

SELECTING AND PERFECTING MANTRAS IN HINDU TANTRISM

By GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN

The exposition of different deity mantras forms an essential part of Tantric compendia. A mantra, a combination of letters thought to be of divine origin, is transmitted by a preceptor to a disciple in an initiation ritual whereby the disciple is authorized to practise its ritual repetition and strive for its perfection in order to attain supernatural powers. The different stages of the process from the selection of the mantra by the preceptor to its employment in desire-oriented rites by the practitioner shall be described in this paper mainly on the basis of chapters 15 and 16 of the *Kulārṇavatantra* (= *KT*),¹ one of the most important texts of the Kaula School of Tantrism, written between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries A.D. These chapters were written at a stage when the technicalities of *mantraśāstra* had been fully developed and were widely accepted. Among other texts consulted were the *Śaradātīlakatantra* (= *ŚT*) by Lakṣmaṇa Deśikendra with Rāghavabhaṭṭa's commentary entitled *Padārthādarśa* (= *PĀ*) (A.D. 1494), the *Mantramahodadhī* (= *MM*) by Mahīdhara (A.D. 1588/89) and the *Tantrarāja(tantra)* (= *TR*) with the commentary *Manoramā* (A.D. 1603/04).

Tantric mantras vary in their length and structure. Mantras consisting of a very large number of syllables² are termed *mālāmantras*. Another type are the so-called seed (*bīja*) mantras, which are one-syllabled and usually end in a simple nasal (*anusvāra*), rarely in a final *h*-sound (*visarga*). They are often derived from the first syllable of the deity's name to which the nasal is added, e.g. *duṃ* is derived from *Durgā* and *gaṃ* from *Gaṇeśa*. Often one or several *bīja*-mantras are prefixed or appended to other mantras as in the case of the following mantra of Mahā-Gaṇapati, a form of *Gaṇeśa*:

*oṃ śrīm hrīm klīm glaum gaṃ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajanaṃ me vaśam
ānaya svāhā/*

'*Oṃ śrīm hrīm klīm glaum gaṃ, svāhā* to Gaṇapati, O best boon-giver, bring everyone under my control.'

The main formula has been prefixed with several seed syllables: the syllable *oṃ*, the praṇava, also called 'saviour' (*tāra*); *śrīm*, the seed syllable of Śrī or Lakṣmī; *hrīm*, the seed syllable of Hrī or Māyā; *klīm*, the seed syllable of Kāma; *glaum*, the seed syllable of the earth element; and *gaṃ*, the seed syllable of *Gaṇeśa*. Mantras usually appear in a coded language in Tantric texts in order to guard their secrecy. Explanations by commentators and special Tantric 'dictionaries' (*mantrābhīdhāna*, *bījanighaṇṭu*, *uddhāraśāstra*) help to understand the code.³

Similar to the Vedic *anukramaṇikās*, Tantric texts specify the following for every mantra: (1) the name of the seer (*ṛṣi*) who has visualized it; (2) the metre (*chandas*), which does not indicate a metrical unit but an inner rhythm; (3) the

¹ For an edition and annotated translation of chapter 15 of the *KT*, cf. Bühnemann (1991).

² According to *MMD*, 74.76cd and *TR*, 35.29cd, *mālāmantras* consist of more than twenty syllables. *TR*, 35.27-29 states the following classification of mantras according to the number of syllables: 1 syllable—*piṇḍa*, 2 syllables—*kartarī*, 3-9 syllables—*bīja*, 10-20 syllables—*mantra*, more than 20 syllables—*mālāmantra*. For the same distinction between *bīja*, *mantra* and *mālāmantra*, cf. *Agni-Purāna*, 293.1-2ab.

³ cf. e.g. the lists of seed syllables and their symbolic meaning in texts like *Mantrābhīdhāna*, *Bījanighaṇṭu*, etc., in *Tantrābhīdhāna* (ed. T. Vidyāratna, Calcutta/London, 1913) and *Dakṣiṇāmūrtimuni's Uddhāraśāstra* (ed. T. B. Krishnamurthi Sastri, Thanjavur, 1985).

presiding deity; and (4) the application or purpose for which it is used (*vinīyoga*). In the case of longer mantras the texts often specify (5) the seed (*bīja*), i.e. the short form of the mantra, which is often its initial part, (6) the energy (*śakti*), usually the middle⁴ part, and (7) the wedge (*kīlaka*), usually the final⁴ part. Instructions for the *nyāsa* rite follow, whereby the syllables or parts of the mantra are ritually 'deposited' on the practitioner's specific body parts and for the visualization (*dhyāna*) of the mantra's presiding deity.

1. The selection of the mantra

A mantra should be received from a preceptor (guru) in an initiation (*dīkṣā*) ritual. A mantra heard accidentally or taken from a book is not only believed to be useless, but also harmful to the practitioner.⁵ Not every mantra is suitable for repetition by a particular person. To determine the qualities of a mantra in respect to a worshipper, the *KT* prescribes a test, whereby the syllables of the person's name (the name is considered representative of the individual) and the syllables of the mantra to be adopted are compared with the help of six diagrams.

The first diagram is the *akathaha-cakra*.⁶

अकथह १	उडप २	आखदळ ३	ऊचफ ४
ओडव ५	लृझम ६	औदश ७	लृत्रय ८
ईघन ९	ऋजभ १०	इगधक्ष ११	ऋलव १२
अःतस १३	ऐठल १४	अंणप १५	एटर १६

Fig. 1.

1	2	3	4
I		II	
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
IV		III	
13	14	15	16

It is named after the syllables *a-ka-tha-ha* written in the first square. The squares of the diagram (= I-IV) are subdivided into four squares each in the manner shown above.

