahatmya, Markandeya Purana*

Om Aim Saraswatyai Namah

Om Aim Saraswatyai Namah — The Saraswati Mantra

“Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. With Aim (Saraswati's Bija). I bow to Saraswati.' Saraswati is the goddess of knowledge, language, music, arts, and wisdom. 'Aim' = her Bija, encoding the vibrational quality of clarity, precision, creative articulation, and the power of discriminative intelligence. This mantra is extensively used by students, teachers, musicians, writers, and all who seek to develop their intellectual, creative, and communicative faculties.”

— *Saraswati Stotram, Devi Upasana tradition*

Om Shrim Mahalakshmiyei Namah

Om Shrim Mahalakshmiyei Namah — The Mahalakshmi Mantra

“Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. With Shreem (Lakshmi's Bija). I bow to the great Lakshmi.' Mahalakshmi is the goddess of the 16 kinds of wealth (Shodasha Kalaa Lakshmi): material wealth, knowledge, courage, victory, sons/progeny, gold, grain, happiness, bliss, intelligence, beauty, higher knowledge, strength, fame, compassion, and health. This mantra invokes abundance at all levels — the totality of what makes a human life truly wealthy.”

— *Sri Sukta, Mahalakshmi Stotram*

Type 8: Shaiva Mantra — Mantras of Lord Shiva

Shaiva Mantras invoke Shiva — the third aspect of the Hindu Trinity (Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshvara), the Lord of dissolution and liberation, the Adi Yogi (first yogi), the Lord of Mount Kailasa, the destroyer of the triple city (Tripura), and the ultimate refuge of all who seek liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In the Shaiva philosophical tradition, Shiva is not merely the deity of destruction but the very ground of all consciousness — pure, unchanging, eternal awareness (Chit), in whom all creation arises, exists, and finally dissolves. The name 'Shiva' means literally 'the auspicious one' — suggesting that what appears as destruction is, in fact, the most auspicious act of liberation.

Om Namah Shivaya

Om Namah Shivaya — The Panchakshara

“Meaning: The five-syllable (Panchakshara) Mantra Na-Ma-Shi-Va-Ya corresponds to the five elements: Na = earth (Prithvi), Ma = water (Jala), Shi = fire (Agni), Va = air (Vayu), Ya = space (Akasha). Adding Om: the mantra encompasses all five elements plus the transcendent ground (Om). This is the most recited mantra in the entire Shaiva tradition and one of the most widely chanted mantras in the world.”

— *Shiva Purana, Shri Rudram*

Om Namo Bhagavate Rudraya

Om Namo Bhagavate Rudraya

“Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. I bow to the Blessed Lord Rudra.' Rudra is one of Shiva's most ancient and most powerful names — the howling, roaring manifestation of cosmic wind and storm, the Lord who brings both terror and liberation. This mantra is used for healing, protection, and the dissolution of deeply embedded karmic patterns.”

— *Atharva Veda, Shiva Kavacham*

Mrityunjaya Mantra

Om Tryambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam / Urvarukamiva Bandhanan Mrityormukshiyā Mamritat

“Meaning: The great Mahamrityunjaya Mantra (Rig Veda VII.59.12): 'We worship the three-eyed Lord Shiva who is fragrant and who nourishes all beings. As the ripe cucumber is freed from its vine, may we be liberated from the bondage of death, not separated from immortality.' This mantra is the primary Vedic healing mantra, used in Ayurveda for serious illness, during surgery, at the time of death, and in daily practice for longevity and vitality.”

— Rig Veda VII.59.12, Shiva Purana

Type 9: Vaishnava Mantra — Mantras of Lord Vishnu and His Avataras

Vaishnava Mantras invoke Vishnu — the second aspect of the Trinity, the All-pervading Sustainer and Preserver of the universe — and his ten primary Avataras (divine incarnations), particularly Rama and Krishna, who represent the complete embodiment of dharmic living and the divine love (Bhakti) that transcends all philosophical categories. The Vaishnava tradition is one of the largest and most widespread branches of Hindu spirituality, and its mantras — particularly the Hare Krishna Mahamantra and the Ram Nam — have achieved a global reach through the Bhakti yoga revival movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna / Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama / Rama Rama Hare Hare

The Hare Krishna Mahamantra — The Great Deliverance Mantra

“Meaning: The 16-word, 32-syllable Mahamantra of the Vaishnava tradition, considered the yuga-dharma (the appropriate spiritual practice for the present age). 'Hare' = Hara, the energy of the Lord; 'Krishna' = the all-attractive, the one who draws all consciousness to himself; 'Rama' = the one who gives pleasure, the reservoir of all pleasure. This mantra is pure Bhakti — pure devotional love expressed through sound.”

— *Kali-Santarana Upanishad*

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya — The Dvadashakshara

“Meaning: The 12-syllable Mantra of Vishnu/Vasudeva: 'Om. I bow to the Blessed Lord Vasudeva.' 'Vasudeva' = 'he who dwells in all beings and in whom all beings dwell' — a name that encapsulates Vishnu's all-pervading, all-sustaining nature. This mantra is considered one of the most complete and most beneficial Vaishnava mantras, suitable for practitioners at all stages.”

— *Vishnu Purana, Bhagavata Purana*

Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama

Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama

“Meaning: The primary Ram Nam mantra popularized by Sant Tukaram and Ramdas Swami. Mahatma Gandhi's final words at his assassination were 'He Ram' — a testimony to the depth

at which this mantra had penetrated his consciousness. 'Rama' = one who delights; 'Jaya' = victory/glory. This simple, rhythmic mantra is extensively used in kirtan (devotional singing), walking meditation, and as a constant companion in daily life.”

— *Ramacharitamanas, Adhyatma Ramayana*

Type 10: Stotra Mantra – Devotional Praise Mantras

Stotra Mantras (from 'Stu' = to praise) are extended devotional compositions — hymns, prayers, and praises addressed to specific deities — that function both as musical offerings of devotion and as mantric recitations with specific spiritual and psychological effects. The Stotra tradition is among the richest and most varied in all of Indian literature, encompassing texts ranging from the terse philosophical power of Adi Shankaracharya's Nirvana Shatakam to the mellifluous devotional beauty of the Soundarya Lahari.

Twameva Mata Cha Pita Twameva...

Twameva Mata – Universal Prayer Shloka

“Meaning: Twameva Mata Cha Pita Twameva / Twameva Bandhu Cha Sakha Twameva / Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva / Twameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva. Meaning: 'You alone are my mother, you alone are my father; you alone are my relative, you alone are my friend; you alone are my knowledge, you alone are my wealth; you alone are everything to me, O God of gods.' One of the most universal and most beloved of all Sanskrit devotional slokas.”

