SELECTING AND PERFECTING MANTRAS IN HINDU TANTRISM

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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 Kulārṇava-tantra (= 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 mantrākṣātra had been fully developed and were widely accepted. Among other texts consulted were the Sāradātīlakatāntra (= ŠT) by Laksmanā Deśikendra with Rāghavabhātta’s commentary entitled Padārthārādārśa (= PA) (a.d. 1494), the Mantramohodadhi (= MM) by Mahādhara (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 (anuṣvāra), 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. dvī is derived from Durgā and gam from Gaṇeṣa. 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 Gaṇeṣa:

\[ \text{oṁ śrīṁ hṛṁ klīṁ glauṁ gam gauṇapataye varavarada sarvañjanam ma vaśam ānaya svāhā!} \]

’Oṁ śrīṁ hṛṁ klīṁ glauṁ gam, svāhā to Gaṇapati, O best boon-giver, bring everyone under my control.’

The main formula has been prefixed with several seed syllables: the syllable oṁ, the praṇava, also called ‘saviour’ (tāra); śrīṁ, the seed syllable of Śrī or Lakṣmī; hṛṁ, the seed syllable of Ḥrī or Māyā; klīṁ, the seed syllable of Kāma; glauṁ, the seed syllable of the earth element; and gam, the seed syllable of Gaṇeṣa. Mantras usually appear in a coded language in Tantric texts in order to guard their secrecy. Explanations by commentators and special Tantric ‘dictionaries’ (mantrābhidhāna, bijānighāntu, uddhārakoṣa) help to understand the code.³

Similar to the Vedic anukramanikās, 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

² According to MM, 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—pinda, 2 syllables—karatā, 3–9 syllables—bīja, 10–20 syllables—mantra, more than 20 syllables—mālāmantra. For the same distinction between bīja, mantra and mālāmantra, cf. Agni-Pūrāṇa, 293.1–2ab.
³ Cf. e.g., the lists of seed syllables and their symbolic meaning in texts like Mantrābhidhāna, Bijānighāntu, etc., in Tantrābhidhāna (ed. T. Vidyārātra, Calcutta/London, 1913) and Daksināmātāramuni’s Uddhārakoṣa (ed. T. B. Krishnamurti Sastri, Thanjavur, 1985).
presiding deity; and (4) the application or purpose for which it is used (viṇīyoga). In the case of longer mantras the texts often specify (5) the seed (biṣa), i.e. the short form of the mantra, which is often its initial part, (6) the energy (śakti), usually the middle part, and (7) the wedge (kīlaka), usually the final 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 (āhāna) of the mantra's presiding deity.

1. The selection of the mantra

A mantra should be received from a preceptor (guru) in an initiation (dikṣā) ritual. A mantra heard accidentally or taken from a book is not only believed to be useless, but also harmful to the practitioner. 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

![Diagram](image)

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 Manoranā 8, 16–9, 20 on TB, 1.43cd–48ab.
The syllables of the alphabet from a to kṣa 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.\(^\text{7}\)

The second diagram is the aśadama-cakra, a diagram of twelve squares, named after the syllables a-ka-da-ma written in the upper central square.\(^\text{9}\)

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+---------------------+---------------------+---------------------+
| अःधम                | अकहम                | आक्षदम                |
| अंतव                | अक्षव                | आक्षतव                |
| ओमफ                | ओमघफ                | उड्धव                  |
| ओझपह                | एछघष                | ऊपदश                  |
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Fig. 2.

Beginning with the square which contains the first letter of the person's name,\(^\text{10}\) 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 naksatrat-cakra, where the syllables of the alphabet are assigned to the twenty-seven lunar mansions.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^\text{7}\) cf. the instructions in TR, 1.48b and ST, 2.129c.

\(^\text{8}\) cf. the statements in KT, 15.81.

\(^\text{9}\) For this cakra, cf. KT, 15.85–6. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed on the basis of contemporary prints.

\(^\text{10}\) cf. the instructions in MMD, 24.22.

