

## **MANTRA (INCANTATIONS) - DIVINE REMEDIAL IN AYURVEDA**

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### **Abstract**

Ayurveda is a complete way of life, and this system improves not only a person's health, but also their well being, behavior and state of mind. It is prevention-oriented and free from harmful side-effects and treats the root cause of a disease rather than just the symptoms. As per its views illness areas caused by an imbalance in a person's physical or mental constitution and therefore it gently bring a person's body and mind back into a healthy balance. Ayurveda can be used to alleviate various conditions; it is based on the principles of preventing disorders in the long term rather than waiting for problems to manifest themselves. Thus it is the ideal way for healthy individuals to maintain good health and general well being. In Ayurveda, apart from herbal remedies for diseases, a Daivavyapashraya treatment (magico-religious practices) is one of the important management measures. Mantra recitation is the part of it which is cited to enhance the healing. It is equally applicable in preventive and therapeutic aspects. The rationale of this endeavor is to search and comprehend the basic principles at the rear of mantra therapy. Though this therapy is not practiced routinely, it is a potential area of Ayurveda which can be applied. So it is a need of hour to explore the fundamental principles of mantra chanting.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda; Mantra; Healing; Basic principles.

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## INTRODUCTION

Atharva veda had numerous hymns addressed to Indra, Varuna, Agni and other Gods for relief from a variety of ailments such as fever, leprosy, jaundice, urinary obstruction and diarrhea diseases were looked upon as punishments awarded by Gods who were angered by human transgressions. The hymes invariably accompanied with various rituals mentioned in kaushika sutra of Atharva veda.<sup>[1]</sup> Hence Daiva-Vyapasraya (magico religious practices) is the spiritual way and solution of healing in Ayurveda. It consists of the use of Dana (taking recourse to gift), Swastyayana (propitiator rites), mangala (auspicious observances), homa (oblations), niyama (observance of spiritual rules), prayashchitta (atonement), Upavasa (fasting), mantra (Incantations) etc. Among all these Mantra is explained in Ayurveda as foremost role in various places.<sup>[2]</sup> It is explained in various events both in healthy and unhealthy conditions. It is equally useful in healthy people to maintain the health and to treat the diseases hence it is explained under the code of virtuous conduct (sadvritta) also.<sup>[3]</sup> As per Karma phala siddhanta, diseases may be a sign of wrong action in present or previous life.<sup>[4]</sup> It requires spiritual re-examination of lives, particularly if the disease is severe. Mantra provides a mental empowerment in harmony with the rhythm of the cosmos to facilitate the cosmic healing force.<sup>[5]</sup> In Ayurveda, apart from herbal remedies for diseases, a stress is laid on Mantra recitation also to enhance the healing. This attempt is for better understanding of the concept of Mantra and basic principles behind it.

### Mantra Etymological Derivation (Vyutpatti)

“Mananaat traayate yasmata atasmata mantrah prakirtitah”

The repeated incantation of which one can overcome or protect himself (from bondage or troubles) is called as Mantra.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Mantra syntactical derivation (Nirukti)

The Sanskrit word mantra combines the root man (to think) with the suffix tra (instrument or tool). Therefore, mantra means literally tool for thinking.<sup>[7]</sup> A Mantra is a set of words recommended in the holy Vedas. Most of the mantras follow the written pattern of two line slokas although they are often found in single line or even single word form.<sup>[8]</sup>

According to Bhagvat geeta the word begins from Aum which is the universal and the most basic mantra which is known as the pranava mantra, the source of all mantras.<sup>[9]</sup> The sacred word designating this creative source is the sound OM, called pranava. This sound is remembered with deep feeling for the meaning of what it represents. From that remembering come the realization of the individual self and the removal of obstacles.<sup>[10]</sup> For this reason, Aum is considered to be the most fundamental and powerful mantra, and thus is prefixed and suffixed to all prayers.<sup>[11]</sup> The syllable OM is composed of the three sounds A-U-M (in Sanskrit, the vowels A and U combine to become O) and the symbol's threefold nature is central to its meaning.<sup>[12]</sup> Continuous pronunciation of Aum (Pranava) is capable to remove all diseases and also to maintain the health.<sup>[13]</sup> One should repeat Pranava with three Pluta-Matras (or prolonged intonation) for the destruction of former sins and evils.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Origin of Mantra