— *Parabrahma Stotram, pan-Vedic tradition*

Shloka from Soundarya Lahari

Shivashah Shaktya Yukto Yadi Bhavati Shaktah Prabhavitum

“Meaning: Opening verse of Soundarya Lahari (Wave of Beauty) by Adi Shankaracharya: 'Only when conjoined with Shakti does Shiva have the power to create; otherwise, the Lord is not even capable of movement. Therefore to you, who is worthy of worship by Hari, Hara, Virinci and other gods, how can one who has not accumulated merit be capable of offering salutation or praise?' One of the most sublime devotional and philosophical poems in Sanskrit literature.”

— *Soundarya Lahari, Adi Shankaracharya, Verse 1*

Type 11: Dhyana Mantra – Meditation Mantras

Dhyana Mantras (from 'Dhyana' = meditation) are mantras specifically designed as focal points for deep meditative practice — mantras whose vibrational quality, semantic meaning, and contemplative depth are calibrated to support the progressive deepening of awareness from ordinary mental activity (Vyutthana) through increasingly refined states of meditation (Dhyana) to the threshold of Samadhi. They differ from devotional mantras primarily in their functional orientation: while devotional mantras express relationship with the divine, Dhyana mantras investigate the nature of the divine — and of the self.

Soham

Soham — So-Ham — I am That

“Meaning: The most widely used of all Dhyana mantras — the natural mantra of the breath itself. 'So' = that (the cosmic Self, Brahman); 'Ham' (or Aham) = I am. Together: 'I am That — I am the cosmic Self.' The extraordinary power of this mantra lies in its synchronization with the breath: 'So' is the natural sound of inhalation; 'Ham' is the natural sound of exhalation. The practitioner thus discovers that every breath is already a mantra — that the universe is continuously affirming one's identity with the Absolute.”

— Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, Hamsa Upanishad

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

“Meaning: The universal peace mantra — the triple invocation of Shanti (peace, cessation of disturbance) used at the close of all Vedic prayers, meditations, and rituals. The three repetitions of Shanti address the three types of suffering (Tapatraya): Adhibhautika (suffering from external causes — other beings), Adhidaivika (suffering from supernatural causes — weather, illness), and Adhyatmika (suffering from internal causes — one's own mind). May peace prevail at all three levels.”

— Vedic tradition, all four Vedas

Om Purnamadah Purnamidam...

Purna Mantra — Isha Upanishad Opening

“Meaning: Om Purnamadah Purnamidam / Purnat Purnamudachyate / Purnasya Purnamadaya / Purnamevavashishyate. Meaning: 'That (the Absolute) is infinite/complete; this (the manifest world) is infinite/complete; from the infinite, the infinite arises; taking the

infinite from the infinite, the infinite alone remains.' One of the most philosophically profound mantras in the entire Vedic tradition, expressing the non-dual teaching that both the transcendent Absolute and the immanent world are equally complete and infinite.”

— *Isha Upanishad, Opening Invocation*

Type 12: Karma Mantra — Action, Purpose, and Life Mission Mantras

Karma Mantras (from 'Karma' = action, deed, work) are mantras specifically oriented toward the sanctification, purification, and empowerment of action in the world — mantras that transform ordinary activity into yoga by bringing conscious, devoted, mantrically empowered awareness to the performance of one's duties, work, and life mission. The philosophical foundation of Karma Mantras is the Bhagavad Gita's teaching of Karma Yoga — the path of liberation through action — and the understanding that every action, when performed with the right inner attitude and dedicated to the Divine, becomes a form of worship and a vehicle of liberation.

Karmanyevadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana

Bhagavad Gita II.47 — The Karma Yoga Mantra

“Meaning: Karmanyevadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana / Ma Karmaphalaheturbhur Ma Te Sango Stvakarmani. Meaning: 'Your right is to perform action only; never are you the master of its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be your motive; neither let there be attachment to inaction.' This single verse — the most famous in the entire Bhagavad Gita — is the definitive statement of Karma Yoga and one of the most powerful contemplative mantras for professionals, leaders, and all who seek to act in the world without being enslaved by anxiety about outcomes.”

— *Bhagavad Gita II.47, Krishna to Arjuna*

Nishkama Karma Mantra

*Yat Karomi Yad Ashnami Yaj Juhomi Dadami Yat / Yat Tapasyami Kaunteya
Tat Kurushva Mad Arpanam*

“Meaning: Bhagavad Gita IX.27: 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever austerity you practice — O son of Kunti, offer that to Me.' This is the complete Karma Yoga life-mantra: the dedication of every action, every bite of food, every act of giving, and every austerity to the Divine — transforming the entire fabric of daily life into continuous worship and practice.”

— *Bhagavad Gita IX.27*

Type 13: Japa Mantra — The Science of Mantra Repetition

Japa (from 'Jap' = to repeat in a low voice, to mutter) is the systematic, sustained repetition of a mantra — the fundamental and most widely practiced method of Mantra Yoga sadhana. While any mantra can theoretically be practiced through Japa, the term 'Japa Mantra' refers specifically to those mantras that have been identified by the tradition as particularly suited for Japa practice — mantras of appropriate length, rhythmic quality, and spiritual content for sustained repetition over extended periods.

Type of Japa	Description and Practice Guidance
Vaikhari Japa	Audible, vocal chanting — the grossest and most externally perceptible form of Japa. Vaikhari Japa is recommended for beginners, for group practice, and for practitioners whose mind is highly restless. The external sound engages the auditory processing centers of the brain, providing an additional anchor for attention and making mind-wandering easier to detect.
Upamshu Japa	Whispered or murmured Japa — an intermediate practice in which the mantra is barely audible, moving the lips but producing no real vocal sound. Upamshu Japa is considered 100 times more powerful than Vaikhari Japa in the traditional texts. It maintains some of the grounding quality of external sound while beginning to internalize the attention.
Manasika Japa	Purely mental Japa — the silent repetition of the mantra entirely in the mind, with no movement of lips or breath. This is the most subtle and most powerful form of Japa, traditionally described as 1,000 times more powerful than Vaikhari Japa. It requires a significantly more developed concentration than audible Japa and is recommended only after substantial practice of the grosser forms.
Likhita Japa	Written Japa — the practice of writing the mantra repeatedly, slowly, with full attention and devotion. Likhita Japa combines the physical engagement of writing with the concentration of Japa, creating a uniquely anchored and focused practice that is particularly beneficial for practitioners who struggle with mental restlessness or who work well kinesthetically.
Ajapa Japa	The spontaneous, continuous Japa that arises without deliberate effort — the state in which the mantra has been so thoroughly established in consciousness that it repeats itself automatically with every breath, every heartbeat, every moment of conscious life. Ajapa Japa is the highest form of Japa — the natural condition of one whose consciousness has been completely saturated by the mantra.