⁴ According to some authorities, *śakti* is the final part and *kīlaka* the middle part of a mantra. For a discussion of both interpretations, cf. Nowotny (1957: pp. 132-3, n. 146).

⁵ cf. the statements in *KT*, 15.20-21.

⁶ For this *cakra*, cf. *KT*, 15.78-85. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed according to Manoramā 8, 16-9, 20 on *TR*, 1.45cd-48ab.

The syllables of the alphabet from *a* to *kṣa*⁷ are assigned to the squares from the first squares of the groups I to IV to the fourth squares of these groups. The method for assigning the categories *siddha*, *sādhya*, *susiddha* and *ari*, which are interpreted in the senses of 'relative', 'servant', 'supporter' and 'enemy', to the squares is not specified in the text of the *KT*. It seems that the major square (= I, II, III or IV) in whose subdivision the first letter of the person's name appears, is called the *siddha* group. It has the subdivisions: *siddha-siddha*, *siddha-sādhya*, *siddha-susiddha* and *siddha-ari*. Beginning with the major group (I, II, III or IV) containing the initial letter of the name, one assigns the categories *siddha*, *sādhya*, *susiddha* and *ari* to the major squares in a clockwise direction. Then, beginning again with the subdivision containing the initial letter of the name, one assigns the categories *siddha-siddha*, etc., clockwise to the subdivisions within that major square, following the same pattern for the subdivisions within the other major squares. One then locates the square containing the first letter of the mantra and determines whether the mantra is suitable for repetition by a particular person based on the category assigned to the major square and the subdivision containing the letter. A mantra identified as *siddha-siddha* is perfected by a prescribed number of repetitions, while a mantra which is *siddha-ari* destroys relatives.⁸

The second diagram is the *akaṣama-cakra*, a diagram of twelve squares, named after the syllables *a-ka-ṣa-ma* written in the upper central square.⁹

अःठभ अंटब	अकडम	आखदय इगणर
औबफ		ईघतल
ओझपह ऐजनस	एछधष	उडधव ऊचदश

Fig. 2.

Beginning with the square which contains the first letter of the person's name,¹⁰ one assigns in a clockwise direction the categories *siddha*, *sādhya*, *susiddha* and *ari* until one arrives at the square which contains the first letter of the mantra. Then, if the initial letter of the mantra appears in squares 1, 5 or 9 (1 referring to the square containing the first letter of the person's name, and so on), the mantra is regarded as 'relative' (*siddha*), in squares 2, 6 or 10 as 'servant' (*sādhya*), in squares 3, 7 or 11 as 'supporter' (*susiddha*) and in squares 4, 8 or 12 as 'enemy' (*ari*).

The third diagram is the *nakṣatra-cakra*, where the syllables of the alphabet are assigned to the twenty-seven lunar mansions.¹¹

⁷ cf. the instructions in *TR*, 1.48b and *ŚT*, 2.129c.

⁸ cf. the statements in *KT*, 15.81.

⁹ For this cakra, cf. *KT*, 15.85–6. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed on the basis of contemporary prints.

¹⁰ cf. the instructions in *MMD*, 24.22.

¹¹ For this cakra, cf. *KT*, 15.87–8. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed on the basis of contemporary prints.

अश्विनी अ आ	भरणी इ	कृत्तिका ई उ ऊ	रोहिणी ऋ ॠ वृ वृ	मृगशिरा ए	आर्द्रा ऐ	पुनर्वसु ओ औ	पुष्य क	आश्लेषा ख ग
मघा घ ङ	पूर्वा फाल्गुनी च	उत्तरा फाल्गुनी छ ज	हस्त झ ञ	चित्रा ट ठ	स्वाती ड	विशाखा ढ ण	अनुराधा त थ द	ज्येष्ठा ध
मूल न प फ	पूर्वाषाढा ब	उत्तराषाढा भ	श्रवणा म	घनिष्ठा य र	शतभिषा ल	पूर्वा भाद्रपदा व श	उत्तरा भाद्रपदा ष स ह	रेवती ळ ञं अः

Fig. 3.

Beginning with the lunar mansion of one's birth, one assigns the categories (1) birth; (2) wealth; (3) calamity; (4) welfare; (5) opponent; (6) fulfiller; (7) slayer; (8) friend; (9) best friend, and again (1) birth, and so on until one arrives at the square in which the initial letter of the mantra appears. If it appears in squares 1 (= birth), 3 (= calamity), 5 (= opponent) or 7 (= slayer),¹² the mantra should be rejected; all other squares are auspicious.

The fourth diagram is the *rāṣi-cakra* where the syllables of the alphabet are assigned to the zodiac signs from Aries to Pisces.¹³

उऊऋ मिथुन ऋऌऴ वृष	अआइई मेष	यरलबक्ष मीन कुम्भ पफबभम
कर्क एऐ		मकर तथदधन
ओऔ सिंह कन्या अंअः शषसहळ	तुला कखगघङ	टठडढण धनु वृश्चिक चछजझञ

Fig. 4.

¹² cf. the statements in *PĀ*, 101, 4.

¹³ For this *cakra*, cf. *KT*, 15.89-91. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed on the basis of contemporary prints and the authority of *PĀ*, 102, 9-12.