Mantras are Vedic in origin. It is considered that it is capable of transformation. Their use and type varies according to the school and philosophy associated with the mantra. The teachings of the Vedas consist of various Mantric chants or hymns.<sup>[15]</sup> Vedic Mantra Treatment is based on chanting.

They awaken the body's natural healing mechanisms. The right and systematic chanting of mantras produces a state where the end user receives positive energy which allows the body to come back to a natural state. These mantras are energy based sounds hence Vedic mantra treatment is a great solution to treat physical and mental illnesses.

This treatment is done in a very natural way without using medicines or therapies but it is most important to pronounce them in the systematic way. The Vedas claimed that one can attain God, health, wealth and luck through chanting the right mantras correctly. As per the Ayurveda concerns, one can achieve at least health with it. Vedic Mantra Treatment is analogous science to Ayurveda.<sup>[16]</sup>

Creation consists of vibrations at various frequencies and amplitudes giving rise to the phenomenon of the world .Mantras are energy-based sounds or shabda. Mantras are tools of power and tools for power.<sup>[17]</sup> When Mantra is repeatedly utter it tunes to a particular frequency and this frequency establishes a contact with the cosmic energy and drags it into human body and surroundings. Mantras are used in healing practices but are much more than ritualistic as they are infused with powerful energy and meanings. The reality behind the use of mantras is that words carry power through energy.<sup>[18]</sup> Chanting of mantras create thought-energy waves. Thus it balances the energies and also increases the level of a certain type of energy, which promotes certain actions and events.<sup>[19]</sup>

From the Vedic period man has been constantly associated with Mantras - right from the moment man is born till he breathes his last.<sup>[20]</sup> Most of the Sanskrit mantras in Ayurveda come from ancient books of knowledge that is Vedas. For example

Deerghayu Mantra sangraha is mentioned in Atharva veda.<sup>[21]</sup>

Although mantra (Incantations), mani (wearing gems) and aushadhi (medicine) being the basic forms of treatment in Ayurveda, Mantra treatment is given first preference as it is believed that it is Daivi (divine) form of treatment.<sup>[22]</sup> One can find numerous references emphasizing Mantra recitation in Ayurveda texts especially in Caraka samhita are –

- In Jaatakarma that is the reciting of mantras in the newborn's right ear, requesting the Gods to protect the newborn from evil spirits.<sup>[23]</sup>
- In the treatment of Jwara (fever), Charaka recommends chanting Vishnu Sahasra nama (thousand names of Lord Vishnu)<sup>[24]</sup>
- In the treatment of poisoning<sup>[25]</sup>
- In Unmada (Insanity) and Apasmara (Epilepsy)<sup>[26]</sup>
- In treatment of aagantuja shopha (exogenous oedema)<sup>[27]</sup>
- In Vishachikitsa (Treatment of Poisoning)<sup>[28]</sup>
- During the labour (Prasuti)<sup>[29]</sup>
- Before collection of herbal drugs<sup>[30]</sup>
- Before the procedure like jatakarma (reciting of mantras in the newborn's right ear, requesting the Gods to protect the newborn from evil spirits)<sup>[31]</sup>
- In the treatment of snake bites, antidotes are prepared while chanting specific mantras to increase the efficacy of the medicine<sup>[32]</sup>
- Aapo hi stha mentioned in Sadvritta (Code of conduct)of Ayurveda is originally from Rig-Veda<sup>[33]</sup>

In this way the role of mantra is better described and well defined in many places. Other than this, it is described in Vamana (Emesis) and Virecana (Purgation) <sup>[34]</sup> procedures etc.