\(^\text{11}\) For this cakra, cf. KT, 15, 87–8. The illustration depicts the diagram reconstructed on the basis of contemporary prints.
Beginning with the lunar mansion of one's birth, one assigns the categories (1) birth; (2) wealth; (3) calamity; (4) welfare; (5) opponent; (6) fulfills; (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), the mantra should be rejected; all other squares are auspicious.

The fourth diagram is the raśi-cakra where the syllables of the alphabet are assigned to the zodiac signs from Aries to Pisces.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{12}\) cf. the statements in PAI, 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 PAI, 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*), (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 *rnidhani-cakra*, where numbers are assigned to letters of the person’s name and to the letters of the mantra.\(^{16}\)

![Diagram](attachment:image.png)

**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’ (*rnin*) and the smaller one ‘creditor’ (*dhani*). A mantra which is *rnin* is a debtor from previous lives. According to belief, 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

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\(^{14}\) 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 *PA*, 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 *PA*, 110, 9-22.

\(^{17}\) cf. the statements in *TR*, 1,56ed-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.\textsuperscript{13}

The sixth diagram is the kulakula-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).\textsuperscript{19} The fifty syllables of the alphabet are classified according to the five elements:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{क्रम} & \textbf{क्षन} & \textbf{भू} & \textbf{जल} & \textbf{आकाश} \\
\hline
अ & आ & ए & क & घ & व & ल & ल & ल & अ & अ & अ & अ & अ \\
इ & ई & उ & ह & ग & झ & झ & झ & झ & झ & झ & झ & झ \\
ऋ & ऋ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ & एँ \\
ॠ & ॠ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ & उँ \\
ऌ & ऌ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ & हँ \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Fig. 6.}
\end{figure}

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 \textit{hrim}, \textit{klm} or \textit{srin} to the mantra to remove the defect, or prefix and append the syllable \textit{om}.\textsuperscript{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 Narasimha.\textsuperscript{21} A mantra is particularly suitable when a person has a special devotion for and attraction to it.\textsuperscript{22} If a person out of ignorance has accepted a mantra that turns out to be inimical (\textit{uri}), this mantra is abandoned in a special ritual which removes the dangers caused by its repetition.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{13} cf. the statements in \textit{Pa}, 110, 28–9.

\textsuperscript{19} For this cakra, cf. \textit{KT}, 15.94–6.

\textsuperscript{20} cf. the statements in \textit{MMD}, 24.72–3.

\textsuperscript{21} cf. the statements in \textit{KT}, 15.97–9 and \textit{MMD}, 24.57–61.

\textsuperscript{22} cf. the remark in \textit{MMD}, 24.74.

\textsuperscript{23} cf. the description of the ritual in \textit{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 (Kalārṇavatantra 15.65–69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Defect中文</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘obstructed’ (śūrdha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘having false syllables’ (kūṭāksara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘perplexed’ (mugdha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘bound’ (badha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>‘angry’ (kruddha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘broken’ (bheda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>‘young’ (bāla)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>‘adolescent’ (kumāra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘youthful’ (yuvaka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>‘grown up’ (prādhya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>‘old’ (yuddha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>‘proud’ (garvita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>‘restrained’ (stambhita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>‘insensible’ (mūrccha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>‘intoxicated’ (mattta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>‘tied’ (kīirta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>‘broken’ (khandita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>‘deceitful’ (sātha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>‘slow’ (manda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>‘turning the face away’ (parāmukha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>‘cut’ (chīna)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>‘dead’ (badhira)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>‘blind’ (andha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>‘inanimate’ (acetana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>‘servile’ (kīṁkara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>‘hungry’ (kṣudhita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>‘immobilized’ (stabthā)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>‘fallen from its place’ (sthūnabhrasṭa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>‘tormented’ (pīḍita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>‘without affection’ (niḥsneha)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These defects are removed by performing the yoni mudrā,25 one of the mudrās of Ḫathayoga, similar to anal contraction named mūlabandha, which is accompanied in this case by visualizing the syllables of the mantra ascending from the lowest center, the mūla ādi, to the crown of the head, the mūla śāṇā.