One assigns the twelve astrological houses to the squares by counting from one's (lunar) zodiac sign up to the square in which the first letter of the mantra appears. Their significance for the mantra is determined from the names of these houses: (1) ascendant (*lagna*),¹⁴ (2) money, (3) brother, (4) friend, (5) son, (6) enemy, (7) wife, (8) death, (9) religious merit, (10) activity, (11) gain and (12) loss. If the initial letter of the mantra appears in houses 6 (= enemy), 8 (= death) or 12 (= loss), the mantra is rejected.¹⁵

The fifth diagram is the *ṛnidhani-cakra*, where numbers are assigned to letters of the person's name and to the letters of the mantra.¹⁶

१४	२७	२	१२	१५	६	४	३	८	८	९
अ	इ	उ	ऋ	ॠ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	झ	ट
ठ	ड	ढ	ण	त	थ	द	ध	न	प	फ
ब	भ	म	य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह
१०	१	७	४	८	३	७	५	४	६	३

Fig. 5.

This diagram consists of six rows of eleven squares each. The upper row contains the numbers assigned to the letters of the mantra (vowels and consonants separated). Rows two to five contain the syllables of the alphabet and the bottom row has the numbers assigned to the letters of the person's name. Beginning with the square in which the first letter of the person's name appears, one counts in alphabetical order up to the square in which the first letter of the mantra appears. The numbers assigned to the squares in the bottom row of the diagram are added, the sum is multiplied by three and the product is divided by seven. The number obtained in this way is called 'number of the name'. Then, beginning with the square in which the first letter of the mantra appears, one counts (if necessary, backwards) up to the square in which the first letter of the name appears. The numbers assigned to the squares in the top row of the diagram are added, the sum is multiplied by three and the product is divided by seven. The number obtained in this way is called 'number of the mantra'. One compares the number of the name and the number of the mantra and calls the larger number 'debtor' (*ṛnin*) and the smaller one 'creditor' (*dhanin*). A mantra which is *ṛnin* is a debtor from previous lives. According to belief,¹⁷ such a mantra was repeated in a previous life but could not yield a result at that time because the mantra had to first eradicate evil karma. The reciter might have died before the mantra became effective. Therefore the mantra is considered to be indebted to the reciter from a previous life and will give results

¹⁴ This is the sign rising on the horizon at the time of birth. In a horoscope it is assigned to the first square, which is related to a person's body and health.

¹⁵ cf. the statements in *PĀ*, 102, 16.

¹⁶ For this cakra, cf. *KT*, 15.92-3 and also *TR*, 1.56-7. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed on the basis of contemporary prints and the authority of *PĀ*, 110, 9-22.

¹⁷ cf. the statements in *TR*, 1.58cd-61ab and *MMD*, 24.50-51.

quickly in this life. As it can easily be perfected, it should be adopted. A mantra which is a 'creditor' should be rejected.¹⁸

The sixth diagram is the *kulākula-cakra*, which is used to determine whether the letters of a person's name and those of the mantra belong to one family (*kula*) or not (*akula*).¹⁹ The fifty syllables of the alphabet are classified according to the five elements:

वायु	अग्नि	भू	जल	आकाश
अ	इ	उ	क	लृ
आ	ई	ऊ	कृ	लृ
ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
त	थ	द	ध	न
प	फ	ब	भ	म
य	र	ल	व	श
ष	क्ष	ळ	स	ह

Fig. 6.

If the letters of the person's name belong to the same element as the letters of the mantra or to elements which are 'friends', the mantra should be adopted. Earth is a friend to the water element, fire is an enemy and wind is indifferent. Wind is a friend to the fire, water an enemy and earth is indifferent, etc. If the letters are 'unfriendly', the mantra should be rejected.

We do not know whether all six diagrams are employed by the preceptor to test the suitability of a mantra for a person. If one cannot find a suitable mantra after testing many mantras with the help of the diagrams mentioned above, one may try to prefix seed syllables like *hrīm*, *klīm* or *śrīm* to the mantra to remove the defect, or prefix and append the syllable *om*.²⁰

Certain mantras are said to be exempt from this test altogether. These are e.g. mantras transmitted by a learned female preceptor, those obtained in a dream, one-syllabled mantras and mantras of certain deities, like Sūrya and Narasiṃha.²¹ A mantra is particularly suitable when a person has a special devotion for and attraction to it.²² If a person out of ignorance has accepted a mantra that turns out to be inimical (*ari*), this mantra is abandoned in a special ritual which removes the dangers caused by its repetition.²³ During this rite the person asks for pardon from the deity for having undertaken the repetition of a mantra which caused mental irritation without considering its suitability.

¹⁸ cf. the statements in *PĀ*, 110, 28-9.

¹⁹ For this cakra, cf. *KT*, 15.94-6.

²⁰ cf. the statements in *MMD*, 24.72-3.

²¹ cf. the statements in *KT*, 15.97-9 and *MMD*, 24.57-61.

²² cf. the remark in *MMD*, 24.74.

²³ cf. the description of the ritual in *MMD*, 24.62-71.

2. The purification of the mantra

After a mantra has been identified as suitable for a person, certain purificatory rituals are performed because every mantra has one or several defects, consisting mostly of unsuitable arrangements of syllables, or an unsuitable number of syllables. Mantras consisting of a particular number and combination of syllables are termed as 'angry', 'deaf', 'young', and so on. The following list provides the names of sixty defects enumerated in *KT*, 15.65–69.²⁴

The Sixty Defects of mantras (*Kulārnavatantra* 15.65–69)