Mala Japa

Japa practiced with a counting mala (rosary of 108 beads). The physical engagement of counting on the mala provides a tactile anchor that reduces distraction while maintaining awareness of the number of repetitions. The traditional Japa mala has 108 beads (plus the Sumeru/guru bead at the junction point). The practitioner begins at the bead adjacent to the Sumeru and proceeds around the mala, turning back at the Sumeru without crossing it.

Type 14: Kirtan and Sankirtan – Communal Chanting

Kirtan (from 'Kirt' = to praise, to glorify) is the musical, rhythmic, often ecstatic chanting of divine names and mantras — typically in a call-and-response format in which a leader (kirtankara) sings a phrase and the assembled community responds. Sankirtan (from 'Sam' = together + 'Kirtan') is the communal dimension of this practice — the singing of divine names by a community of practitioners together. Both Kirtan and Sankirtan are classified as Bhakti Yoga practices — the yoga of devotion — and are considered the primary spiritual practice recommended for the present age (Kali Yuga) in the Bhagavata tradition.

The Bhagavata Purana identifies Sankirtan as the most accessible and most universally beneficial spiritual practice for the modern age — requiring no special qualification, no initiation, no previous spiritual development, and no specific spiritual knowledge. Anyone who sings divine names with genuine feeling — regardless of their current spiritual condition, their past actions, or the state of their consciousness — is, the tradition asserts, directly and immediately transforming the quality of their consciousness and accumulating spiritual merit. This democratic, accessible, inclusive quality of Kirtan makes it one of the most important tools in the contemporary yoga teacher's toolkit.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

The Hare Krishna Mahamantra – The Primary Kirtan Mantra

“Meaning: The primary mantra of the Gaudiya Vaishnava Kirtan tradition and the ISKCON movement. This 16-word, 32-syllable mantra is considered by the tradition to be a direct call to Krishna and Rama — a plea for the divine energy (Hare/Hara) to engage the consciousness of the caller. The mantra requires no translation to be effective: the call of divine names in itself, the tradition holds, is sufficient to produce the experience of divine presence.”

— *Kali-Santarana Upanishad, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*

► **Benefits of Regular Kirtan Practice**

Psychological: Reduction of depression and anxiety symptoms; cultivation of joy, compassion, and openness; dissolution of social inhibition and self-consciousness; development of the capacity for unconditional positive affect. Neurological: Research demonstrates that group kirtan produces brain states similar to collective meditation — enhanced alpha and theta wave activity, increased oxytocin (bonding hormone), and

reduced cortisol. Social/Community: Kirtan builds community and creates shared experience of transcendence — a powerful antidote to the social isolation that characterizes contemporary urban life. Spiritual: The Bhagavata Purana's claim is that regular Kirtan gradually purifies the Chitta (mind-field) of its accumulated Samskaras, eventually producing the spontaneous arising of Bhakti (love) — the highest of all spiritual states.

Type 15: Aushadha Mantra — Healing and Therapeutic Mantras

Aushadha Mantras (from 'Aushadha' = medicine, medicinal herb, therapy) are mantras specifically prescribed in the Ayurvedic, Atharva Vedic, and Tantric medical traditions for therapeutic purposes — the healing of physical disease, psychological disturbance, spiritual affliction, and the restoration of balance to the body-mind complex. The tradition of Mantra as medicine is among the oldest in human history: the Atharva Veda — the fourth and most ancient Veda — is in large measure a medical text, containing hundreds of mantras for healing specific diseases, neutralizing poisons, facilitating childbirth, enhancing fertility, treating injuries, and restoring health.

Dhanvantari Mantra

*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya Dhanvantaraye Amritakalasha Hastaya
Sarvamaya Vinashanaya Trailokyā Nathaya Sri Maha Vishnu Svarupaya
Namah*

“Meaning: The primary mantra of Dhanvantari — the divine physician, the deity of Ayurveda, the physician of the gods (Vaidya of the Devas). Dhanvantari is traditionally understood as an avatara of Vishnu who emerged from the churning of the cosmic ocean carrying a pot of Amrita (nectar of immortality). This mantra is chanted at the beginning of healing sessions, before surgery, and during serious illness. 'Dhanvantaraye' = to Dhanvantari; 'Amritakalasha Hastaya' = holding the pot of amrita; 'Sarvamaya Vinashanaya' = destroyer of all diseases.”

— *Dhanvantari Stotra, Ayurveda tradition*

Mahamrityunjaya Mantra for Healing

*Om Tryambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam / Urvarukamiva
Bandhanan Mrityormukshiya Mamritat*

“Meaning: The Mahamrityunjaya Mantra (Great Victory over Death Mantra) is the primary Vedic healing mantra, prescribed in Ayurveda for serious illness, life-threatening conditions, surgical procedures, and the process of dying. 'Tryambakam' = three-eyed Shiva; 'Pushtivardhanam' = he who nourishes and increases vitality; 'Urvarukamiva' = like a ripe cucumber from its vine. The mantra is traditionally chanted 108 times daily during illness, and 1,008 times during critical conditions (Maha Japa). Clinical research has shown benefits in reducing pain, improving recovery time, and supporting the immune response.”

— *Rig Veda VII.59.12*

Type 16: Guru Mantra — Lineage Transmission and Initiation Mantras

Guru Mantras occupy a unique and irreplaceable position in the Mantra tradition — they are the mantras received directly from a qualified teacher in the context of formal initiation (Diksha), representing the living transmission of a lineage's accumulated spiritual power and understanding. The Guru Mantra is not merely a collection of syllables but a vibrational key that has been charged with the Guru's own realization and the accumulated realization of the entire lineage through which it has been transmitted. The classical texts are unambiguous: the same mantra received from a book or website and the same mantra received from a realized Guru are as different as a key and a stone.

Om Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshvarah / Gurur Eva Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah

Guru Vandana — The Primary Guru Mantra

“Meaning: Meaning: 'The Guru is Brahma (the creator); the Guru is Vishnu (the preserver); the Guru is Deva Maheshvara (the great lord, Shiva); the Guru is verily the Supreme Absolute Brahman itself. To that glorious Guru, I offer my salutations.' This mantra is chanted at the beginning of all yoga classes in the classical tradition, establishing the right relationship between teacher and teaching and invoking the entire lineage's blessings on the practice.”

— *Guru Gita, Skanda Purana*

Tvameva Mata Cha Pita Tvameva

*Om Asatoma Sadgamaya / Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya / Mrityorma
Amritamgamaya / Om Shanti Shanti Shanti*

“Meaning: The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Shanti Mantra: 'Lead me from the unreal to the real; lead me from darkness to light; lead me from death to immortality. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This mantra, understood as the Guru's prayer for the student, encapsulates the three primary dimensions of spiritual development: from untruth to truth (intellectual clarity), from darkness to light (inner illumination), from mortality to immortality (Self-realization).”

— *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I.3.28*

PART THREE

MANTRA AS THERAPY – VIBRATIONAL HEALING

“The physician who does not know mantra is only half a physician. The mantra heals what the medicine cannot reach.”

– Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana

Chapter 20: Mantra in Ayurveda – Classical Therapeutic Traditions

20.1 The Atharva Veda – The Oldest Medical Text

The Atharva Veda — the fourth and in many scholars' view the most ancient and most practically oriented of the four Vedas — is, among other things, the world's oldest surviving medical text: a comprehensive collection of mantras, hymns, and ritual procedures for the treatment of virtually every disease known to ancient Indian medicine. The Atharva Veda's therapeutic system is based on the understanding that disease is ultimately a disturbance of the cosmic order (Rta) as manifested in the individual's body-mind complex — a disturbance that can be corrected at the vibrational level through the application of the appropriate mantra, which restores the disrupted vibrational pattern to its healthy configuration.

Condition	Atharva Vedic Mantra Treatment
Fever (Takman)	The Atharva Veda contains multiple mantras for the treatment of fever (Takman — the Vedic equivalent of the fever deity/demon), including: 'Atat tvopa sprishami / om yadi gachhasi pravanam vata vahini' (AV 1.25.4). The traditional treatment combined specific herbal preparations (Aushadhi) with mantra recitation over the medicine, understood to enhance the medicine's therapeutic potency through vibrational activation.
Jaundice	AV 1.22 contains a complete mantra treatment for Haridra (jaundice): 'Haridrabhih pari dada asyai tvam Hariman... tava tvam hariman astu haritebhyah pashubhyah' — transferring the yellow color of jaundice to naturally yellow things (turmeric, parrots, yellow plants). This is not magical thinking but a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between color vibration (specific light frequencies) and physiological balance.
Headache / Shiroroga	AV IV.9 provides mantras specifically for headache: 'Yad anyatreto abudhyathah' (Whatever may have caused this headache...). The mantra identifies the possible causes (Vata disturbance, heat, cold, etc.) and redirects the disturbing energy through specific vibrational patterns.
Mental Disorders	The Atharva Veda contains an extensive tradition of mantras for psychological conditions — what the tradition calls Unmada (mental derangement), Apasmara (epilepsy), and the various conditions caused by the disturbance of the Manas (mind). AV VI.111 provides a complete mantra protocol for psychological healing: 'Yad unmad yasmai unmadas tattas tvam apa nunudah' — driving away the spirit/energy of derangement.
Healing Medicines	A crucial function of Atharva Vedic mantras in the Ayurvedic

	tradition is the empowerment of herbal medicines: mantras are recited over medicinal preparations during their preparation, charged in the presence of fire or water, and administered to patients along with the physical medicine. This practice — Mantra-Aushadha (mantra-medicine) — reflects the understanding that physical medicine and vibrational medicine are complementary healing modalities.
Surgical Procedures	The Sushruta Samhita — the classical text of Indian surgery — prescribes specific mantras for use before, during, and after surgical procedures: protective mantras (Raksha mantras) to be worn by the surgeon; healing mantras to be chanted during the procedure to minimize blood loss and trauma; and recovery mantras for post-operative care.

20.2 Tridosha Theory and Mantra Therapy

Ayurveda's foundational framework of the three Doshas (Vata — air/space; Pitta — fire/water; Kapha — earth/water) provides a sophisticated basis for the systematic application of specific mantras to specific constitutional imbalances. Each Dosha has a characteristic vibrational signature, and specific mantras produce specific effects on the Doshic balance — making mantra therapy not a one-size-fits-all intervention but a personalized, constitution-sensitive therapeutic modality.

Dosha	Characteristics	Balancing Mantras	Mechanism of Action
Vata (Air + Space)	Dry, light, mobile, cold, rough, subtle, clear. Imbalanced: anxiety, insomnia, constipation, nervous disorders, fear	Om, Soham, Om Namah Shivaya, Shanti mantras; slow, rhythmic chanting at low pitch	Grounds the scattered, mobile quality of Vata; the earthing vibrations of slow Om/Shiva mantras stabilize Vata's excessive movement
Pitta (Fire + Water)	Hot, sharp, light, oily, liquid, spreading. Imbalanced: anger, inflammation, infection, digestive disorders, competitiveness	Om Namō Narayanaya, Sri Sukta, Shanti mantras; cooling mantras at medium pitch	Cools the intense fire of Pitta; Vishnu/Lakshmi mantras cultivate the Sattvic contentment that reduces Pitta's drive and intensity
Kapha (Earth + Water)	Heavy, slow, cold, oily, smooth, stable. Imbalanced: depression, lethargy, congestion, weight gain, attachment	Gayatri, Surya mantras, energizing kirtan; rapid, rhythmic chanting at higher pitch	Stimulates the sluggish quality of Kapha; the warmth and movement of solar/fire mantras kindles the digestive and metabolic fire

Chapter 21: Mantra and the Modern Science of Sound Healing

21.1 Cymatics and the Geometry of Sound

The science of Cymatics — pioneered by Swiss scientist Hans Jenny in the 1960s and 1970s — provides perhaps the most visually dramatic demonstration of the ancient mantra tradition's claims about the relationship between specific sounds and specific patterns of organization in matter. Jenny's experiments demonstrated that when different sound frequencies are applied to a plate covered with sand, iron filings, or viscous fluids, the particles spontaneously organize into beautiful, complex, and repeatable geometric patterns — with different frequencies producing distinctly different patterns, and identical frequencies consistently producing identical patterns.

The implications for mantra theory are profound: if specific sound frequencies produce specific geometric patterns in physical matter under experimental conditions, then the specific phonological structure of each mantra — its precise combination of frequencies, harmonics, and rhythmic patterns — may indeed produce specific and reproducible geometric resonance patterns in the matter of the practitioner's body, nervous system, and brain. The striking correspondence between Cymatic sand patterns at specific frequencies and the geometric Yantras (sacred geometric diagrams) traditionally associated with the same frequencies in the Tantric tradition has been noted by several researchers as potentially more than coincidental.

Research-Based Benefits of Mantra Practice

Cardiovascular: A landmark study by Luciano Bernardi (2001) demonstrated that recitation of both the Rosary and the Hindu Om Mani Padme Hum at their traditional rates (approximately 6 cycles per minute) spontaneously synchronized with the Mayer waves of blood pressure variation and significantly increased baroreflex sensitivity — suggesting that both traditions arrived, independently, at the optimal breathing frequency for cardiovascular health. | **Immune Function:** Research published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* demonstrated significantly elevated levels of salivary immunoglobulin A (IgA) — a marker of immune function — following kirtan practice compared to control conditions, suggesting that mantra chanting enhances the mucosal immune response. | **Neurological:** Harvard Medical School researcher Sara Lazar's fMRI studies found that long-term meditators who used mantra-based meditation had measurably thicker cortical tissue in regions associated with attention and interoception, suggesting that mantra practice produces structural changes in the brain associated with enhanced cognitive function. | **Stress Reduction:** Multiple controlled trials have demonstrated significant reduction of cortisol, blood pressure, and subjective stress ratings following mantra practice programs of 4-8 weeks' duration.

