

## **Bija Mantras and the Elements – by Simon Heather**

The bija mantras for the elements were first mentioned in the Jabala Darsana Upanishad which was written between 200BC and 200AD.

“Sage, also it is necessary to chant the *pancha bhootha* mantras (mantras of the five elements) viz., Ham, Yam, Ram, Vam and Lam. It is said that this very great *Dharana* (practice) destroys all sins.”

### **Five Elements**

The five elements evolve from the five *tanamatras* (principals); earth from *gandha* (smell), water from *rasa* (taste), fire from *rupa* (sight), air from *sparsha* (touch) and *akasha* from *shabda* (hearing).

When sounding the bija mantras for the chakras we are connecting with the different elements. The connection with the element is created by the tongue position in the mouth and by visualising the shape of the element when sounding the mantra.

Concentrate on visualising the shape of the mouth and tongue rather than trying to form the shape with your mouth.

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

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

### **Muladhara Chakra – Earth**

The word of Muladhara comes from ‘*mula*’ meaning ‘root’ and ‘*adhara*’ meaning ‘foundation or base’; therefore the Muladhara Chakra is the basic foundation of the seven chakras.

The element associated with the Muladhara Chakra is Earth. The square is the symbol for Earth. It represents the four directions and the four dimensions.

The Earth element is the densest of all the elements. It gives stability and strength. The sense of smell is related to the element of earth and the nose is the sense organ of this chakra. The Earth element is the foundation of the body, the bones, flesh, skin and body hair.

The *bija mantra* (seed sound) for this chakra is LAM sounded as LANG. The ‘L’ sound in the bija mantra LANG is produced by placing the tongue behind the upper teeth. The mantra is made up of two sounds that are roughly equal in length LA and NG. The duration for the two sounds is the same for all the bija mantras

The NG this sound is produced with a nasal intonation creating a resonant humming sound half way between an 'M' and a 'N'. The mantra LANG is focused in the base chakra.

When properly produced, the sound LANG excites the *nadis* (subtle channels of energy) in the first chakra and creates a lock that prevents the downward movement of energy. LA is the sound for the earth element and NG is *nada-bindu*, the primal cosmic sound from which the universe manifested.

The upward movement of energy starts when the sound ANG, vibrates in the head. Sounding the bija mantra LANG takes away the insecurities associated with the first chakra.

Repetition of the bija manta LANG deepens concentration, giving awareness and inner strength. Its vibrations create a passage inside the *Brahma Nadi*. *Brahma Nadi*, is the subtle channel through which the Kundalini, when awakened moves from Muladhara to Sahasrara Chakra.

LANG is connected with the element of earth and its presiding deity Indra. Sounding LANG arouses the power of Indra the King of the Devas and Lord of Heaven.

Within the *sushumna* (central energy channel) there are three *granthis* or knots that prevent the upward movement of the *Kundalini Shakti*.

- The *Brahma Granthi* (located in the Muladhara Chakra) is related to the physical body, to the world of names and forms.
- *Vishnu Granthi* (located between the Manipura and the Anahata Chakra) is related to the astral body and to the world of emotions.
- *Rudra Granthi* (located at the Ajna Chakra) is related to the causal body and to the world of thought, ideas, visions and intuition.

Johari says that the first knot, *Brahma Granthi*, is found in the Manipura Chakra but most other sources place it in the Muladhara Chakra. *Brahma Granthi* ties the awareness to sensual perception and the physical world.

### **Svadhishthana Chakra - Water**

Swadhishthana means 'One's Own Abode' or "Sacred Home of the Self."

The shape associated with this element is the circle, which represents the element water. Water droplets are spherical.

Water is the essence of life. Almost three quarters of the human body is water, which is present in blood, mucous, urine, saliva, lymph and other fluids.

The water element evolved from the *rasa tanmatra* (taste principal), which is why the tongue is its sense organ.

The bija mantra for this chakra is VAM sounded as VANG. The 'V' sound in the bija mantra is VANG produced by the lips as though making a 'FF' sound before the VA.

The mantra VANG is focused in the sacral chakra. If produced properly, the sound of this bija mantra will influence the flow of *prana* in the Svadhishtana Chakra.

When the bija mantra VANG is repeated it enhances the production and circulation of fluids in the body.

The power of *Varuna*, an aspect of *Vishnu* (the sustainer of creation) is present in the bija mantra VANG. In Hindu mythology, *Varuna* is considered the god of all forms of the water element, particularly the oceans.

When the bija mantra VANG is repeated the Svadhishtana Chakra is purified. Sounding VANG clears away many blocks in the lower regions of the body.

### **Manipura Chakra – Fire**

Manipura is derived from two words ‘*mani*’ meaning 'jewel' and ‘*pura*’ meaning 'city'. Therefore literally Manipura means 'city of jewels'.

The Manipura Chakra is considered to be the centre of dynamism, energy, willpower and achievement, which radiates *prana* throughout the entire human body. It is associated with the power of fire, and digestion. It is also associated with the sense of sight,

The triangle is the symbol of the fire element. Visualisation of a triangle of bright red colour in the Manipura Chakra helps the aspirant in his/her spiritual evolution.

The fire element consists of both heat and light energy, but heat is dominant. The fire element is related to the sun, the ruling planet of this chakra. The sun is the source of life in the solar system, and the navel represents the source of life in the body.

The fire element in the navel region aids in the digestion and absorption of food, which supplies the whole body with vital energy. The fire element is related to hunger, thirst, sleep, lethargy and radiance (*ojas*). The fire element is purifying and nourishing, yet it can also be destructive when out of control.

The bija mantra for this chakra is RAM sounded as RANG. The ‘R’ sound in the bija mantra RANG is produced with the tip of the tongue curling up to touch the roof of the mouth.