1	'obstructed' (<i>ruddha</i>)	31	'deprived of parts' (<i>vikala</i>)
2	'having false syllables' (<i>kūṭāksara</i>)	32	'fallen to pieces' (<i>dhvasta</i>)
3	'perplexed' (<i>mugdha</i>)	33	'lifeless' (<i>nirjīva</i>)
4	'bound' (<i>baddha</i>)	34	'having its enemies destroyed' (<i>khaṇḍitārika</i>)
5	'angry' (<i>kruddha</i>)	35	'asleep' (<i>supta</i>)
6	'broken' (<i>bhedita</i>)	36	'disregarded' (<i>tiraskṛta</i>)
7	'young' (<i>bāla</i>)	37	'low' (<i>nīca</i>)
8	'adolescent' (<i>kumāra</i>)	38	'dirty' (<i>malina</i>)
9	'youthful' (<i>yuvaka</i>)	39	'difficult to approach' (<i>durāsada</i>)
10	'grown up' (<i>praudha</i>)	40	'without essence' (<i>niḥsattva</i>)
11	'old' (<i>vrddha</i>)	41	'conquered' (<i>nirjita</i>)
12	'proud' (<i>garvita</i>)	42	'burnt' (<i>dagdha</i>)
13	'restrained' (<i>stambhita</i>)	43	'unstable' (<i>capala</i>)
14	'insensible' (<i>mūrccchita</i>)	44	'frightening' (<i>bhayamkara</i>)
15	'intoxicated' (<i>matta</i>)	45	'pitiless' (<i>nistrimśa</i>)
16	'tied' (<i>kīlita</i>)	46	'censured' (<i>nindita</i>)
17	'broken' (<i>khaṇḍita</i>)	47	'cruel' (<i>krūra</i>)
18	'deceitful' (<i>śaṭha</i>)	48	'fruitless' (<i>phalahīna</i>)
19	'slow' (<i>mandā</i>)	49	'destroying' (<i>nikṛntana</i>)
20	'turning the face away' (<i>parāṅmukha</i>)	50	'powerless' (<i>nirvīrya</i>)
21	'cut' (<i>chinna</i>)	51	'revolved' (<i>bhramita</i>)
22	'deaf' (<i>badhira</i>)	52	'cursed' (<i>śapta</i>)
23	'blind' (<i>andha</i>)	53	'pressed by a loan' (<i>ṛṅakliṣṭa</i>)
24	'inanimate' (<i>acetana</i>)	54	'limbless' (<i>aṅgahīna</i>)
25	'servile' (<i>kimkara</i>)	55	'dull' (<i>jaḍa</i>)
26	'hungry' (<i>kṣudhita</i>)	56	'hostile' (<i>ripu</i>)
27	'immobilized' (<i>stabdha</i>)	57	'indifferent' (<i>udāsīna</i>)
28	'fallen from its place' (<i>sthānabhraṣṭa</i>)	58	'ashamed' (<i>lajjita</i>)
29	'tormented' (<i>pīḍita</i>)	59	'deluded' (<i>mohita</i>)
30	'without affection' (<i>niḥsneha</i>)	60	'inactive' (<i>alasa</i>)

These defects are removed by performing the *yonimudrā*,²⁵ one of the *mudrās* of Haṭhayoga, similar to anal contraction named *mūlabandha*, which is accompanied in this case by visualizing the syllables of the mantra ascending from the lowest cakṛa, the *mūlādhāra*, to the crown of the head, the

²⁴ *ŚT*, 2.64–70 (also in *Brhattantrasāra* 344, 20–28 and *NP*, 64.14–19) lists 49 defects; *TR*, 1.75–81 and *Kaulāvalīnirṇaya*, 17.10–12 each give a list of 25 defects. These defects are explained in detail in *ŚT*, 2.71–108 (also in *Brhattantrasāra*, 344, 29–346, 18 and *NP*, 64.20–57) and the *PĀ* and *VT* (I, 30 ff.) which comment on this passage.

²⁵ According to *TR*, 1.82ab the energy of the mantra (*mantravīrya*) is connected (with that of the practitioner, cf. *Manoramā* 16, 16–18) by performing the *yonimudrā*. For *mantravīrya*, cf. *TR*, 35.67 with the *Manoramā*.

brahmarandhra. The performer²⁶ fixes his concentration on this spot, retains the breath while repeating the mantra one thousand times and then visualizes the syllables of the mantra descending from the *brahmarandhra* to the *mūlādhāra-cakra*.²⁷

Another method for removing these defects consists of performing the purificatory rites (*samskāra*) which are special ways of reciting or purifying the syllables of the mantra. The names listed here are from *KT*, 15.71-2 and the brief explanations follow *ŚT*, 2. 114-22:

- (1) Creating (*janana*): the practitioner extracts the mantra's syllables one by one from the alphabet usually with the help of a yantra in which the syllables of the alphabet are inscribed. This *mātrkāyantra* may have the form of a triangle consisting of forty-nine small triangles, each inscribed with one syllable of the alphabet.²⁸

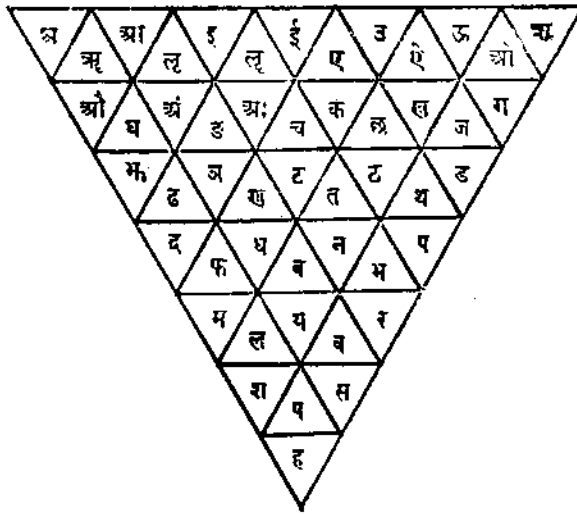


Fig. 7.

