

Shakti Bija Mantras: Seed Syllables of Transformation

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The term mantra is commonly used today in the media for key phrases, terms or words of power and influence. Each group has its particular mantras that represent its special view, orientation or goal, whether it is a corporation, a political party or religious organization. We are coming to value clear and concise statements or summary views over longer explanations and discussion. Our communication through computers, power point and text messaging is getting progressively condensed or, we could say, mantric in nature.

Mantra in the Yoga tradition consists of the use of sacred sounds and intentions to transform the energy of the mind in a positive direction. Mantra is probably the most powerful and commonly used of all yogic meditational methods. All the main paths of Yoga - whether of knowledge, devotion or action, or whether Hatha, Raja or Kundalini Yogas - have their key mantras. Mantras can also be performed to help us with concentration, with our work, dealing with emotions, for health, prosperity or overall well-being.

Mantras are of many types. Some are longer prayers and intentions, like the famous Vedic *Gayatri* mantra to the solar Godhead. Others consist of the repetition of Divine names like the well known mantra *Om Nama Shivaya* for Lord Shiva. Yet probably the most important and simplest of all mantras are the single syllable mantras

called 'bija' or seed mantras starting with *Om*. They can be used for meditation, worship of deities, energizing prana or for healing purposes – for all aspects of mantra practice. These main bija mantras are also called 'Shakti mantras', as they are commonly used in the worship of the Goddess, who Herself is the power of sound and mantra.

Shakti bija mantras carry the great forces of Nature such as the energies of the Sun and Moon, electricity and magnetism, not simply as outer factors but as inner potentials of Divine light, love and wisdom. Shakti mantras hold, resonate, and propel the Kundalini force, the higher evolutionary power of consciousness, to flow within us. In this article, we will focus on the eight prime Shakti bija mantras, their energies and usage for Yoga, for health and or overall improving our karmas in life.

Eight Prime Shakti Bija Mantras and their Corresponding Powers

Pranic energy – ascending power of pure consciousness	Om
Energy of sound – creative power of knowledge and guidance	Aim
Solar energy – power of illumination and reflection	Hrīm
Lunar energy – power of reflection and devotion	Śrīm
Electric energy – power of action, expression and transformation	Krīm
Magnetic energy – power of love and attraction	Klīm
Power of fire – power to purify, protect and remove negativity	Hūm
Power to stabilize – power to hold and conceive	Strīm

Shakti mantras relate to the primary forms of the Goddess or Divine Mother. There are special Shakti mantras for each of the great Goddesses, through which we can commune with them and gain their grace. Shakti mantras are the primary mantras used in Tantric Yoga, in which they are combined in various ways to bring about different results. They have a great capacity for transformation that can extend to the deepest layers of our consciousness and prana. They should be approached with reverence and respect as the very life blood of the Goddess.

Most Shakti mantras contain the vowel- *Ī*, the vibratory ee-sound, which is the main primal sound of Shakti. Most contain the consonant-*R*, which is the seed of fire, heaven, light, order and dharma and has a stimulating and energizing effect. Some contain the consonant-*L*, which is the seed of earth, water, joy and bliss and has a calming and stabilizing effect. Many begin with either the letter-*H*, which indicates prana, light and the Sun, or the letters *S* or *Sh*, which indicate the Moon, the mind and water. Some like *Aum* or *Aim* consist of vowels only.

Application of Shakti Mantras

Shakti mantras can be used to create, sustain or dissolve the various forms, patterns and forces within us. They have particular affinities with certain locations in the body and with specific chakras - like *Hrīm* and the heart - but also have a broader effect to promote certain types of forces, like *Hrīm* as solar energy that can be used on many different levels.

The application of Shakti mantras, like that of other mantras, depends upon the goals of life that we are using them to achieve (dharma, artha, kama, and moksha or career, wealth, enjoyment or liberation), which gunas we are energizing them with (sattva, rajas, tamas, or the qualities of clarity, action or inertia), or their application through Yoga, Ayurveda, Vedic astrology or other disciplines. In this regard, the same Shakti mantra can be used in many different ways. Yet at the deepest level, Shakti mantras are meant to arouse and support the Yoga Shakti or inner power of Yoga within us.