24 ST, 2.64–70 (also in Bhaktatrasārā 344, 20–28 and N平行, 64, 14–19) lists 49 defects; TR, 1.75–81 and Kaudāvālīnityaya, 17.10–12 each give a list of 25 defects. These defects are explained in detail in ST, 2.71–98 (also in Bhaktatrasārā, 344, 29–346, 18 and N平行, 64, 20–57) and the PĀ and VT (1, 30 ff) which comment on this passage.

25 According to TR, 1.82a,b the energy of the mantra (mantravīrya) is connected (with that of the practitioners, cf. Manorāmā 16, 16–18) by performing the yoni mudrā. For mantravīrya, cf. TR, 35.67 with the Manorāmā.
brahmārandhra. The performer\textsuperscript{26} 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 brahmārandhra to the mūlādhārā-cakra.\textsuperscript{27}

Another method for removing these defects consists of performing the purificatory rites (sāmśkāra) 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 ST, 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.\textsuperscript{28}

![Fig. 7.](image)

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

\textsuperscript{26} According to TR, 1.73ab it is the preceptor who removes these defects before transmitting the mantra.

\textsuperscript{27} cf. the description in PĀ, 95, 14–16.

\textsuperscript{28} Text such as MMD, 24.98cd–101 and Paramāṇanda-tantra, 21.63cd–67 describe the mātrkāyantra in the form of a triangle. The diagram reproduced here is from the edition of the Paramāṇanda-tantra, 525.

\textsuperscript{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.
(2) Giving life (jīvāna): the practitioner recites each syllable of the mantra, prefixed by the syllable om, separately.

(3) Striking (tāḍāna): The practitioner writes down the mantra and sprinkles each syllable with sandal water while reciting yam.

(4) Awakening (bodhāna): the practitioner writes down the mantra and touches it with as many red oleander flowers as there are syllables in the mantra while reciting rām.

(5) Consecrating (abhiṣēka): 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 ṛṣvotttha tree as there are syllables in the mantra.

(6) Cleaning (vimalikaraṇa): the practitioner burns the mantra's three impurities with the recitation of the 'light' mantra, om kram, 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 (tarpana): after reciting the mantra, the practitioner offers water to it by saying: 'I offer water to mantra x'.

(9) Kindling (ādiyana): the practitioner prefixes om hriṃ śrīṃ to the mantra.

(10) Concealing (guptyi): the practitioner retains the mantra and repeats it secretly.\textsuperscript{30}

Analogous to the concept of the two kinds of impurities (aśāuca) 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

\textsuperscript{30} MMD, 24.107ab states that the mantra is prefixed and appended with the syllable hriṃ 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’ (purasācarana/ purusācarāya), 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 (tarpana)
   1/10 the number of japa
4. fire sacrifice (homa)
   1/10 the number of water libations
5. feeding of Brahmmins (brahmaṇaḥbhogaṇa)
   1/10 the number of offerings in the fire.

The first part of the purasācarana, 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 purasācarana 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 1/10 the number of japa; the number of offerings in the fire is 1/10 the number of water libations; the number of Brahmmins fed is 1/10 the number of offerings in the fire. If one part of the purasācarana 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 (upānūṣu) and (3) mental (mānasā).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 Kāsasampītat) 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. 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.

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. 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...'. 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. The syllable kṣa is considered the Meru bead and is not uttered.

Certain solitary places are recommended for the performance of the purāscarama 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.
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’ (pujāsthāna). One should not stay in abandoned temples or ruined buildings as these are believed to be inhabited by evil spirits.

A diagram having the shape of a tortoise (kārmacakra) is often employed for selecting an auspicious place within a given area. The space of the house (if the ṣaṅga 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>लक्ष</th>
<th>कङ्गघ</th>
<th>चछजङजङ</th>
<th>अ</th>
<th>अ</th>
<th>इ</th>
<th>ऑ</th>
<th>ऑ</th>
<th>ऋ</th>
<th>ए ए ए</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>शषसह</td>
<td>ठठठठठ</td>
<td>ठठठठठ</td>
<td>ठठठठठ</td>
<td>ठठठठठ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 (dipasthāna) 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 pṛaṣaḍāraṇa. The practitioner should avoid accepting food from others during the time of his practice. 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.