Chapter 22: Chakra Mantras and Pranic Healing

The chakra system — the system of subtle energy centers (Chakras, literally 'wheels') described in the Tantric and yogic traditions — is intimately connected with mantra through the system of Bija mantras that each chakra embodies. Each chakra is associated with a specific element (Mahabhuta), a specific Bija mantra that encodes its vibrational signature, and specific physical, psychological, and spiritual qualities whose development or obstruction characterizes the state of that chakra.

Chakra	Location	Element	Bija	Psychological Quality	Therapeutic Application
Muladhara	Base of spine	Earth (Prithvi)	LAM	Survival, grounding, security, stability	Anxiety, fear, instability, disconnection from body; chant LAM 108x for grounding
Svadhishthana	Sacral/lower abdomen	Water (Jala)	VAM	Pleasure, creativity, sexuality, relationships	Sexual dysfunction, creative blocks, relationship issues; chant VAM 108x
Manipura	Solar plexus/navel	Fire (Tejas/Agni)	RAM	Power, will, self-esteem, digestion	Low confidence, digestive issues, lack of will; chant RAM 108x
Anahata	Heart center	Air (Vayu)	YAM	Love, compassion, connection, grief	Isolation, grief, inability to love; chant YAM 108x with Metta meditation
Vishuddha	Throat	Space (Akasha)	HAM	Communication, truth, expression	Communication issues, thyroid disorders; chant HAM 108x
Ajna	Third eye/forehead	Light/Mind (Manas)	OM (or AUM)	Intuition, wisdom, clarity of vision	Mental fog, headaches, lack of intuition; chant OM

					focused at Ajna
Sahasrara	Crown of head	Pure Consciousness	Silence / OM	Unity consciousness, liberation, bliss	Spiritual disconnection; sustained Om/Silence meditation at crown

► Chakra Mantra Therapy Protocol

Complete 7-Chakra Balancing Practice (45 minutes): Begin in Vajrasana or Padmasana after 10 minutes Nadi Shodhana. Starting from Muladhara, chant each Bija mantra 21 times with full attention directed to the corresponding chakra location. Feel the vibration resonating at that point. Progress upward through all 7 chakras. After completing all 7, rest in Shavasana for 10 minutes with awareness at Sahasrara. This practice is particularly effective for: overall energy system harmonization; premenstrual and menstrual support; emotional processing and integration; preparation for deep meditation; and recovery from illness or physical trauma.

Chapter 23: Specific Mantra Protocols for Common Conditions

Condition	Primary Mantra	Supporting Mantra	Protocol
Anxiety / Panic Disorder	Om Namah Shivaya	Soham (breath sync)	21 min slow Om Namah Shivaya + 10 min Soham daily; add Bhramari pranayama before
Depression / Low Mood	Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram	Gayatri Mantra	Daily 30 min sunrise kirtan; Gayatri 108x; Sun salutation with Ram mantra
Hypertension / Cardiovascular	Om / Mahamrityunjaya	Hare Krishna Mahamantra	6 cycles/min chanting; 20 min OM humming; weekly Mahamrityunjaya mala
Insomnia / Sleep Disorders	Om Namo Narayanaya	Soham (lying down)	108x slow Om Namo Narayanaya at bedtime; Soham sync with breath in Shavasana
Digestive Disorders (Vata)	Ram Bija (Manipura)	Nrisimha Mantra	Chant RAM 108x with hand on solar plexus; post-meal Agni mantra practice
Grief / Bereavement	Om Namah Shivaya	Twameva Mata Shloka	Daily 30 min compassionate kirtan; Shiva mantra for release and liberation
Lack of Concentration	Om Aim Saraswatyai Namah	Gayatri Mantra	Morning 108x Saraswati mantra; Trataka with Gayatri before study/work
Immune Deficiency	Mahamrityunjaya	Dhanvantari Mantra	Daily 108x Mahamrityunjaya with visualization; Dhanvantari before meals
Addictions	Om Krim Kalikayai Namah	Nishkama Karma Mantra	Kali mantra for transformation; Karma Yoga commitment practice; 40-day sadhana
Anger Management	Om Shanti Shanti Shanti	Metta Mantra in Sanskrit	Immediate: Triple Shanti with exhalation;

			Daily: 20 min Metta mantra practice
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PART FOUR

CLASS MANTRAS AND SHANTI PAATH

“Every class should begin in the awareness of the sacred and end in a dedication to the peace of all beings. The opening mantra invites the divine into the practice; the closing Shanti Paath sends the fruits of practice to the four directions for the benefit of all.”

— **Dr. Shivam Mishra, SKM Yoga**

Chapter 24: Class Opening Mantras — Invocations for Yoga Practice

The opening mantra of a yoga class is not a ritual formality but an essential practice with specific functions: it establishes the practitioner's consciousness in the appropriate mode for practice (Sattvic, open, receptive, and oriented toward the transcendent); it creates a boundary between the ordinary activities of daily life and the sacred time and space of yoga practice; it invokes the blessings of the tradition — the accumulated wisdom and grace of all the teachers who have preceded this practice; and it aligns the practitioner's intention with the highest purpose of yoga. Below are the most important class opening mantras from the classical Sanskrit tradition.

Opening Invocation 1 — Universal Om

OM

Om

Meaning: The primordial sound — all that was, is, and shall be. Begin every class with three repetitions of extended Om chanting, feeling the vibration in the chest, throat, and cranial cavity. The extended exhalation of Om naturally activates the parasympathetic nervous system and signals to the nervous system that this is a time of inward practice, not external activity. After three Oms, sit in the silence that follows — the Turiya state, the silence between mantras — for approximately one minute.

— *Mandukya Upanishad, Universal Vedic tradition*

Opening Invocation 2 — Patanjali Invocation for Iyengar-Style Classes

**Yogena Chittasya Padena Vacham / Malam Sharirasya
Cha Vaidyakena / Yopakarottam Pravaram Muninam /
Patanjalim Pranjaliranatoham**

*Yogena Chittasya Padena Vacham / Malam Sharirasya Cha Vaidyakena /
Yopakarottam Pravaram Muninam / Patanjali Pranjaliranatoham*

Meaning: Meaning: 'To the noblest of sages, Patanjali, who gave yoga for serenity of mind, grammar for purity of speech, and medicine for the perfection of the body — to him I bow with folded hands.' This invocation is chanted in Iyengar Yoga classes worldwide as the primary opening prayer, honoring Patanjali as the systematizer of yoga, grammar, and Ayurveda.