### **Fundamental doctrines of mantra chanting**

The Vedas interpret that the vowels and consonants of Sanskrit as coming from the Damaru (drum) of Lord Siva.<sup>[35]</sup> The individual letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are derived from the basic strands of energy vibrating at the central part of existence of human beings. The vibrations created by sound, thought and actions really do have an impact on inner self of human beings, as well as on environment and hence the universe. Mantra is letters of the Sanskrit alphabet it can create a positive, friendly and a healing effect. Recent researches in the efficacy of mantras and sound therapy on human body and healing has revealed the same which have already experienced, advocated in Veda and which has been passed on from time immemorial to the present day. According to modern science also, the hormones and neurotransmitters throughout the human organism communicate with each other through distinctive vibration sympathies. When a person is physically and mentally healthy, it means there is a harmony within cells which resonate well with each other. So ultimately the resonance is responsible for communication of cells. When this harmony among cells falls out then the disease manifested.<sup>[36]</sup>

The phonetics of Sanskrit strike the palate at multiple reflex points stimulating energy in numerous meridians that awaken the inactive parts of the brain (most of which are as yet unused in average man) and enhance the circulation and flow of energy throughout the body. Ayurveda theory behind the production of shabda (sound) also supports it.<sup>[37]</sup> As per Ayurveda every word or shabda possesses some inherent energy (Shakti). According to Nyaya Vaisheshika School, Shabda (sound) is having two types Dhwanyaatmaka (Instrumental sound) and Varnatmaka shabda (alphabetical sound). Dhwanyaatmaka is instrumental sound produced by samyoga (conjunction) and Vibhaga (disjunction).

Varnatmaka is due to pronunciation of varna or shabda. In the process of production (utpatti) of Varnatmaka shabda, Aatma (Soul), Buddhi (Intellect), manas (Mind), kayagni (digestive fire) are involved. During the process of production of varnatmakashabda, due to propagation of vayu in urah pradesh (Chest cavity) production of vocal sound takes place with the help of (Kantha) larynx, Shira (Head), Jivhamula (base of tongue), teeth, nose, lips and talu (palate). Hence it is very clear that due to the involvement of Aatma (Soul), Buddhi (Intellect), manas (Mind) and kayagni (Digestive fire), chanting of Mantra produces some particular energy in the body of that person who is chanting it. Since body and mind are interlinked, the pulsation of sound attunes the body, mind and breath.<sup>[38]</sup>

Words are made of sound. The process of production of varna (word) given in Paniniya Shiksha is also able to reveal the principle behind it. When a soul and mind are conjuncted and associated with memory, a desire to utter some words is raised. After this desire the efforts start. Due to those efforts, the soul joins with vayu (prana) etc. and the action of vayu is produced. The vayu (air) reaching upward passes through larynx etc. and the required word is produced with the conjunction of vayu with Akasha (ether). Similar process is described in Prashata pada bhashya of Vaisheshika philosophy.<sup>[39]</sup>

Yoga philosophy also supports the same theory but in different way. As per Yoga apart from the physical nervous system, there are some 72,000 naadis (bundles of tubular vessels) as part of the psychic nervous system to be the counterparts of the physical nervous system. When a mantra is chanted, sound energy is generated and the vibrations of that energy is diffused and distributed into the physical nervous system by these naadis through six major chakras (wheels in Sanskrit and plexus in physiology) situated along the

length of the spinal column and a seventh at the crown of the head.<sup>[40]</sup>

It can be understood with the nearest possible correlation between Ayurveda and Yoga. These Chakras (wheels) can be correlated to the plexuses of the modern physiology. These are six chakras and their corresponding plexuses in ascending order from the base of the spine. The plexuses are related to transmitting and receiving nerve impulses and blood circulation. When the energy produced due to the chanting of mantra passes from the naadis to these plexuses of the physical nervous system, it turns in to neural energy and is passed on to the nerves which in turn obey the brain and then get circulated throughout the body through blood.<sup>[41]</sup>

At this juncture it is very necessary to understand the difference between ordinary sound and Mantra sound. Any sound will do well in enhancing healing, so what is so special about Mantras? What difference does it make between reciting a mantra and talking when both are a group of letters Shabda? Answer is hidden in the six Chakras. Yoga philosophy considers as each Chakra in its subtle form is a lotus with varied number of petals. Each petal represents an Akshara (letter or alphabet) apart from a main letter, the Beejaakshara (beeja means seed). As well as each Chakra has a presiding deity with unique colour and features, responsible for nurturing specific organs or area of human body.

