



# Sanatana Mitra

DECEMBER 2011



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## Upcoming Events

**Jan. 22 - Mantra Yoga**  
Union City

**Mar. 3-4 - Kriya Yoga**  
Singapore

**Mar. 10-11 - Kriya Yoga**  
Phillipines

## The Key Parts of Mantra

This year I've written a number of articles on mantra yoga and it seems like a good time to go deeper into the science of mantra by looking at the components that constitute all mantras.

Remember that for classifying mantras, we can consider that there are two primary reasons to chant mantras - to fulfill our ego-desires or for Self-realization. Some mantras can be used for both purposes such as the mahamritunajaya mantra for preventing untimely death as well as for liberation from the cycle of karmic suffering.

Every mantra has six parts (shadanga): rishi, chandas, devatha, beejam, keelakam, shakti. Knowing the six parts for the specific mantra we are following is critical for achieving the benefits in a timely manner. It is not always possible to know all the six parts and sometimes it is not necessary but in all cases, the benefits can still be attained albeit in a slower pace through intense and regular practice.

Rishi identifies the sage who discovered the mantra first - that is he is the seer of the mantra such as Vishwamitra

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## The Existence of the Soul

There is a fascination among Western spiritual people to speculate about the existence of God, even though no-one has ever succeeded in proving either that God exists or that God does not exist. Simply, the definition of God is beyond the scope of our logic and mental boundaries. However, closer to home, a question that all sincere seekers should make an effort to ascertain is whether their souls exist and its relationship with reality.

Even the existence of the soul seems to be beyond our current scope of scientific research, just as X-rays would have been to the budding scientists of the 17th century. How else can we approach the soul if we cannot measure it, weigh it, photograph it or write an

equation about it? The truth is that we need the soul to exist if there is to be any sense in our search for the true Self... if we have any existence beyond this lifetime.

Even though there doesn't seem to be any proof for its existence, most everyone is convinced that they have a soul. We feel that we have a continuous existence that transcends the body and mind - we take it for granted and although we don't know what it is and how to take care of it, we get worried once in a while about its fate when the body and mind dies. In the west, the concern is whether the soul will go to heaven or hell, whereas in the east, the concern is on the next re-incarnated state.

Even a book would be insufficient to

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## The Priorities of Jesus

As we are rushed forward by consumerism to yet another Christmas and therefore the approach of a new year, it is timely to review one of the basic tenets of the Lord Jesus's teachings, the beatitudes, and decide whether and how it may affect our actions in 2012.

Jesus lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said:

Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now for you will be filled.

Blessed are you that weep now for you shall laugh.

Blessed are you when men should hate you, isolate you, blame you, and remove your identity because of me for your reward will be great in the hereafter.

It is easy to imagine that Jesus is somehow exhorting humanity to abandon their livelihood and duties to follow his teachings in exchange for some future reward after death. It becomes more difficult to interpret this passage from Luke 6 which is called the Sermon on the Plain when it is usually overshadowed by the longer passage in

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# The Three Puppet Strings

In yogic philosophy, all matter in the universe arises from the fundamental substrate called prakriti. From prakriti arises the three primary gunas or qualities that create the essential aspects of all nature—energy, matter and consciousness. These three gunas are *tamas* (darkness), *rajas* (activity), and *sattva* (lightness). All three gunas are always present in all beings and objects but vary in their relative amounts lead-

ing to various levels of material attachment and delusion.

Lord Krishna has said (BG 14:05 – 14:08):

The eternal embodied soul to the material body bound

The three-fold principle binding mind is found

Pure and good, illuminating *sattva* snare

Attachment to happiness and

knowledge beware

Restless and passionate, intense selfish *rajas* craving

Attachment to desire borne on fruits of work saving

Ignorant and lazy, *tamas* delusion inducing wrap

Attachment to negligence and non-action soul trap

Understanding the gunas is critical to knowledge of human psychology. The

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## The Priorities of Jesus

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Matthew called Sermon on the Mount which has eight beatitudes.

This passage makes it clearer that Jesus was addressing his twelve disciples especially since in the narrative it is following his choosing of the apostles. Even though he was surrounded by many others who were seeking him for healing, he specifically looked at his close disciples when he gave this teaching. This indicates that the teaching was not for the masses but for sincere spiritual seekers. However, it can be applied to a wider audience if we look at it from the perspective of balancing one's priorities.