For example, the mantra *Śrīm* at an outer level connects us to the abundance of our dharma and artha, our career and financial gains, and the fulfillment of our kama or desires. For Yoga practice, it grants devotion to guru and the deity. In Ayurveda, it promotes healing, growth, and nourishment. In Vedic astrology, it is the mantra of the Moon and can be used for strengthening benefic Venus and Jupiter as well. In Vastu, it promotes well-being, prosperity and happiness in the dwelling.

Used with a sattvic intention, *Śrīm* has a nourishing and harmonizing force; with a rajasic intention, it has a power to promote outer development and achievement; and with a tamasic intention, it can gain a destructive or crushing capacity. At an outer Lakshmi (Goddess of Prosperity) level, *Śrīm* can grant us the abundance of the material world; while at an inner Lakshmi level, it can grant us the abundance of the spiritual life, which is devotion, bliss and the beauty of perception.

Many people use such seed mantras as their main mantra for meditation (TM mantras are usually based upon Shakti mantras, for example), also referred to as 'primal sound' or 'mantra meditation'. They may repeat their special mantra before meditation to take the mind more quickly into the meditative state. Shakti mantras have a powerful effect by their sound alone, which is pranic in nature and helps decondition the mind, even if one does not understand their meaning. They are also easy to pronounce as they consist of one syllable only!

Please use these mantras with respect and a sense of their sacred power, along with your meditation, honoring the deity within. Generally, seed mantras are repeated numerous times in a series of continuous meditation sittings to reach the number of 100,000, which is said to be the number usually required to awaken their energy and draw it deep into our psyche. Then they can be repeated regularly as needed. They can be used in combination with Divine names or with other prayers as well.

Om

Om is the prime mantra of the Purusha, the Cosmic Being, the Atman or higher Self. As such, it attunes us with our true nature and higher reality. *Om* is the sound of

Ishvara, the cosmic lord, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe, who is also the inner guru and prime teacher of Yoga. It reflects both the manifest and the unmanifest Brahman, sustaining the vibration of being, life and consciousness in all worlds and all creatures

Generally, *Om* is divided threefold as *A*, *U* and *M*, with *A* referring to creation, the waking state and Brahma, the creator; *U* as sustenance, the dream state and Vishnu the preserver; and *M* as dissolution, the deep sleep state and Shiva the transformer. More specifically, *Om* relates to Shiva, the cosmic masculine force.

Om serves to open and clear the mind for meditation. It brings about an ascension and expansion of our energy. It promotes the higher prana and inner light and takes us into the formless realm. It draws the sound current up the spine, through the chakras and out the top of the head. *Om* also means 'yes' and is said to be the sound of assent. It allows us to harmonize with the forces of the universe externally and with our own nature internally. It attunes us to the cosmic reality and the sacred vibratory patterns that arise from it.

Relative to Ayurvedic medicine, *Om* helps harmonize the body, prana, mind, and senses with the higher Self, Atman or Divine presence within. It connects us with the cosmic healing prana. It brings a deep healing energy into the subconscious mind to remove negative emotions, addictions and compulsions. Relative to Vedic astrology, *Om* is the sound of the Sun and of the higher light behind all the stars and planets. In Vastu, *Om* can clear the energy in the home or dwelling and bring in Divine light, grace, and knowledge.

Relative to other mantras, *Om* is often used to begin them. It clears the mind for other mantras to work, opens us up to the higher consciousness, and brings a deeper prana into the mantra. Without first chanting *Om*, it is said that other mantras may not be effective. Whole *Upanishads* and entire books have been written about it.

Aim̐

After *Om̐*, *Aim̐* (pronounced 'aym') is the next most common bija mantra. *Aim̐* is the feminine counterpart of *Om̐* and often follows *Om̐* in various chants. *Om̐* and *Aim̐* are the two main compound vowel mantras, *A* plus *U* making *Om̐* (and *Aum̐*) and *A* plus *I* making *Aim̐*. As such, together they comprehend all sounds.