For example, the Moolaadhara Chakra is made up of a 4 petalled lotus. The letters residing in the 4 petals are VA, S'A, SHA and SA. Its Beejaakshara is LUM. The presiding deity Saakini has five faces and resides in the Asthi dhatu (bone mass) to nurture it. Here comes the Ayurvedic connection to Mantras as chanting of a particular Beejakshara will nourish that particular Dhatu (Body tissue). There are Seven Dhatus according to Ayurveda and here the six chakras with the

Sahasrara at the crown of the head nourish the seven Dhatus which are the structural unit of human body and hence the whole body. Depending on the disease, the patient's condition, the Dhatus affected, Mantra chanting can bring about healing of that particular dhatu (Body tissue) which is imbalanced.<sup>[42]</sup>

But some important cautions should be necessary during the chanting of mantra. Slow or fast healing depends on the mantra or sloka chosen for the purpose and the concentration and sincerity of the chanting person. Mantras are chosen in a specific manner that is chandas (meters) etc. for a specific purpose and are loaded with power. So chanting Mantras has an effect in all planes and at all levels from the physical, physiological, mental levels to the subtle Chakras and into the subtlest energy vibrating at the core of human existence.<sup>[43]</sup>

These mantras are primarily invented by great seers for the welfare of the society. Since human being is part of our solar system. The cosmic energy received contains different energies coming from different celestial bodies.<sup>[44]</sup> Ayurveda also believed on Pinda Brahmanda theory (An individual is epitome of the universe).<sup>[45]</sup> Hence the energies coming from the Planets in this solar system always fall & absorbed by human body. These energies are much needed by everyone. Life force is indeed combined with these energies. When there is a deficit of any of these energies, the related problems will arise. For example, when there is a deficit of energy coming from Sun, health problems like headache, bad eye sight, weakness of heart etc will occur. It can be overcome by increasing the Sun's energy by recitation of Sun's Mantra.<sup>[46]</sup> When a Mantra will repeatedly utter atuning to a particular frequency is established and this frequency establishes a contact with the cosmic energy and drags it into body and surroundings. Thus balance the energies and also increase the level of a



certain type of energy, which promote health.<sup>[47]</sup>

Mantra therapy can be compared with music therapy in modern words. Modern science is also having the same opinion with a different approach. Neuro-linguistics and Psycholinguistics are the sciences which deal with the language (sound). Neuro-linguistics is the study of the neural mechanisms in the human brain that control the comprehension, production, and acquisition of language. Psycholinguistics is the study of language acquisition and linguistic behavior as well as the psychological mechanism responsible.

As per this science, when a mantra is chanted in rhythmic tone with ups and downs, Neuro-linguistic creates a melodious effect in the body. The Neuro-linguistic effect will be possible even if the meaning of the mantra is not known. Hence knowing the meaning of every mantra is not compulsory. At the same time if the meaning known it has got an additional effect which is known as Neuro-linguistic (NLE) + Psycholinguistic effect (PLE). The NLE and PLE effects are due to the production and spreading of curative chemicals in the brain. These curative chemicals give soothing and curing effect in the body, probably first in psyche and ultimately in body as both are interconnected. Different sounds have different effects on human psyche. Soft sound soothes nerves, the musical note enchants heart; but the sound of thunders may cause awe and fear. Modern doctors advise the people under high tension to sit and listen to music or mantras for few minutes. This has become an accepted procedure just like the yoga and Pranayama practices. Even chanting the kirtanas, melodious bhajanas, songs etc. have the good effect almost similar to the NLE and PLE.<sup>[48]</sup>

Sound and vibration are starting to make inroads into the modern medicine also.

