



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Insight into Sutras #5

## Words Matter

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

Words are important. The radar screen of your mind is filled with what you say and with what others say to you. The unsaid words are on that screen as well. You're always tracking the moving blips.

You may want others to use specific words to make you happy. Usually they don't follow your script, not even if you give it to them. Bottom line, consider what are you looking to get from them. If your happiness depends on them saying the right things, they can upset your apple cart just a few minutes later. Your sense of self must come from a deeper inner center for you to be happy and to have successful relationships.

If words can shut you down, are there words that can open you up? Yes! The enlivened mantra is sacred words, words of power. They invoke the upwelling of Consciousness within you. This inner arising transforms you completely, bringing a whole new level of aliveness and enthusiasm into your life. You see the world differently. You see you differently.

It is your mind that needs this transformation. Your own Self doesn't need to be uplifted, for it is already Divine. But your mind keeps you from seeing your inner radiance. Your own Self is Shiva: all encompassing, pervading all, being all. Your mind is puny by comparison. Yet your mind blocks your knowing of Self like you can use your thumb to block the sun.

Transforming your mind is accomplished through words. This is because your mind is churning out words all the time, day and night. When you change the words you use, you get different results. Research on affirmations shows measurable improvements in education, health and relationship outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Using different words on yourself makes a difference

The Shiva Sutras says this works in your spiritual development as well. The second chapter of the text focuses on transforming your mind. These practices are called shaktopaya, the upaya (path) of shakti (energy). Your mind is made of energy, as is everything. And the enlivened mantra is full of Divine Energy. Together they uplift your mind and empower you to transcend it.

Chittam mantrah.<sup>2</sup> — Shiva Sutras 2.1

By intensive awareness of the Divine in the mantra, you become what it names.

The two Sanskrit words name two things: the power of your mind and the power in the mantra. Chittam means mind, literally a contracted form of Chit (Consciousness). Mantra means a set of words that enshrine God within them. These are Divine words, meaning they are God in the form of words. God can take on any form, even the form of words.

Your mind reflects whatever you present to it. If you present garbage, your mind becomes filled with garbage. If you present Divine words, your mind becomes filled with Divine light. What kind of mind do you want to have?

Every religion and meditative tradition uses mantra in some way. In tantra, you get an enlivened mantra from a Shaktipat Guru. It is plugged in. With a lamp that won't turn on, first you check the light bulb, then notice the cord is unplugged. When you plug it in, you get light. You want a mantra that lights you up.

Receiving it is called "mantra diksha," the initiation into mantra. It initiates an inner process, the blossoming forth of Consciousness within. Not merely words, the mantra is Divine words that ignite the fire of yoga within you.

It is the Guru who gives the spark to the mantra. They received it from their own Guru, who received it from theirs and on back through the generations. Yet the mantra is fully empowered only when the disciple has used it to attain their own Self. It has the full power of the Guru's own realization imbedded within it, thus it is called chaitanya, meaning it is scintillating with Consciousness. By repeating mantra, your mind is uplifted and expanded — a Divine mind.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115137> (accessed 5/4/25)

<sup>2</sup> Citta.m mantra.h.

The reason that your mind is so important is that you identify with it. Unfortunately, whatever your mind says, you believe it. You might not believe another person if they said the same thing, but you get completely entangled in your mind's constant output. The ancient sages noticed this, explaining it this way:

Atma chittam.<sup>3</sup> — Shiva Sutras 3.1

The individual is mind.

Here, the word atma refers to your sense of self, the way you feel about yourself day-to-day. This Sanskrit aphorism has no verb, so it's like there is an equal sign between the two words: atma = chittam. It means your sense of self = mind. Whatever you are thinking, that is what you are becoming.

You get completely lost in your mind. It is not your fault. It is a cosmic setup – Shiva created your mind to block your knowing of your own Divinity. Thus your mind works hard at its job, convincing you that you are not God.

A saying from India tells the best way to get a thorn out of your foot, by using another thorn. In this way, to become free from thoughts, you take the help of another thought — the mantra. Now your mind is mulling over the greater dimensionality within you.

Your mind will begin to reflect Consciousness to you, progressively more and more as your unresolved issues cease to limit you.

Chiti-vahnir avaroha-pade channo'pi matraya meyendhanam plushyati.<sup>4</sup>

— Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam 14

The fire of Consciousness (Chiti), though concealed in the individual, burns away  
Maya's limiting knowledge like fire burns fuel.

This sutra explains why your mind returns to the same issues again and again. Your mind is trying to burn its way through them, to understand and get past them. This process sometimes works, and it is rare and wonderful. It happens because the fire of Consciousness is shining through your mind. Like the sun shining through a magnifying glass, it can burn up whatever it touches.

Instead, mantra burns through a whole forest of issues in a short time. This is because Consciousness is held in the mantra, like fire is held in a match head. But you have to light it up, which you do by repeating the mantra.

What if your unresolved issues aren't dissolving fast enough? Just like when you're driving and want to go faster, you have to press on the accelerator. You can do dedicated mantra periods during the day. Simply set a timer and repeat mantra until the timer rings.

I recommend beginning with out-loud repetition as it engages more of your senses: mind, mouth, breath, sound and hearing. As the mantra flows more fluidly for you, switch to a whisper, then to silent repetition. Adding a minute or a few to the time you had in mind makes it more powerful, for minute #21 is more powerful than minute #20. Yet even one minute of mantra will make a difference, especially if you do it several times a day.

We also have practices where you write the mantra, or move the beads of a mala through your fingers like prayer beads. I even know yogis who are mantra buddies, connecting to do mantra together or to keep each other on track with their own timings.

Yet the best reason to repeat mantra is to get enlightened. Words can bind you. Words can liberate you. Which kind of words do you use on yourself? More importantly, when you know which words will liberate you, do you use them?

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<sup>3</sup> Aatmaa citta.m.

<sup>4</sup> Citi-vahnir avaroha-pade channo'pi maatrasya meyendhana.m plu.syati.