The main point of concentration when producing this seed sound is on the third chakra. The sound originates from the navel when repeated in a proper manner.

The sound RANG increases the digestive fire, which enhances assimilation and absorption. It contributes to longevity, the main goal of a person motivated by this chakra. The nature of fire is to move upwards and the repetition of this mantra, when produced properly helps the upward movement of the Kundalini.

*Agni* is the god of fire and the acceptor of sacrifices. The ram is the vehicle of *Agni*. The ram is the carrier of the bija mantra RAM.

## **Anahata Chakra – Air**

In Sanskrit the word ‘*anahata*’ - means unbroken, unstruck and unbeaten. *Anahata Nad* refers to the Vedic concept of unstruck sound, the sound of the celestial realm.

The Anahata Chakra is said to be located near the region of the heart. Because of its association with touch, it is associated with the skin and with the hands.

The Anahata Chakra is associated with the six-pointed star, which is made up of two triangles. The one pointing upwards symbolises Shiva, the male principal. The other triangle points downward symbolising Shakti, the female principal.

The six-pointed star represents the balance that is attained when these principals are joined in harmony.

The six-pointed star also symbolises the balancing of energy in the Heart chakra, which lies between the three chakras above it and the three chakras below it. The Anahata Chakra is associated with love and the desire for sharing and sympathy. Here energy can move upward or downward.

The element associated with the Anahata Chakra is *vayu* (air or wind). *Vayu* is the vital life-giving force (*prana*). It aids the functions of the lungs and heart, circulating fresh oxygen and vital energy. Air is formless and colourless, without smell or taste.

The bija mantra for this chakra is YAM sounded as YANG. The ‘Y’ sound in the bija mantra YANG is produced with the tongue pressed against the soft palate at the front of the roof of the mouth. The mantra is focused in the heart chakra.

When this sound is produced properly the spiritual heart vibrates and any blocks in the cardiac region are cleared. True knowledge dawns in the consciousness and the second knot, the *Vishnu Granthi*, is undone, allowing energy to start to flow upward.

Sounding the bija mantra YANG gives one control over air, prana and the breath. The bija mantra YANG is the sound form of the deity Vayu, the lord of the air/wind.

## **Vishuddha Chakra – Akasha**

In Sanskrit the word ‘Shuddha’ or ‘Shuddhi’ means pure. The pure can never be tainted. Pure in this sense is beyond good or bad, right or wrong, clean or dirty. Vishuddha means “absolutely pure”.

The Vishuddha Chakra is associated with the element *akasha* (ether) and the sense of hearing, as well as the action of speaking.

The symbol for this chakra is the crescent. The silver crescent is the symbol of *nada*, pure cosmic sound. The moon implies psychic energy, clairvoyance and communication without words.

Thus the void (*akasha*) is inside of the pure essence (*tanmatra*) of sound (*nada*). The crescent is the symbol of purity and *akasha* is the purest of all the elements. Purification is a vital aspect of the Vishuddha Chakra, as is pure knowledge.

At the Vishuddha Chakra, the aspirant gets a vision of the void (*akasha*), which is translated as space. Akasha is generated by the principal (*tanmatra*) of sound.

In the Vishuddha Chakra all the elements of the lower chakras are refined to their purest essence and dissolved in *akasha*, depicted by the circle and crescent.

The influence of the five elements ceases after the fifth chakra and the aspirant becomes a *tattvatit*, one who has gone beyond the grip of the elements.

The bija mantra for this chakra is HAM sounded as HANG. The 'H' sound in the bija mantra HANG is produced at the back of the throat. The mantra is focused in the throat chakra.

When this sound is produced properly. It vibrates the brain and causes the cerebrospinal fluid to flow more freely in the throat region, bringing sweet and melodious qualities to the voice.

### **Ajna Chakra - Mahatattva**

Ajna means meaning 'command' or 'summoning'. Those who reach this chakra eradicate all of their sins and impurities and prepare to enter the seventh door, beyond Ajna Chakra.

The symbol for this chakra is the circle with two petals on either side.

A person who has reached this level of awareness has a body that constantly radiates the sound AUM. The aura of such persons enables all those who come into their presence to become calm and sensitive to the refined sound frequencies of AUM.

The five great elements (*mahabhutas*) – earth, water, air, fire and akasha evolve from *mahatattva*, the supreme or great element in which all other elements are present in their pure essence. The bija mantra for this chakra is AUM.

The bija mantra AUM is created from three sounds, A, U and M. The mantra AUM is focused in the third eye chakra.

The *pravana*, AUM, is the source of all sounds and is connected with *anahata nada*, the primal cosmic sound. It thus creates unity and is a combination of sun (A), moon (U), and fire (M).

The third eye plays an important role in the piercing of the third knot, *Rudra Granthi*. When *Rudra Granthi* is pierced, individuality is dropped, the old ego awareness is left behind and the experience of unmanifest consciousness emerges at the Sahasrara Chakra.

## **Sahasrara Chakra**

In Sanskrit the word ‘Sahasrara’, means thousand, so the Sahasrara Chakra is the ‘Lotus of the Thousand Petals’ and is located four finger-breadths above the crown of the head.

When the Kundalini is raised up to the Sahasrara Chakra, the illusion of the ‘individual self’ is dissolved. According to the scriptures, the Sahasrara Chakra is the seat of the self-luminous Self, the essence of being.

The sounds associated with this chakra are all sounds from AH to KSHA, including all the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. AUM can be used for this chakra as it contains all the sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet.

The bija mantra AUM is sounded in the crown chakra.

## **References**

Most of the information in the article comes from the book ‘Chakras – Energy Centres of Transformation’ by Harish Johari - Destiny Books, Rochester, NY, 2000.

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