It is important to understand that Jesus was not applauding the poor for the sake of their poverty – there many people who are in poverty for many diverse karmic reasons. What is the reason that many sincere spiritual seekers encounter financial difficulties? It is because they've given their priorities to seeking spiritual truths over material benefits. Jesus was stating the fact that his disciples were poor since they'd left their livelihood to follow him and letting them know that they were benefitting in accumulating spiritual wealth. Very few seekers can balance their material needs with their spiritual goals and

have financial stability but it is possible and as long as one makes the effort, one has the blessings.

Jesus was not making such a simplistic statement that those who have no food now will have food after death! He was talking about the hunger of his disciples for God, for their true Self, for higher consciousness and for liberation from suffering – it is this hunger that drives the spiritual student to meditate day after day, year after year and to seek after the saints and sages. Jesus was promising his disciples that their hunger for God will be satisfied.

Another characteristic of a sincere spiritual seeker is the grief of separation from her true Self – the isolation of the ego-consciousness from higher consciousness. This grief is another driving force that impels the disciple to move ever forward towards his goal.

The consequence for those who follow the hunger for their own essential Being...for the Truth, is to be reviled by those who are following the material goals of life. We are living in a very materialistic society where there is no allowance for those who are exploring and seeking a different reality than those presented to the masses by those who control the media. The real

spiritual seeker becomes an outsider to society.

Of course, it is not my intention to extol poverty due to the searching for God, hunger (even for God), grief from our separation of the Self, or marginalizing by society. However, it is instructive to examine these issues in light of one's current cultural and personal situation. Jesus was addressing his disciples at a particular space and time and we need to extract the lesson from that milieu and apply our perspective.

One lesson that everyone can take heart in is that there is no reason to feel anxiety or shame if one's material life is not as developed as some of our friends and neighbors, as long as you are doing your best in light of balancing the spiritual side of life.

The greatest lesson as far as I'm concerned is that to achieve the goals of realizing the kingdom of God, of satisfying one's spiritual hunger and achieving happiness, one will have to make some adjustment to one's life and re-set our priorities. This is especially timely as we approach a new year, an extremely important year for spiritual progress, that of 2012. For those who are intent on their spiritual goals, an extra effort will yield very high results as I've explained elsewhere. Let's listen to Jesus with our hearts and get our priorities straight for this new pivotal year.

# The Existence of the Soul

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deal with the vast subject of the soul and so we can only touch upon that aspect which is germane as far as Self-realization is concerned, which is the very nature of the soul according to the sages of yogic wisdom. The soul is called the jiva and is neither eternal nor unchanging – it is the capacity of the soul-jiva to evolve that is of greatest interest to all sincere spiritual seekers.

It is the existence of this soul-jiva that is the cause of human suffering because it is only the apparent self – the self that is subject to karma and is re-born over and over again. The soul-jiva is hypnotized by the ego and enmeshed by the five senses. The soul-jiva has taken up a relative existence in matter.

However, the soul-jiva is only a reflection, albeit a sentient reflection of the soul-atma which is spirit, eternal and unchanging. It is the soul-atma that is the true Self.

This is somewhat analogous to the hypothetical situation when a character in a role playing video-game has so disengaged itself from the actual player that it seems to have a mind of its own and engages in the game without the active participation of the player who only watches and may sometimes give some guidance! The character is still subject to the rules of the game and cannot “see or know” beyond its limitations. Of course, this analogy breaks down quite easily but it does give a sense to

the human dilemma as far as the soul-jiva and soul-atma is concerned.

The process of yogic awakening and in fact for all spiritual awakening is the progressive expansion of the consciousness or awareness of the soul-jiva until it realizes it is really One with the soul-atma. At this stage, the soul-jiva gives up its apparent existence and there is only the soul-atma – this is the dissolution of the apparent self and the realization of the True-Self, which has never been enmeshed in matter, and which is spirit.

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## The Three Puppet Strings

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mind is highly unstable and fluctuates under the changing dominance of the different gunas. The temporarily dominant guna acts like a lens that effects our perceptions and perspective of the world. When the mind is dominated by rajas it will experience world events as chaotic activity and it will react in a passionate and restless manner.

Yoga teaches that we have the ability to consciously alter the levels of the gunas in our bodies and minds. The gunas cannot be separated or removed in oneself, but can be consciously acted upon to encourage their increase or decrease. A guna can be increased or decreased through the interaction and influence of external objects, lifestyle practices and thoughts.