Modern medicine now uses sound waves to break up kidney and gallstones in the body. The machine used is called a lithotripter. This machine bombards the stones with a specific sound frequency for one or two hours. The patient is admitted in the morning and discharged in the evening. Generally no anesthetic is needed. Then the pulverized stone is passed out of the body through the urine.<sup>[49]</sup>

In Ayurveda mantras are considered to be like foods and herbs as they have particular energetic effects as mentioned. They can be expanding or contracting, heating or cooling, light or heavy, soft or harsh in their effects. The overall energetic of mantra depends upon following factors viz. Sound factor, pronounce the mantra correctly, and force, intensity, velocity or life force, which will alter its energy, meaning and impact, different tones, thought, meaning, intention, emotion and most important is faith of that person who is chanting it.<sup>[50]</sup>

All over again, to understand the above subject in Ayurveda point of view, the knowledge about the concept of Pancha maha bhoota (Five primordial elements) is also very vital. However the pancha maha bhootas are those essential or substantial matters, which are responsible to make a nature and contour of a physical configuration. Five primordial elements came into the existence in an orthodox order. This order starts from the Akasha and finishes with Prithvi. When talk about these five primordial elements sky has distinguished meaning. This is responsible to produce sound. As Per Taittiriya Upanishada as well as according to Charaka, among Pancha maha bhoota, Aksha is the first element that came into existence. It is not a synonym of sky but it can be conceptually similar to the space. Modern physics also accept the ether to be the root cause of all other element. According to Encyclopedia Britanica, everything in the material universe consists of ether, and matter

itself being in all probability one of its modifications. Familiar thing that we call matter is after all a manifestation of ether and energy. Thus the modern scientist and philosophers are nearer to the ancient Indian philosophers, where Akasha has been accepted as the root cause of the other material substances available in the universe.

Akasha maha bhuta is the space without which matter cannot exist. Its main sense attribute is shabda (Sound). Shabda and Nonresistance (Apratigha tatwa) is its main property. It can be something similar to Space. All the body channels, pores or empty spaces symbolize Ether or space. All sound is transmitted through space and is related to the sense of hearing. The ear is the sense organ of hearing and since sound is produced through means of the vocal cords and mouth these are considered to be the organ of action related to the sense of hearing. Vishuddha chakra is located in the area of the throat and is directly related to the Akasha element and the tanmatra of sound.

It is believed in Ayurveda that Akasha is Anadi (Having no origin) and Ananta (having no end) and it is sarva vyapi (omnipresent). It can be understood from its Apratigha tatwa guna, which allows very existence of the matter. As nothing can exist in the absence of space, even the human bodies, cells and organs have a space to exist. As the outer space is for our body, our body is for the billions of cells in it. It is believed that the outer space is made up of nothing but the inner space and thus proving the sarva vyapakatwa (omnipresent) of this basic element Akasha.<sup>[51]</sup>

Shabda is the very basic form of energy, which is also ever existent as Akasha. As the theory of Eienstine states that "The energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can be changed from one form to another and that matter is nothing but a form of energy. It cannot exist without matter and vice versa." In

the Akasha maha bhoota energy exists in the form of Shabda that is sound energy. Hence sound energies that have always existed in the universe, they cannot be created or destroyed and command the power to heal physically & spiritually.<sup>[52]</sup> According to theistic philosophy, "AUM" was the first Shabda to exist and from it the Universe evolved. Together many shabda constitute a mantra, which is a repetition of group of shabda or a specific energy-field<sup>[53]</sup>

Sound is the basic source of energy and motion existing in the universe. Mantra is the science of the subconscious as well as the cosmic powers of sound.<sup>[54]</sup>