As *Om̐* is the unmanifest or expansive aspect of primal sound, *Aim̐* is the manifest or directed form. As *Om̐* serves to clear the mental field, *Aim̐* helps us focus the mind and heart in a particular manner. As *Om̐* is the word that is heard, *Aim̐* is the word that is seen. As *Om̐* is the supreme Purusha or cosmic masculine force, *Aim̐* is *Adya Shakti*, the supreme Shakti or cosmic feminine force. That is why we find the mantra *Aim̐* in so many different mantras to the Goddess or Divine Mother.

More specifically, *Aim̐* is the seed mantra of Sarasvati, the Goddess of knowledge and speech, the consort of Lord Brahma, the Creator in the Hindu trinity of great Gods. As such, *Aim̐* aids us in learning, art, expression and communication and is good for promoting learning and education generally.

Aim̐ is also the mantra of the guru and helps us access all higher knowledge. It can be used to call or to invoke wisdom and understanding. It indicates motivation, direction and will-power. It can orient us toward whatever we are seeking. It increases concentration of mind and awakens our higher intelligence (Buddhi). Relative to other mantras, *Aim̐* is often used to direct our awareness or intention to the deity, to function as our call to draw in the higher knowledge so the mantra can work.

In terms of Ayurveda, *Aim̐* strengthens the voice and the vocal chords. It helps open the lungs and clear the senses. Astrologically, *Aim̐* connects to the planet Mercury and to some extent the Moon, both planets that govern speech and expression. For Vastu, *Aim̐* will bring creativity and learning into the dwelling, particularly for studies, libraries and classrooms.

Hrīm

After *Om* and *Aim*, *Hrīm* (pronounced 'hreem') is probably the most commonly used bija mantra. It is composed of the sound-*Ha*, which indicates prana, space and light, with the sound-*Ra*, which indicates fire, light and dharma, and the sound- *ī*, which indicates energy, focus and motivation.

Hrīm is the prime mantra of the Goddess in all of her three main powers of creation, preservation and destruction, and so is the main Shakti mantra, with a more specific application than *Aim*. It is said to be the Shakti bija and to be equivalent to *Om* for the Goddess. More specifically, it relates to Parvati or Shakti, the consort of Shiva, who is the destroyer/transformer among the great trinity of deities.

Hrīm is a mantra of magical force, captivation and empowerment. It can be used relative to any deity or object whose presence we wish to access at the level of the heart. It brings about joy, ecstasy and bliss. *Hrīm* both purifies and exalts us in our inner quest, humbling us before the Divine power so that it can enter into our hearts.

Hrīm is a specific mantra for the heart (hridaya in Sanskrit) on all levels, whether the spiritual heart, the heart chakra, the emotional heart or the heart as a physical organ. It energizes the heart, provides warmth, and allows for both deep feeling and deep thought.

In terms of Ayurveda, *Hrīm* can be used to counter heart disease of all types, aiding in longevity and rejuvenation. More specifically, it helps promote the pranic and functional aspect of the heart and with it the power of circulation of the blood, the lungs and the nervous system. It has generally Pitta (fiery) energy but some Vata (air) energy as well, stimulating the higher pranas and emotions. In terms of Vedic astrology, *Hrīm* relates to the Sun, the planet of the heart, and helps promotes solar energy, expression and charisma.

Hrīm is usually a soft mantra but can also be harsh. As a soft mantra, it increases the finer energies of the heart. As a harsh mantra, it can be used to hypnotize or captivate, to dissolve or to carry away.

Śrīm

Śrīm (pronounced 'shreem') is one of the most commonly used mantras because it is probably the most benefic of all sounds, drawing to us all that is good, helpful and promoting of positive growth and development. More specifically, *Śrīm* is the seed mantra of Lakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity and abundance, and the consort of Lord Vishnu, the preserver in the Hindu trinity of great Gods, and brings Lakshmi's many blessings. *Śrīm* is also called 'Rama bija' and is used in the worship of Lord Rama, the avatar of dharma.

Śrīm is the mantra of faith, devotion, refuge and surrender. It can be used to take refuge in or express devotion to any deity, helping us to gain its favor and grace. *Śrīm* relates to the heart in its feeling aspect, whereas *Hrīm* relates to the pranic or functional aspect of the heart.