Alternatively, the alphabet may be inscribed into a yantra having the shape of an eight-petalled lotus in the following way:²⁹

²⁶ According to *TR*, 1.73ab it is the preceptor who removes these defects before transmitting the mantra.

²⁷ cf. the description in *PĀ*, 95, 14-16.

²⁸ Text such as *MMD*, 24.98cd-101 and *Paramānandatantra*, 21.63cd-67 describe the *mātrkāyantra* in the form of a triangle. The diagram reproduced here is from the edition of the *Paramānanda-tantra*, 525.

²⁹ A reference to a *mātrkāyantra* in the form of a lotus appears in *PĀ*, 96, 20-21. The yantra is described in detail in *ST*, 6.10.

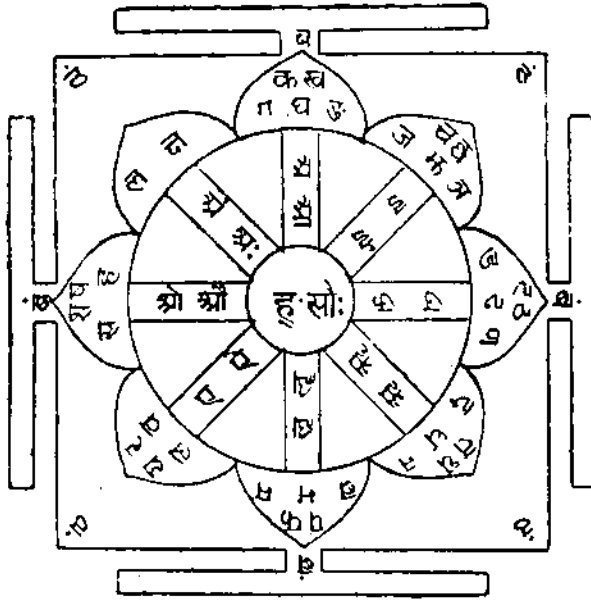


Fig. 8.

- (2) Giving life (*jīvana*): the practitioner recites each syllable of the mantra, prefixed by the syllable *om*, separately.
- (3) Striking (*tāḍana*): The practitioner writes down the mantra and sprinkles each syllable with sandal water while reciting *yaṃ*.
- (4) Awakening (*bodhana*): the practitioner writes down the mantra and touches it with as many red oleander flowers as there are syllables in the mantra while reciting *raṃ*.
- (5) Consecrating (*abhiṣeka*): in accordance with the regulations found in his own tradition, the practitioner sprinkles the syllables of the mantra with water mixed with as many twigs of the *aśvattha* tree as there are syllables in the mantra.
- (6) Cleaning (*vimalīkaraṇa*): the practitioner burns the mantra's three impurities with the recitation of the 'light' mantra, *om hraum*, while contemplating the mantra.
- (7) Strengthening (*āpyāyana*): the practitioner sprinkles each syllable of the written mantra with water mixed with *kuśa* grass.
- (8) Offering water libations (*tarpaṇa*): after reciting the mantra, the practitioner offers water to it by saying: 'I offer water to mantra x'.
- (9) Kindling (*dīpana*): the practitioner prefixes *om hrīm śrīm* to the mantra.
- (10) Concealing (*gupti*): the practitioner retains the mantra and repeats it secretly.³⁰

Analogous to the concept of the two kinds of impurities (*aśauca*) arising for members of a family at birth and death, which is explained in the *dharmaśāstras*, the *mantraśāstra* describes the impurities arising at the 'birth', i.e. at the beginning, and 'death', i.e. at the end, of the recitation of a mantra. These

³⁰ *MMD*, 24.107ab states that the mantra is prefixed and appended with the syllable *hrīm* and is repeated one thousand times during this rite.

impurities are removed by reciting the mantra seven or one hundred and eight times with the syllable *om* at the beginning and end.³¹

3. The 'preliminary ritual' for perfecting the mantra

After receiving a mantra from a preceptor in the initiation ritual, the practitioner employs it in *japa*, a repetition to produce a cumulative stream of energy. The aim of *japa* is to make a mantra effective, that is, to realize the union with the deity whom the mantra expresses and to gain supernatural powers. *Japa* forms part of a ritual called the 'preliminary ritual' (*puraścaraṇa/puraścaryā*), a common procedure for perfecting a mantra. Following *KT*, 15.8, the parts are

- (1) ritual worship (*pūjā*)
thrice a day
- (2) repetition of the mantra (*japa*)
x times
- (3) offering of water libations (*tarpaṇa*)
1/10 the number of *japa*
- (4) fire sacrifice (*homa*)
1/10 the number of water libations
- (5) feeding of Brahmins (*brāhmaṇabhojana*)
1/10 the number of offerings in the fire.

The first part of the *puraścaraṇa*, the *pūjā*, is performed in the morning, at noon and in the evening. It is a regular Tantric *pūjā* where an idol or an aniconic form of the deity, like a yantra, is worshipped with a certain sequence of offerings. In contrast to other forms of Hindu *pūjā*, the deity is not visualized as descending from the distant heavenly world in a Tantric *pūjā*, but is drawn out from the worshipper's own heart and returns there at the end of the worship. The deity worshipped here is, of course, the deity whose mantra the practitioner of the *puraścaraṇa* wants to perfect.

The four other parts are performed for a fixed number of times: The number of water libations offered to satiate the deity is $\frac{1}{10}$ the number of *japa*; the number of offerings in the fire is $\frac{1}{10}$ the number of water libations; the number of Brahmins fed is $\frac{1}{10}$ the number of offerings in the fire. If one part of the *puraścaraṇa* cannot be performed one should do twice the number of *japa* performances prescribed for that limb.³² For example, one thousand offerings in the fire can be substituted by two thousand repetitions of the mantra.