An important way to regulate these gunas in body and mind is through ayurvedic cooking which seeks to increase the sattvic, decrease rajasic and

avoid the tamasic foods.

Sattvic foods are fresh, juicy, light, nourishing, sweet and tasty and give the necessary energy to the body without taxing it. It is the foundation of higher states of consciousness. Examples are juicy fruits, fresh vegetables that are easily digestible, fresh milk and butter, whole soaked or sprouted beans, grains and nuts, many herbs and spices in the right combinations with other foods.

Rajasic foods are bitter, sour, salty, pungent, hot and dry. They increase the speed and excitation of the nervous system and chaotic thoughts in the mind. It is the foundation of motion, activity and pain. Examples are sattvic foods that have been overcooked or oil-fried, foods and spices that are strongly exciting such as garlic and onions.

Tamasic foods are dry, old and decaying. They consume large amounts of energy while being digested. They

are the foundation of ignorance, doubt, pessimism. Examples are foods that have been strongly processed, canned or frozen and/or are old, stale or incompatible with each other - meat, fish, eggs and liquor are especially tamasic.

Saints and seers can survive easily on sattvic foods alone but householders living in the world and have to keep pace with its changes also need rajasic energy. It is necessary to keep a balance as much as possible.

Since all gunas create attachment and thus bind one's self to the ego, it is necessary to transcend them. While the seeker should initially cultivate sattva, his/her ultimate goal is to transcend their misidentification of the self with the gunas and to be unattached to both the good and the bad, the positive and negative qualities of all life.

When one rises above the three gunas that originate in the body; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains enlightenment. (BG 14:20).

# The Key Parts of Mantra

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for the Gayatri mantra. In the case of some tantric mantras, the rishi is the first one who attained perfection or siddhi in that mantra. In either case, the initial life force of the mantra comes from the kundalini shakti of the rishi. It is necessary to connect with the rishi if one is seriously going to undertake the practice of a mantra.

Chandas includes the proper pronunciation of that mantra as well as in some cases the proper manner or melody that accompanies its chanting. The pronunciation is critical for all mantras as the sound patterns form the body of the universal energy that is being invoked by the mantra and a badly formed body will not be a suitable vehicle to carry the energy needed. The melody is more important in the case of mantras designed for satisfying desires as these require an additional instrument to give external effects. The melody is absent or less important in the case of liberation mantras recited primarily in the mind.

Devatha is the aspect of the universal power that will give the benefits for that mantra. Generally for each mantra there will be an inherent deity (adhisthan devatha) with specific meditative

form (dhyana rupa). There may also be a separate meditative mantra called dhyana sloka that can be learned to supplement the main mantra. Also, a mantra may have several deities and it needs the direction from the initiator to correctly point to the right one for the student. An example is the Gayatri which is said to have three deities – Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati.

Beejam is the seed from which the mantra is formed and gives the basic character (tattva) of the mantra - soft (jala tattva) or hard (agni tattva). There are some single-syllable or one-word mantras that encapsulate the seed and are called beeja mantras.

Keelakam is the key to open the lock to get results. Most of the powerful mantras are locked and require a key to open. Some mantras such as Om or Nama Shivaya are unlocked and can be practiced without the keelakam, but others are closely locked with hidden keys such as the Gayatri. The keelakam can be another mantra or sloka or can be the transference of a particular touch or energy during the initiation by the mantra siddha.

Shakti is the power of mantra. This is the power we get from perfecting the

mantra.

Besides these six parts of the mantra, there are three supplementary parts that are only present for some mantras - sankalpam, kavacham and ardhham.

Sankalpam is the intent for the mantra practice – it incorporates the will-power of the practitioner and announces to the universe the results desired. If the sankalpam is moksha, then it is not necessary to repeat it every time but if the goal is a material desire, then it is necessary to continually remind oneself the reason for the practice.

Some mantras attract obstructions to those who try to practice them and so a protective armor is necessary – this is the kavacham that needs to be recited before commencing the primary mantra.

Ardham is the meaning of that mantra – this is mostly of subsidiary importance and even absent in the case of beeja mantras but play an important role in meditative slokas for deities. In some mantras, the key is the devotional fervor of the seeker.

It is important for a student to receive the proper guidance when undertaking the practice of a mantra – the critical elements should be identified and incorporated into the mantra yoga sadhana.