The specific configuration of the syllables compiled in the mantras makes them important in terms of associated sonic effect. The voice production (elocution) of a Vedic mantra in a specific composition of accent, pitch, intensity, amplitude and rhythm results in its expansion in the endless domain (area) of physical energy waves and consciousness. Because of the unique property of sound to traverse anywhere in the space, the collective chanting of bija mantras can induce cosmic impact. Each bija mantra (seed of origin) comes with such configurations of phonemes which can deliver one from ignorance, illusions and evils.<sup>[55]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Mantras are spiritualist sounds which produce certain type of energies hence mantra protect the person who recites it.<sup>[56]</sup> Effect of Mantra is described as prabhava janya (Inexplicable action) in the classical texts of Ayurveda.<sup>[57]</sup> Though the reason behind it is prabhava, one of the purpose of this attempt is for understanding the cause effect theory behind it.

The cause effect theory behind effects of mantra chanting as per Ayurveda concerns, the

heart which is the base for mind i.e. manas, its vitiation is responsible for the formation of manas vikara (Psychiatric diseases) and use of mantra is advised for treatment to purify the heart. As heart gets purified the patients become normal. Hence in the Psychiatric disorder patient have to faith on the Vaidya (Physician). Mantra affects not only on manas (Psyche) and Aatma (soul) but five sense organs are similarly involved in this process because these are the instruments through which waves of mantra reaching up to the sole and mind.<sup>[57]</sup>

Mantra can be used as one of the main tool along with other remedies for healing the mind however according to Ayurveda; it can also aid the healing of the physical body as well. Mantras can be used in conjunction with right diet and right living for the most optimal effect in balancing the Tridoshas (Vata, pitta, kapha). Even in this present age of materialistic life Mantra-Shakti (power) can prove to be more influential than any other therapy.<sup>[58]</sup>

Thus it helps to develop latent powers. One can attain health by developing his dormant powers through Mantra. The regular recitation (japa) of a mantra reduces restlessness of the mind, brings restraint in life; and works wonders in developing the concentration and memory.<sup>[59]</sup> It is important to use mantras as part of daily practice with yoga and Ayurveda. In a quiet and clean place at home, one can practice it for five minutes at least in the morning. Chanting of specific mantra for dosha or one prescribed by an Ayurvedic practitioner or spiritual teacher is necessary. Soft mantras are best for vata dosha. Cooling and soft mantras are the best for pitta dosha. Warm and stimulating mantras are the best for kapha dosha.<sup>[60]</sup> It is according to Samanya Vishesh principle (theory of similarity and differences). Chanting can be done loudly (vachakjapa) / lip whisper (upanshu) / mentally (manasik), all work the same way in

delivering the benefits. Recitation method just remains a means for arousing the omnipresent subtle power of Shabda (sound).<sup>[61]</sup>

### **Research Updates**

Recent research in the efficacy of mantras and sound therapy on our body and healing has revealed that the Power of Mantra Yoga or the chanting of Mantras.

The Brahmvarchas Shodh Sansthan, research center for integration of science and spirituality in Shantikunj, Haridwar, India is the only place which carries out extensive experiments on mantra shakti. The result of these experiments is used to testify that Mantropathy can be used scientifically for healing and environment cleansing.

Lot of Research studies have been carried out by many and important results derived by one of the famous professors Dr. T. Temple Tutler, of the Cleveland University, USA on these effects are remarkable.<sup>[62]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Mantras are Sanskrit words loaded with power and capable of penetrating the body into deep levels of consciousness by their unique sounds and the vibrations they create. The sacred utterances or chanting of Sanskrit Mantras provide with the power to attain goals and lift from the ordinary to the higher level of consciousness. They give the power to cure diseases; ward off evils; gain wealth; acquire supernatural powers; worship a deity for glorious spiritual union and for attaining blissful state and attain liberation. It is crystal clear that Mantra therapy which is mentioned in various places in classical Ayurveda texts is one of very potent area of management of various mental as well as physical disorders. It is similarly applicable in health preservation too. Mantra therapy is not a superstition however it is incredibly scientific and based



on fundamental principles of Ayurveda. Hence mantra is a divine instrument with the uncommon potential of arousing hidden consciousness.

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