Īrī means splendor in Sanskrit, like the beautiful light of the Moon. *Śrīm* is often used along with *Hrīm*. As *Hrīm* is solar, *Śrīm* is lunar. *Śrīm* relates to the Moon in Vedic astrology and promotes a kind of lunar energy, Soma and beauty overall. Yet it is also used for other benefic planets like Venus and Jupiter, promoting their positive energies.

Relative to Ayurveda, *Śrīm* is mainly a Kapha (watery and earthy) mantra for improving health, happiness, fertility, love and calmness of mind. Yet it does have some secondary Pitta (fire) qualities and improves our glow, luster and light. It is particularly important for women's health and brings proper function and circulation to the female reproductive system. *Śrīm* has a soothing effect on the mind and emotions, allowing us to surrender to Divine grace and take refuge in the higher powers.

Krīm

Krīm (pronounced 'kreem') is the first and most important of the consonant mantras, the mantras that begin with a hard consonant rather than a vowel or sibilant. *Krīm* begins with *Ka*, the first of the Sanskrit consonants that indicates manifest prana and the initial phase of energy. To this it adds the *Ra*-sound or seed of fire, the *Ī*-sound

or focusing power as in the other Shakti mantras. It creates light and intention like *Hrīm* and *Śrīm* but of a more specific, stimulating, and manifesting nature.

Krīm relates to *Vidyut Shakti* or the basic electrical energy behind all things in the universe – the *Kriya Shakti* or power of action on all levels. *Krīm* rules over all manifestation including time, space and action (causation). Through it, we can gain control of our karmas and also move beyond them.

Krīm is the seed mantra of Kali, the Goddess of time and transformation, the consort of Lord Shiva, the Destroyer/Transformer in the Hindu trinity of great deities. Through it, we set Kali's power in motion within us. It serves to energize things to the highest level, which is to raise their level of vibration to the point where we can return to the source.

Krīm is a mantra of work, yoga and transformative energy, and is said to be *Yoga bija* or the 'seed syllable of Yoga practice'. Its inner application is to awaken the Kundalini Shakti to merge our outer nature back into the higher Self. *Krīm* stimulates higher perception and higher prana, promoting the yogic process of pratyahara (internalization of mind) and giving greater power to concentration, meditation and Samadhi. The mantra can connect us with the inner power of any deity we wish to connect to.

In terms of Ayurveda, *Krīm* combines Vata (wind, electrical) energy mantra with Pitta (fire) for an adrenaline type effect. It has a powerful electrical force and stimulates all the pranas and Agnis (biological fires), the circulatory and nervous systems, particularly the heart and the liver. In Vedic astrology, *Krīm* relates primarily to the planet Mars, which is the planet of work and effort. *Krīm* is generally a harsh or strong mantra, particularly as used with *Him*, and so should be recited with care.

Klīm

Klīm (pronounced 'kleem') is the softer, watery or more feminine aspect of *Krīm*. As *Krīm* is electrical or projective, *Klīm* has a magnetic quality that draws things to us. It can also be used to hold or fix things in place.

Klīm carries the *Akarshana Shakti* or the 'power of attraction'. It relates to Krishna, who grants bliss (Ananda) as a deity, and to Sundari, the Goddess of love and beauty. *Klīm* is the seed mantra of desire (Kama Bija) and helps us to achieve our true wishes in life. *Klīm* can be used relative to any deity we would like to access to fulfill our wishes. *Klīm* is the mantra of love and devotion, increasing the love energy within our hearts. For this reason, it is one of the most benefic mantras, and one of the safest and most widely used.

Relative to Ayurveda, *Klīm* is mainly a Kapha (water)-promoting mantra and is particularly good for the reproductive system and for the plasma and skin. It promotes *Kledaka Kapha* (the digestive fluids of the stomach), increasing our capacity for nourishment. Most importantly, it is specific for *Tarpaka Kapha*, the Soma of the brain that promotes well-being, soothing the nerves and calming the heart. It strengthens the immune system and brings contentment to the entire being. *Klīm* is not specifically an astrological mantra, but is sometimes used for Venus or the Moon. For Vastu, it can bring the energy of Divine love and beauty into the dwelling.

Klīm can have a harsh side as well. It can be used to fix, to stop or to nail down, or to hold things under the power of wishes, though such usage is not as common as its benefic application.