Japa is of three types: (1) aloud (*vācika*), (2) whispered (*upāṃśu*) and (3) mental (*mānasa*).³³

All traditions value the mental *japa* highest. The *KT* states: 'Both (practices), reciting a hymn of praise (*stotra*) mentally or repeating a mantra aloud, are useless like water in a broken vessel.'³⁴

The repetition should neither be too fast nor too slow, nor should the syllables of the mantra be mixed up.³⁵ *Japa* should be done with full concentration³⁶ and a calm and controlled mind.³⁷

³¹ For these impurities, cf. *KT*, 15.57. Texts such as *TS*, 34, 24-6 (quoting *Kāśasamhitā*) discuss the procedure for removing these impurities.

³² cf. *KT*, 15.9.

³³ cf. *KT*, 15.54.

³⁴ cf. *KT*, 15.56.

³⁵ cf. *KT*, 15.55.

³⁶ cf. *KT*, 15.100.

³⁷ cf. *KT*, 15.110.

The counting of the repetitions of the mantra is usually done with the help of a rosary (*mālā*) which has been consecrated before its first use.³⁸ A *mālā* is a string of beads, separated from each other by a special kind of knot, known as brahmagranthi or knot of Brahmā, the creator. At one point in the *mālā* there is one extra bead, known as Meru or summit of the *mālā* which is offset from the continuity of the main loop of the *mālā*. The Meru bead is not crossed while rolling the beads. The *mālā* is turned around when one comes to the Meru bead and one continues counting from the last bead of the previous *mālā*. Usually the *mālā* rests on the middle finger of the right hand and the beads are drawn with the help of the thumb. It is prohibited to use the index finger, however, the *KT* (15.52) allows the use of the index and the other fingers for attaining different purposes, especially in connexion with the rites of black magic. 'By (using) the thumb (in counting) liberation is attained; the index finger destroys enemies; one should consider the middle finger as granting money; the ring finger (is useful) for rites of pacification, the little finger is said to be the finger (for the rites of) immobilization (and) attraction.'³⁹

Rosaries are made of different materials, depending on the deity whose mantra is repeated. Rudrākṣa beads are used by the worshippers of Śiva. The Rudrākṣa (*Elaeocarpus Ganitrus*) tree is held in high esteem by Śaivas. The brown beads made from its dried berries are also believed to have medical qualities. They are classified according to the number of marks on them. Beads made from the stem of the basil plant (*tulasī*) are used by worshippers of Viṣṇu. A crystal *mālā* is prescribed for worshippers of Śakti.

The number of beads is usually 108. The *KT* also mentions rosaries having 15, 25, 27, 30 and 50 beads.⁴⁰ These special rosaries are used for different purposes. For example, japa done with a rosary of 30 beads helps one to obtain money, while a rosary of 15 beads is used in rites of black magic. The rosary is guarded from possible contamination and is hidden from others during japa by covering it with the folds of one's garments. Otherwise, it may be inserted into a rosary-bag (*gomukha/gomukhī*). There is also a method for counting the number of repetitions of a mantra by using the 'rosary of the hand' (*karamālā*), whereby the joints of the four fingers of the right hand, excluding the thumb, replace beads. The methods for counting with the help of the joints differ slightly from practitioner to practitioner. When performing japa in this way, the fingers of the right hand should not be kept apart. If japa is done with fingers apart, the result of japa is believed to escape through the gaps between the fingers. Another method for counting the number of repetitions of the mantra is with the use of the 'rosary of the alphabet' (*akṣamālā*). Describing this 'rosary' the *KT* states: 'It is called *a-kṣa-mālā* because it consists of the bead-like syllables from *a* to *kṣa* . . .'⁴¹ The mantra is prefixed with the syllables of the alphabet from *a* to *kṣa* (to which an *anusvāra* is added) which are counted in forward and reverse order to make the number of syllables 108.⁴² The syllable *kṣa* is considered the Meru bead and is not uttered.

Certain solitary places are recommended for the performance of the *puṣācarana* where the performer's mind is peaceful and undisturbed. Such places can be the interior of a cave or a temple, or the top of a mountain.⁴³ The

³⁸ cf. Padoux (1987b) for the rite of consecrating the rosary and Joshi (1959), ch. iii: 'Le rosaire et le puṣācarana', 29f., for the rosary and the *puṣācarana* rite.

³⁹ cf. *KT*, 15.12.

⁴⁰ cf. *KT*, 15.51.

⁴¹ cf. *KT*, 15.49ab.

⁴² cf. *KT*, 15.48-9.

⁴³ cf. *KT*, 15.22-4.

ritual can also be performed in the presence of certain sacred objects, like fire, water or a Brahmin, which are regarded as suitable objects of worship and are called 'places of worship' (*pūjāsthāna*).⁴⁴ One should not stay in abandoned temples or ruined buildings as these are believed to be inhabited by evil spirits.⁴⁵

A diagram having the shape of a tortoise (*kūrmacakra*) is often employed for selecting an auspicious place within a given area. The space of the house (if the *puraścaraṇa* is performed indoors) or of the village or town (if performed in the open) is converted into a diagram with nine major squares facing the east. The syllables of the alphabet are inscribed into these nine squares in the following way.⁴⁶

ल क्ष	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च छ ज झ ञ
श ष स ह	अं	अ	इ	ट ठ ड ढ ण		
	अः	आ	ई			
	ओ		उ			
	औ		ऊ			
	ए	लृ	ऋ			
	ऐ	लृ	ऋ			
य र ल व	प.	फ	ब	भ	म	त थ द ध न

Fig. 9.