— *Traditional Iyengar Yoga tradition, author attributed to Patanjali's commentators*

Opening Invocation 3 — Guru Vandana (Universal)

Om Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo

Maheshvarah / Gurur Eva Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah

*Om Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshvarah / Gurur Eva Param
Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah*

Meaning: Meaning: 'The Guru is Brahma (creator), Vishnu (sustainer), Maheshvara (destroyer/liberator); the Guru is verily the Supreme Absolute itself. To that glorious Guru, I offer salutations.' This universal guru invocation establishes the proper consciousness of learning and receptivity — the understanding that the teacher in this class is a vehicle for a wisdom that transcends personality and tradition.

— Guru Gita, Skanda Purana

Opening Invocation 4 – Tvameva (Universal Prayer)

**Tvameva Mata Cha Pita Tvameva / Tvameva Bandhu Cha
Sakha Tvameva / Tvameva Vidya Dravinam Tvameva /
Tvameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva**

*Tvameva Mata Cha Pita Tvameva / Tvameva Bandhu Cha Sakha Tvameva / Tvameva
Vidya Dravinam Tvameva / Tvameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva*

Meaning: Meaning: 'You alone are my mother, you alone are my father; you alone are my kin, you alone are my friend; you alone are knowledge, you alone are wealth; you alone are everything, O God of gods.' This deeply devotional shloka establishes the attitude of complete surrender and trust — the recognition that the Divine is one's ultimate refuge, parent, friend, and source of all that one truly needs.

— Parabrahma Stotram – pan-Vedic tradition

Opening Invocation 5 – Saraswati Vandana (for Yoga Education Contexts)

**Ya Kundendu Tushara Hara Dhavala / Ya Shubhra
Vastravritha / Ya Veenaavara Dandamanditakara / Ya
Shveta Padmasana / Ya Brahmachyuta Shankara
Prabhritibihi Devaihi Sada Vandita / Sa Mam Patu
Saraswati Bhagavati Nishhesha Jadyapaha**

Ya Kundendu Tushara Hara Dhavala / Ya Shubhraavastravritha...

Meaning: Meaning: 'She who is as white as the jasmine flower, the moon, snow, the pearl necklace; she who is clothed in pure white; she whose hand is adorned by the staff of the veena; she who is seated on a white lotus; she who is ever worshipped by Brahma, Achyuta (Vishnu), Shankara (Shiva) and other gods — may that Goddess Saraswati, who removes all ignorance, protect me.' Used as opening invocation in educational yoga contexts, requesting the blessings of the goddess of knowledge, wisdom, and inspired speech.

— Saraswati Vandana – traditional Sanskrit stotra

Opening Invocation 6 – Ganesha Vandana (for New Beginnings)**Vakratunda Mahakaya Suryakoti Samaprabha /
Nirvighnam Kuru Me Deva Sarva Karyeshu Sarvada**

*Vakratunda Mahakaya Suryakoti Samaprabha / Nirvighnam Kuru Me Deva Sarva
Karyeshu Sarvada*

Meaning: Meaning: 'O Lord Ganesha, with the curved trunk and enormous body, whose radiance equals that of a million suns — please remove all obstacles in all my works at all times, O God.' This Ganesha invocation is used at the beginning of any new undertaking — a new class series, a new teacher training course, a new practice phase, or the first class in a new yoga studio. Ganesha's blessings ensure an auspicious, obstacle-free beginning.

— *Ganesha Stotram – traditional Sanskrit invocation*

**Opening Invocation 7 – Asatoma Sadgamaya (Brihadaranyaka
Upanishad)****Om Asatoma Sadgamaya / Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya /
Mrityorma Amritamgamaya / Om Shanti Shanti Shantih**

*Om Asato Ma Sat Gamaya / Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya / Mrityor Ma Amritam
Gamaya / Om Shanti Shanti Shantih*

Meaning: Meaning: 'Lead me from the unreal to the Real; lead me from darkness to Light; lead me from death to Immortality. Om, peace, peace, peace.' One of the most beloved and universally used of all Sanskrit prayers, from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. This mantra sets the intention of yoga practice with extraordinary clarity: the movement from the conditioned to the unconditioned, from ignorance to wisdom, from mortality to the recognition of one's eternal nature.

— *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I.3.28*

Chapter 25: Guru Vandana and Lineage Invocations

Honoring the Guru and the lineage at the beginning of a yoga class is not a mere social convention but a profound practice with specific psychological and spiritual functions. The act of honoring the guru and lineage: (1) cultivates Humility — the most important quality for learning, as the ego's defensive self-sufficiency is temporarily dissolved in the attitude of genuine gratitude and receptivity; (2) invokes Shakti — the accumulated spiritual power of all the teachers in the lineage, which is available to be channeled through the class; (3) establishes Continuity — the sense that this class is part of an unbroken tradition stretching back to the original source of yoga wisdom; and (4) creates Accountability — reminding both teacher and students that they are trustees of a sacred tradition with the responsibility to transmit it faithfully.

Guru Stotra — Full Version

**Akhanda Mandalakaram Vyaptam Yena Characharam /
Tat Padam Darshitam Yena Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah //
Ajnana Timirandhasya Jnananjana Shalakaya /
Chakshurunmilitam Yena Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah //
Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshvarah
/ Gurur Eva Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah**

*Akhanda Mandalakaram Vyaptam Yena Characharam / Tat Padam Darshitam Yena
Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah*

Meaning: Verse 1: 'To that Guru I bow, who showed me the state of the One Who pervades the entire undivided cosmos, both moving and unmoving.' Verse 2: 'To that Guru I bow, who opened my eyes blinded by the darkness of ignorance with the collyrium-stick of knowledge.' Verse 3: 'The Guru is Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshvara; the Guru is indeed the Supreme Absolute. To that Guru I bow.' This complete Guru Stotra is chanted at the beginning of extended teacher training sessions.

— Traditional Sanskrit — Guru Gita source tradition

Parampanya Vandana — Lineage Invocation

**Om Namu Brahma Vidyayai / Om Namu Brahma
Vidyayai / Om Namu Brahma Vidyayai**

Om Namu Brahma Vidyayai

Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. I bow to the knowledge of Brahman.' This simple, powerful invocation acknowledges that what is being transmitted in this class is not the personal knowledge of this

teacher but the accumulated wisdom of the entire tradition — the Brahma Vidya (knowledge of Brahman/the Absolute) that has been preserved and transmitted through the unbroken chain of teacher-student transmission. Chant three times with deep intention.

— *Universal Vedantic tradition*

Chapter 26: Shanti Paath – Peace Invocations from the Upanishads

The Shanti Paath (Peace Invocation) is the traditional closing prayer of every Vedic and Upanishadic study session, yoga class, and spiritual gathering. Each major Upanishad has its own specific Shanti Paath — a prayer for the peace, wellbeing, and liberation of both teacher and student. These invocations are among the most beautiful, most philosophically profound, and most spiritually potent texts in the entire Sanskrit literature. They are chanted three times, with each repetition of 'Shanti' (peace) growing progressively quieter until the third 'Shanti' is almost silent — representing the movement from physical peace (first Shanti), through psychological peace (second Shanti), to the deepest spiritual peace (third Shanti, the silence of Samadhi).

