

## How to Sound the Bija Mantras for the Chakras

“With the syllable Aum as their sole support, the wise person attains that which is peaceful, unageing, deathless, fearless - the Supreme.” - Atharva Veda, Prasna Upanishad 5.7.

The *Yogatattva Upanishad* (slokas 83–101) states that the five lower chakras are related to the five elements. There are said to be five great elements (*bhutas*) that make up the world; earth (*prithivi*), water (*apas/jala*), fire (*tejas/agni*), air (*vayu*) and ether (*akasha*).

Each element has a bija mantra associated with it, when this mantra is sounded it resonates in the chakra and purifies the nadis (subtle channels of energy). The nadis link the higher spiritual aspects of our being with our mind, emotions and our body.

The third eye chakra is created from ‘*Mahattva*’, the great or supreme element out of which all the other elements are formed. The bija mantra for the Third Eye Chakra is AUM.

The Crown Chakra is beyond all elements and contains all sounds. The mantra AUM is generally used for this chakra as AUM is the source of all sounds and is the primal cosmic sound *Anahata Nada*.

LAM for Muladhara the Base Chakra - Earth Element - Dental Position  
VAM for Swadhisthana the Sacral Chakra - Water Element - Labial Position  
RAM for Manipura the Solar Plexus Chakra - Fire Element - Cerebral Position  
YAM for Anahata the Heart Chakra - Air Element - Palatal Position  
HAM for Vishuddha the Throat Chakra - Akasha Element - Guttural Position  
AUM for Ajna the Third Eye Chakra - Mahatattva  
AUM for Sahasrara the Crown Chakra

The bija mantras for the chakras are formed from the semi-vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet YA, RA, LA, VA. They are called ‘*antahstha*’ or intermediate sounds in Sanskrit.

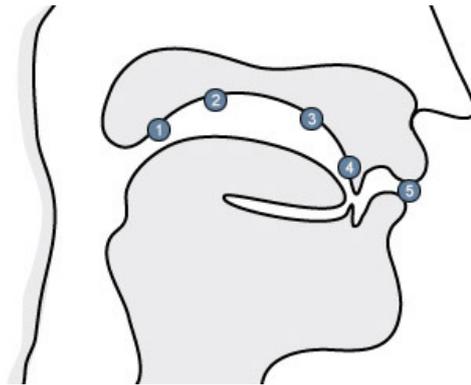
David Frawley says – “Intermediating between vowels and consonants in their energetic quality, semi-vowels reflect *prana* or energy that mediates between the formless realm and the realm of form.”

“These Prana mantras are employed in ‘*Prana-Pratishtha*’ a ritual performed in Hindu temples in order to bring the actual spirit of the deity into the object of worship.”

## Sanskrit Alphabet

The semi-vowels are produced using the five tongue positions used in the Sanskrit Alphabet. As we sound the bija mantras the five different tongue positions stimulate the five elements balancing the chakras.

In yogic philosophy it is said that there are 72,000 nadis (subtle energy channels) in the body. When we chant in Sanskrit we are stimulating the 84 reflex points in the mouth. There are said to be 64 reflex points in the hard palate and 20 in the soft palate, and these reflex points relate to the various nadis. When we chant in Sanskrit we awaken dormant parts of the brain and circulate energy through the body.



**1. Guttural** – The sound comes from the back of the throat. The back of the tongue is placed against the lower soft palate (this tongue position is also called Velar).

**2. Cerebral** – The tip of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth (this tongue position is also called Retroflex or Lingual).

**3. Palatal** – The tongue is placed flatly against the upper soft palate.

**4. Dental** – The tongue is placed behind the upper teeth.

**5. Labial** – The sound is made by the lips (this tongue position is also called Glottal).

Each of the semivowels has a different point of pronunciation: YA uses the hard palate, RA is a retroflex consonant, and LA uses the teeth. VA mainly uses the lips, but it also requires the use of the teeth. VA is halfway between the English "va" and "wa." The sound HA comes from the back of the throat.

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 is produced by its trunk rather than its vocal chords.

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

## **Bija Mantras**

Each element is associated with a different symbol/shape. Visualising this symbol/shape helps to deepen our connection with the element.

### **LAM – Base Chakra**

Visualise a square shape in the base chakra. 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 of the two sounds is the same for all the bija mantras

The NG 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.

### **VAM – Sacral Chakra**

Visualise a circular shape in the sacral chakra. 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.

### **RAM – Solar Plexus Chakra**

Visualise a triangular shape in the solar plexus chakra. 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.

### **YAM – Heart Chakra**

Visualise a six-pointed star in the heart chakra. 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.

### **HAM – Throat Chakra**

Visualise a crescent shape in the throat chakra. 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.

### **AUM – Third Eye Chakra**

Visualise a circle with two petals on either side. The bija mantra AUM is created from three sounds, A, U and M. The mantra AUM is focused in the third eye chakra.

### **AUM – Crown Chakra**

The sounds associated with this chakra are all the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. The mantra 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

David Frawley - Inner Tantric Yoga: Working with the Universal Shakti - Inner Lotus Press, September 2008

Johari, H. Chakras - Energy Centers of Transformation - Destiny Books, Rochester, NY, 2000.

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Discover Sanskrit

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