One locates the square in which the first syllable of the name of the building or village/town appears and considers this square the mouth of the tortoise. The squares on adjacent sides are considered the hands, the two squares below, the belly, the two squares below these, the feet, the square at the bottom, the tail and the central square is the back. The 'mouth' is the most auspicious place. It is the place for putting the lamp (*dīpasthāna*)⁴⁷ which is kept burning during the ritual. The 'back' is also considered auspicious. If the practitioner performs the rite while sitting in the 'hands' he can expect only little success; the 'belly' is considered useless. The 'feet' cause suffering and the 'tail' even death.

A special pure diet consisting of prescribed fruits, roots and barley flour is recommended during the time of the *puraścaraṇa*.⁴⁸ The practitioner should avoid accepting food from others during the time of his practice.⁴⁹ It is believed that half of the effect resulting from the rite goes to the donor of the food and only half to the performer of the rite.⁵⁰

As stated earlier, the purpose of the *puraścaraṇa* is to make the mantra effective. The perfection of the mantra (*mantrasiddhi*) is indicated by signs like unusual calmness and contentment of the mind, absence of anger and greed, the

⁴⁴ cf. *KT*, 15.25.

⁴⁵ cf. *KT*, 15.30.

⁴⁶ The *kūrmacakra* is described in numerous texts. Here the description follows *TR*, 5.88–98 and *Subhagānandanātha's* commentary *Manoramā* 104, 17–106, 14.

⁴⁷ For the *dīpasthāna*, cf. e.g. *Paramānandanātra*, 21.117: *tatkūrmasya mukhaṃ devī dīpasthānam prakīrtitam/dīpyante yatra manavo dīpasthānam tatas tu tat!*

⁴⁸ cf. *KT*, 15.74.

⁴⁹ cf. *KT*, 15.76.

⁵⁰ cf. *KT*, 15.75.

conquest of sleep and hunger, hearing of unusual sounds, like the sound of drums or music and the seeing of Gandharvas.⁵¹ The *KT* states that the nodes of the heart (*brahmagranthi* in the *anāhatacakra*) and the throat (*viṣṇugranthi* in the *viśuddhicakra*), which block the rising of the *kuṇḍalinī*, are pierced. All limbs of the body are strengthened; tears and bristling hairs arising from joy, possession of the body and stammering speech appear.⁵²

If after the performance of the *puraścaraṇa* the mantra has not become effective, the rite should be repeated a second or third time. If the performer is still unsuccessful, a different method of *puraścaraṇa* should be followed.⁵³

4. The use of the mantra in desire-oriented rituals

The mantra can be employed for the so-called desire-oriented (*kāmya*) rites, performed to achieve specific material aims, after a successfully performed *puraścaraṇa*. These also include rites falling under the category of black magic (*abhicāra*), like subjugation (*vaśikaraṇa*), immobilization (*stambhana*), eradication (*uccāṭana*) and liquidation (*māraṇa*). The texts mention certain peculiarities in connexion with the recitation of mantras during these rites. The mantra is connected with the victim's name in six different ways according to the category of rite performed:⁵⁴

- (1) *Grathana*: The syllables of the name are inserted into those of the mantra one by one; employed in pacification (*śānti*) rites.
- (2) *Vidarbha*: The syllables of the name are inserted in between two syllables of the mantra one by one; employed in rites of subjugation (*vaśyakarman*).⁵⁵
- (3) *Samputa*: The mantra appears at the beginning and end of the name; according to some authorities⁵⁶ it appears in reverse form at the end of the name; employed in rites of immobilization (*saṃstambhana*).
- (4) *Rodhana*: The mantra appears at the beginning, middle, and end of the name; employed in rites of creating dissension (*vidveṣaṇa*).
- (5) *Yoga*: The mantra appears at the end of the name;⁵⁷ employed in rites of eradication (*proccāṭana*).
- (6) *Pallava*: The mantra appears at the beginning of the name;⁵⁷ employed in rites of liquidation (*māraṇa*).

Some authorities⁵⁸ distinguish three sexes of the mantras used in desire-oriented rites based upon the final syllable(s). Mantras ending in *huṃ* and/or *phaṭ*, the sound of breaking, are considered masculine; those ending in *svāhā*, the exclamation used for making an offering into the fire, are feminine; and those ending in *namaḥ* ('obeisance') are neuter. The ritual application for these mantras accords with the flow of the breath (*svara*) in the three most important *nāḍīs*, *pīṅgalā*, *iḍā* and *suṣumnā*.⁵⁹ Masculine mantras are successfully employed

⁵¹ cf. the description in *MMD*, 25.97–100.

⁵² cf. *KT*, 15.63–64.

⁵³ cf. the statements e.g. in *MMD*, 24.129 and *N*, 125.9–10.

⁵⁴ For these six methods, cf. e.g. *ŚT* 23.136–141, *ĪSP*, 1.5.1–7, *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava* 369, 8–25, *TR*, 1.72 and *MMD*, 25.18 ff. For eleven methods, cf. *Netratānta* 18.10–12.

⁵⁵ On *vidarbha*, cf. also Padoux (1977).

⁵⁶ For this opinion, cf. *PĀ*, 856, 24.5.