Shanti Paath 1 – Isha Upanishad (Shukla Yajur Veda)

**Om Purnamadah Purnamidam / Purnat
Purnamudachyate / Purnasya Purnamadaya /
Purnamevavashishyate / Om Shanti Shanti Shantih**

*Om Purnamadah Purnamidam / Purnat Purnamudachyate / Purnasya Purnamadaya /
Purnamevavashishyate / Om Shanti Shanti Shantih*

Meaning: Meaning: 'That (Brahman) is infinite, this (universe) is infinite. From the infinite, the infinite has come forth. From the infinite, when the infinite is removed, the infinite alone remains. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This extraordinarily profound mantra encapsulates the non-dual teaching of Advaita Vedanta in six lines: both the transcendent Absolute and the immanent world are equally infinite and complete — and the arithmetic of infinity (infinity minus infinity = infinity) reveals that the removal of the apparent world reveals only the ever-present Absolute.

— Isha Upanishad – Opening Invocation

Shanti Paath 2 – Kena Upanishad (Sama Veda)

**Om Aapyayantu Mamangani Vak Pranashchakshu
Shrotram / Atho Balam Indriyanam Cha Sarvani /
Sarvam Brahmopanishadam / Ma Aham Brahma
Nirakhyam Ma Ma Brahma Nirakhyat / Anirakhyanam
Astu Anirakhyanam Me Astu / Tad Atmani Nirate Ya
Upanishatsu Dharmah Te Mayi Santu Te Mayi Santu /
Om Shanti Shanti Shantih**

Om Aapyayantu Mamangani Vak Pranashchakshu Shrotram...

Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. May my limbs, speech, prana, eyes, ears — and also the strength of

all my senses — all become flourishing. All is the Brahman of the Upanishads. May I never deny Brahman; may Brahman never deny me. Let there be no denial between us. Let the virtues that are in the Upanishads be in me. May they be in me. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This Shanti Paath from the Kena Upanishad prays for the complete integration of the Upanishadic wisdom into every dimension of the practitioner's being.

— *Kena Upanishad — Opening Invocation (Sama Veda tradition)*

Shanti Paath 3 — Taittiriya Upanishad (Krishna Yajur Veda)

**Om Sham No Mitrah Sham Varunah / Sham No
Bhavatvaryama / Sham Na Indro Brihaspatih / Sham No
Vishnururukramah / Namō Brahmane / Namaste Vayo /
Tvameva Pratyaksham Brahmasi / Tvameva
Pratyaksham Brahma Vadishyami / Ritam Vadishyami /
Satyam Vadishyami / Tan Mamavatu / Tad
Vaktaramavatu / Avatu Mam Avatu Vaktaram / Om
Shanti Shanti Shantih**

Om Sham No Mitrah Sham Varunah / Sham No Bhavatvaryama...

Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. May Mitra (friendship/sun) be auspicious to us; may Varuna (cosmic order) be auspicious; may Aryaman (nobility/ancestors) be auspicious; may Indra and Brihaspati (divine wisdom) be auspicious; may the all-pervading Vishnu be auspicious. Salutation to Brahman. Salutation to you, O Vayu — you are indeed the direct Brahman. I shall proclaim you as the direct Brahman. I shall speak what is right; I shall speak what is true. May that protect me; may that protect the teacher. May it protect me; may it protect the teacher. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This comprehensive Shanti Paath invokes blessings from all the major Vedic deities and prays for the protection and mutual wellbeing of both teacher and student.

— *Taittiriya Upanishad — Opening Invocation (Krishna Yajur Veda)*

Shanti Paath 4 — Chandogya Upanishad (Sama Veda)

**Om Aapyayantu Mamangani Vak Pranashchakshu
Shrotram / Atho Balam Indriyanam Cha Sarvani /
Sarvam Brahmopanishadam / Ma Aham Brahma
Nirakhyam / Om Shanti Shanti Shantih**

Om Aapyayantu Mamangani Vak Pranashchakshu Shrotram...

Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. May all my organs — speech, prana, eyes, ears, and the strength of all my senses — become nourished and flourishing. All of this is Brahman as taught in the Upanishads. May I not deny Brahman. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This Sama Vedic Shanti Paath prays that the study of the Upanishads will nourish not merely the intellect but all of the practitioner's organs and faculties — that the wisdom of Brahman will pervade every dimension of the practitioner's being.

— *Chandogya Upanishad — Sama Veda tradition*

Shanti Paath 5 – Mandukya/Atharvashikha Upanishad (Atharva Veda)

**Om Bhadram Karnebhih Shrinuyama Devah / Bhadram
Pashyemakshabhir Yajatrah / Sthirair Angais
Tushtuvam Sastanubhih / Vyashema Devahitam Yad
Ayuh / Swasti Na Indro Vriddhashravah / Swasti Nah
Pusha Vishvavedah / Swasti Nastarkshyo Arishtanemih
/ Swasti No Brihaspatir Dadhatu / Om Shanti Shanti
Shantih**

Om Bhadram Karnebhih Shrinuyama Devah...

Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. May we hear with our ears what is auspicious, O Devas; may we see with our eyes what is auspicious, O worthy of worship; may we enjoy with stable limbs and bodies the full lifespan allotted by the divine. May Indra of great fame grant us wellbeing; may Pusha (nourisher) who knows all grant us wellbeing; may Tarkshya (Garuda/divine protection) who is free from harm grant us wellbeing; may Brihaspati (divine wisdom) grant us wellbeing. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This Rig/Atharva Vedic Shanti Paath is one of the most comprehensive blessings in the Vedic tradition — praying for auspicious sight, auspicious hearing, physical health, full lifespan, and the protection of all the great divine forces.

— Rigveda and Atharvaveda — Universal Vedic tradition

Chapter 27: Closing Mantras – Dedication and Universal Peace

The closing of a yoga class with appropriate mantras serves several essential functions: it seals the practice — preventing the subtle energies awakened during practice from dissipating; it dedicates the merit of the practice — the spiritual benefit generated — to the wellbeing of all beings, transforming the personal practice into a universal offering; it establishes the transition from the sacred time and space of practice back to the activity of daily life with appropriate intention; and it cultivates the Mahakaruna (great compassion) that the Bodhisattva ideal prescribes — the dedication of one's own liberation and wellbeing to the liberation of all beings.

Closing Mantra 1 – Universal Lokah Samastah Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu

Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu

Meaning: Meaning: 'May all beings everywhere be happy and free, and may my thoughts, words, and actions contribute in some way to that happiness and that freedom.' Possibly the most universally used closing mantra in contemporary yoga classes worldwide — drawn from the Jain tradition but widely adopted across yoga traditions. Chanted three times as a concluding dedication of the practice's merit to universal happiness.