Strīm

Strīm (pronounced 'strem') contains the *Sa*-sound of stability, the *Ta*-sound which gives extension, and the *ī*-vowel that provides energy, direction and motivation. It is connected to root meanings such as to stand, to spread, to take a step, to rise or traverse from one level to another. It brings about an expansion and spreading of energy that can follow a horizontal expansion, a vertical ascent, or a spiral movement.

Strīm is said to be *Shanti bija* or the 'seed syllable of peace' and carries the Shakti of Sat or Pure being. *Strī* in Sanskrit also means a woman. The mantra *Strīm* provides the power of the Divine feminine (Stri-Shakti) to give birth, to nourish, to protect and to guide. It is similar to *Śrīm* in sound qualities but stronger and more stabilizing in its

effects. It can be used to increase Shakti or feminine energy in oneself or in one's outer activity.

Strīm is another general mantra of the Goddess, particularly in her higher knowledge form. *Strīm* can be used relative to any deity whose energy we wish to expand or project in a creative manner. It grants poetic and artistic powers, as well as powers of argument, debate and law.

Strīm is the seed mantra of the Hindu Goddess Tara (not the Buddhist Tara, who is a different deity approached with different mantras). Hindu Tara is connected to Durga, who is often called Durga-Tara, as a protective and fiery form of the Goddess. She is the high priestess and represents the inner knowledge and the insight of the guru, particularly the power of the Word. Tara controls the weapons of the Gods, particularly the *Trishula* or trident of Lord Shiva. Tara also relates to the mantra *Om*, and *Strīm* is the means through which *Om* takes us across all difficulties.

Tara in astrological symbolism is the wife or feminine form of Brihaspati, the planet Jupiter. She is the great star Goddess associated with the star Aldeberan (the Vedic star Rohini), the bright red star of the constellation Taurus. As Brihaspati/Jupiter is the high priest or guru of the Gods, Tara is the high priestess of the heavens. *Strīm* as the mantra of the Star Goddess attunes us to the benefic powers of the stars and Nakshatras and gives us astrological knowledge.

In terms of Ayurveda, *Strīm* is important as a healing and empowering mantra for women, and can aid in childbirth and can promote women's health generally, strengthening the heart, reproductive system, circulatory system and bones.

Hūm

Hūm (pronounced 'hoom') is one of the most important Sanskrit mantras along with *Om*, *Aim* and *Hrīm*. It is said to be the Pranava or primal sound of Lord Shiva, the transformative aspect of the Divine Trinity.

Hūm is the main Agni or fire mantra and can help enkindle fire in all of its forms from the digestive fire to the Pranic fire to the fire of the consciousness. It refers to a

gaseous type of fire and so can be connected with lightning and to the power of prana and the breath. *Hūm* is also a weapon and protection mantra and can be used to destroy negativity with its lightning fire. It can be used to direct a fiery explosive energy with other mantras. It is also called *Krodha bija* or the 'seed sound of wrath'. It is the mantra that Lord Shiva uses to project the fire from his third eye that destroys all negativity and burns up all desires.

Hūm with a long vowel sound has a similar meaning but a more feminine and Shakti quality. It relates to fierce forms of the Goddess like Kali, Chandi and Chhinnamasta. It has the power to cut off and indicates the sword. However, *Hūm* has a soft potential as well. It is said to be the *Dhenu bija*, the 'seed sound of the Mother cow', calling its calf back to it. It calls out and invokes, while at the same time challenging and warding off. *Hūm* is used specifically for raising the Kundalini, particularly combining the mantra with the breath, and the fixing of the gaze at the navel, the seat of the digestive fire.

Relative to Ayurveda, *Hūm* increases Prana, Tejas and Pitta, setting all our fiery energies in motion from the digestive fire to the fire of the mind. Both strengthen the immune system particularly against any active pathogenic attacks, but as harsh mantras require some care in application.

Astrologically, *Hūm* relates to fiery planets like the Sun, Mars or Ketu and increase their fiery properties. They are particularly good for bringing in the higher perceptive power of Ketu, which is a great aid in astrological research, spiritual healing and Yoga. Relative to Vastu, they can be used to create a protective energy shield around one's dwelling.