⁵⁷ The erroneous reading in *ŚT*, 23.141: *mantrasyānte bhaven nāma yogah proccāṭane mataḥ | ante nāmo bhaven mantraḥ pallavo māraṇe mataḥ ||* has been corrected in *PĀ* 857, 7–8 as follows: *ante nāmo bhaven mantraḥ yogah proccāṭane mataḥ | mantrasyānte bhaven nāma pallavo māraṇe mataḥ ||*

⁵⁸ For the three sexes of mantras, cf. e.g. *KT*, 16.40–43, *ŚT*, 2.57cd–63 (the same passage occurs in *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava* 370, 9–21) and *MMD*, 24.93–5ab.

⁵⁹ For this practice as recorded in *Agni-Purāna*, 293.8.9, cf. Padoux (1978a) and for the significance of different *prāṇic* rhythms according to the *svarasāstra*, cf. e.g. the *Śivasvarodaya*.

in 'cruel rites', like liquidation.⁶⁰ The proper time to awaken the energy of masculine mantras is while the breath moves through the right nostril where the *nāḍī piṅgalā*, associated with the sun and masculine principle, terminates. Feminine mantras should be used in pacification rites, at the time when the *prāṇa* moves through the left nostril where the *nāḍī idā*, associated with the moon and feminine principle, terminates. The energy of the masculine mantras is dormant at this time. Neuter mantras are successfully employed in rites of immobilization while the *prāṇa*, flowing through the *suṣumnā* passage, moves through both nostrils simultaneously or alternates erratically through both nostrils. The mantras of all sexes can be employed successfully at this time.

Summary

According to the *KT*, a mantra is selected by comparing its syllables with those of the individual's name through the use of six diagrams, viz. the *akathaha-cakra*, *akaḍama-cakra*, *nakṣatra-cakra*, *rāśi-cakra*, *ṛnidhani-cakra* and *kulākula-cakra*. The *yonimudrā*, similar to the anal contraction *mūlabandha*, accompanied by a visualization, or the ten purificatory rites (*saṃskāra*), special ways of reciting the syllables of the mantra, are employed to remove the defects of the mantra, usually caused by unsuitable arrangements of its syllables. After the mantra has been purified, the practitioner can employ it in japa. Japa forms one part of the 'preliminary ritual' (*puraścaraṇa/puraścaryā*), a procedure for making the mantra effective. It consists of (1) ritual worship (*pūjā*), (2) repetition of the mantra (japa), (3) offering of water libations (*tarpaṇa*), (4) fire sacrifice (*homa*) and (5) feeding of Brahmīns (*brāhmaṇa abhojana*). An auspicious place for this ritual is selected with the help of the tortoise diagram (*kūrmacakra*) and certain dietary restrictions are observed. After the mantra has been made effective (*siddha*), which is indicated by certain signs, it is employed in desire-oriented (*kāmya*) rites. The victim's name can be associated with the mantra in six different ways, viz. *grathana*, *vidarbha*, *saṃpuṭa*, *rodhana*, *yoga* and *pallava*, during desire-oriented rites. The texts also refer to the favourable application of masculine, feminine and neuter mantras in connexion with the flow of the breath in the *piṅgalā*, *idā* and *suṣumnā nāḍīs*.⁶¹

ABBREVIATIONS

Agni-Purāna = *Agnipurānam*. Gen. ed. M. C. Āpte. Pune, 1957.

Bṛhātatantrasāra = *Bṛhātatantrasārah*. R. K. Rāyadvārā *sampādita evaṃ lipyantarita*. Vārāṇasī, 1985.

ĪŚP = *The isānasivagurudevapaddhati by isānasivagurudevamisra*. Ed. T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī. 4 Pts. Trivandrum, 1920-25.

Kaulāvalinirṇaya = *Kaulāvalī*. Ed. A. Avalon. Delhi, 1985. (Repr.)

KT = *Kulārnavatantra*. Introduction by A. Avalon, Readings by M. P. Pandit, Sanskrit Text ed. by T. Vidyāratna. Calcutta/London, 1965. (Rev. ed.)

Manoramā See *TR*.

MMD = *Mantramahodadhīh saṭīkah*. Bombay, 1983. (Repr.)

N = *Nityotsava of Umānandanāthā* [Supplement to *Paraśurāma-kalpasūtra*]. Ed. A. Mahadeva Sāstrī. Revised and enlarged by Swami Trivikrama Tirtha. Bārōda 1977 (Fourth ed.)

Netratantra = *The Netra Tantram with commentary by Kshemarāja*. Ed. M. K. Śāstrī. 2 vols. Bombay, 1926-39.

NP = *Atha nāradīyamahāpurānam prārabhyate*. Bombay, 1923.

PĀ = *Padārthhādarśa* by Rāghavabhaṭṭa. See *ŚT*.

Paramānandatāntra = *Paramānandatāntram*. *Maheśvarānandanāthaviracitayā saubhāgyānandasandohākhyavyākhyayā saṃvalitam*. Ed. R. Miśra. Vārāṇasī, 1985.

⁶⁰ This follows the statements in *KT*, 16. 42-43.

⁶¹ I should like to thank the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Tokyo for its support and assistance enabling me to research this paper.

ŠT = *Śradātīlakatantra*. Ed. A. Avalon. Delhi, 1982. (Repr.)

Tārābhaktisudhārnava = *Tārā-Bhakti-Sudhārnava*. Ed. P. Bhattācārya. Calcutta/London, 1940.

TR = *Tantrarājatantra*. Ed. L. Shastri. Calcutta, 1926.

TS = *Tantrasārah mahāmahopādhyāyaśrīkṛṣṇānandavāgīśabhaṭṭācāryavivacitaḥ*. 2 Fasc. Banaras, 1938.

VT = *Shrividyarnava Tantra*. Ed. R. C. Kak and Harabhata Shastri. 2 Vols. Srinagar, 1932–37.

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