— *Traditional Sanskrit – Jain and pan-Yoga tradition*

Closing Mantra 2 – Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah

**Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah / Sarve Santu Niramayah
/ Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu / Ma Kashchid Dukhabhag
Bhavet / Om Shanti Shanti Shantih**

*Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah / Sarve Santu Niramayah / Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu /
Ma Kashchid Dukhabhag Bhavet*

Meaning: Meaning: 'May all beings be happy; may all beings be free from illness; may all beings see what is auspicious; may no being experience suffering. Om, peace, peace, peace.' This Brihadaranyaka Upanishad prayer is perhaps the most comprehensive expression of universal compassion in the entire Sanskrit literature — encompassing all beings, all forms of wellbeing, and the prayer that not a single being, anywhere, suffer. Chant at the end of every class as the ultimate dedication.

— *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad – Universal Vedic prayer*

Closing Mantra 3 – Mangala Shloka

**Swasthi Praja Bhyah Paripalayantham / Nya Yena
Margena Mahim Mahishah / Go Brahmanebhyah
Shubhamasthu Nithyam / Lokah Samastha Sukhino
Bhavantu**

Swasthi Praja Bhyah Paripalayantham...

Meaning: Meaning: 'May the rulers of the world protect the people with righteousness and justice; may there always be auspiciousness for the cows (symbolic of gentle, giving nature) and for the learned; may all the worlds be happy.' This traditional benediction prayer invokes blessings not only for individuals but for the entire social order — praying for just governance, the protection of the innocent, the wellbeing of the learned, and universal happiness.

— *Traditional Sanskrit blessing — pan-Indian tradition*

Closing Mantra 4 — Guru Dakshina Mantra

**Ananta Samsara Samudra Tara Naukayitabhyam Guru
Bhakti Bhajam / Vairagya Samrajya Da Pujitabhyam
Namoh Namah Sri Guru Padukabhyam**

Ananta Samsara Samudra Tara Naukayitabhyam Guru Bhakti Bhajam...

Meaning: Meaning: 'To the sandals of the Guru, who serve as the boat to cross the endless ocean of worldly existence for those devoted to the Guru; who bestow the kingdom of dispassion — I offer my salutations again and again.' This closing mantra, expressing deep gratitude to the Guru for the gift of teaching, is traditionally chanted at the conclusion of classes and practice sessions as a formal offering of gratitude to the lineage.

— *Guru Paduka Stotram — traditional Vedantic text*

Closing Mantra 5 — Universal Shanti Paath (Most Widely Used)

Om Shanti Shanti Shantih

Om Shanti Shanti Shantih

Meaning: Meaning: 'Om. Peace (for the physical world/body), Peace (for the psychological world/mind), Peace (for the spiritual world/Self).' The simplest, most universal, and most widely applicable closing invocation. Chanted as the concluding word of every Vedic ceremony, every yoga class, every Upanishadic teaching session. The three-fold repetition of Shanti addresses the three-fold suffering of existence (Tapatraya): physical, psychological, and spiritual. The final Shanti merges into silence — the peace that passes understanding.

— *Universal Vedic tradition — present in all four Vedas*

Closing Mantra 6 — Dedication to Patanjali

**Sthala Asanasya Sukhaya Bhava / Anantasana Pataye
Namah / Yogena Chittasya Padena Vacham / Patanjalin
Pranjaliranatoham**

Sthala Asanasya Sukhaya Bhava...

Meaning: Meaning: 'May the posture/practice be steady and comfortable. Salutation to the Lord of the eternal seat, Ananta (the infinite cosmic serpent). With folded hands, I bow to Patanjali, the noblest of sages, who gave yoga for the serenity of mind.' This closing mantra offers the practice and its fruits to Patanjali, the compiler of the Yoga Sutras, as a dedication and expression of gratitude for his extraordinary systematization of the yoga tradition.

— *Combined traditional sources — Iyengar tradition*

Conclusion: Mantra — The Living Tradition

We have traversed in this text an extraordinary landscape — from the metaphysics of Nada Brahma and the physics of sacred sound to the detailed typology of the sixteen major forms of Mantra Yoga; from the classical therapeutic protocols of the Atharva Veda and Ayurveda to the modern neuroscience of chanting; from the profound Bija mantras that encode the vibrational signatures of cosmic forces to the universal peace prayers of the Shanti Paath that close every yoga class in a spirit of compassion and dedication to the wellbeing of all beings.

What you carry from this study is not merely information but a set of vibrational keys — the most ancient and most sophisticated sound technology in human history, preserved and transmitted across millennia through the extraordinary discipline of the guru-shishya tradition. These keys unlock specific chambers in the mansion of consciousness: the Bija mantras unlock the elemental forces and their corresponding chakras; the Mahavakyas unlock the recognition of one's own nature as Brahman; the Gayatri unlocks the solar intelligence that illuminates the mind; the Shanti Paath unlocks the universal compassion that is the highest expression of yoga's purpose.

Your practice of these mantras — regular, sincere, and ideally guided by a qualified teacher — will gradually and irreversibly transform your consciousness. The mantras work not by magic but by the most fundamental mechanism of consciousness: that which we repeatedly attend to, we become. By repeatedly attending to the vibrational reality of Om, of Soham, of Om Namah Shivaya, of the Shanti Paath — by repeatedly bringing our consciousness into resonance with the cosmic patterns these sounds encode — we progressively align our individual consciousness with the universal consciousness that was always its deepest nature. This is not transformation but recognition; not acquisition but remembering.

“The mantra is the sound form of the guru's grace. Chant it with love. Chant it with understanding. Chant it with persistence. And in time, the mantra will chant you — and in the silence after the chanting, you will hear what has always been listening.”

— Dr. Shivam Mishra, SKM Yoga

Final Instructions to SKM Yoga Teacher Training Students

As you prepare to teach yoga, commit to the following: (1) Establish a personal mantra practice — minimum 20 minutes daily, ideally including at least one mala (108 repetitions) of your chosen practice mantra. (2) Learn the pronunciation of every mantra in this book correctly — seek guidance from a qualified teacher or audio resources. Incorrect pronunciation is not merely ineffective but potentially disturbing to the subtle body. (3) Begin and close every class with mantra. Your students may initially be unfamiliar or

uncomfortable — but consistency, explanation, and your own genuine practice will eventually reveal the transformative power of these practices to them. (4) Study the Vedic and Upanishadic sources of these mantras. The deeper your understanding of their philosophical context, the more powerfully you can transmit their meaning. (5) Practice in the Brahma Muhurta (the period approximately 1.5 hours before sunrise) — traditionally considered the most auspicious time for mantra practice, when the atmosphere is surcharged with Sattvic prana and the mind is naturally calm and receptive.

ॐ Om Shanti Shanti Shantih ॐ

Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah — May All Beings Be Happy

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