As stated earlier, the purpose of the pṛaṣaḍāraṇa 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

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44 cf. KT, 15.25.
45 cf. KT, 15.30.
46 The kārmacakra is described in numerous texts. Here the description follows TR, 5.88–98 and Subhagānandānātha’s commentary Manorāmā 104, 17–106, 14.
47 For the dipasthāna, e.g. Paramānandatātra, 21.117: tatkārmatya mukham devi dipasthānam prakṛti (amādyante yatra manavo dipasthānam taita su taita)
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. The KT states that the nodes of the heart (brahmagranthi in the anāhatacakra) and the throat (visnugranthi in the viśuddhicakra), which block the rising of the kundalini, are pierced. All limbs of the body are strengthened; tears and bristling hairs arising from joy, possession of the body and stammering speech appear.

If after the performance of the puraścarana 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 puraścarana should be followed.

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 puraścarana. These also include rites falling under the category of black magic (abhicāra), like subjugation (vāśikarana), immobilization (stambhana), eradication (uccāśana) 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:

1. Grathana: The syllables of the name are inserted into those of the mantra one by one; employed in pacification (sānti) rites.

2. Vidartha: The syllables of the name are inserted in between two syllables of the mantra one by one; employed in rites of subjugation (vāśikarana).

3. Sampūṭa: The mantra appears at the beginning and end of the name; according to some authorities it appears in reverse form at the end of the name; employed in rites of immobilization (sāṃstambhana).

4. Rodhana: The mantra appears at the beginning, middle, and end of the name; employed in rites of creating dissonance (viḍvēṣana).

5. Yoga: The mantra appears at the end of the name; employed in rites of eradication (proccāśana).

6. Pallava: The mantra appears at the beginning of the name; employed in rites of liquidation (māraṇa).

Some authorities distinguish three sexes of the mantras used in desire-oriented rites based upon the final syllable(s). Mantras ending in hum and/or phat, 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 namah ("obeisance") are neuter. The ritual application for these mantras accords with the flow of the breath (svāra) in the three most important nādis, pīngalā, idā and suśumṇā. masculine mantras are successfully employed.

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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. ST 23.136-141, ISP, 1.5, 1-7, Tārābhaktisudhākara 369, 8-25, TR, 1.72 and MMD, 25.18 ff. For eleven methods, cf. Netranātra 18, 10-12.
56 For this opinion, cf. PA, 856, 24-5.
57 The erroneous reading in ST, 23.141: mantrasyāṁ bhavet nāmā yogah prōcōdāṁ matah; ante nāmī no bhavet mantraḥ pāllavo māranī matah || has been corrected in PA 857, 7-8 as follows: ante nāmī no bhavet mantraḥ yogah prōcōdāṁ matah | mantrasyāṁ bhavet nāmā pāllavo māranī matah ||
58 For the three sexes of mantras, cf. e.g. KT, 16.60-43, ST, 2.57cd-63 (the same passage occurs in Tārābhaktisudhākara 370, 9-21) and MMD, 24.93-5ab.
59 For this practice as recorded in Agni-Purana, 293.8, cf. Padoux (1978a) and for the significance of different prāntī rhythms according to the svarasāstra, cf. e.g. the Śivaraṇodaya.
in 'cruel rites', like liquidation. The proper time to awaken the energy of masculine mantras is while the breath moves through the right nostril where the nādi pīṇgālā, associated with the sun and masculine principle, terminates. Feminine mantras should be used in pacification rites, at the time when the prāna moves through the left nostril where the nādi 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 prāna, flowing through the susūmna 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, akadūna-cakra, naksattra-cakra, rāsi-cakra, rūdhansi-cakra and kulākula-cakra. The yonimudrā, similar to the anal contraction mūlādhāra, accompanied by a visualization, or the ten purificatory rites (ṣaṃskāra), 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' (puraśkaraṇa/puraśkaryā), 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 (tarpāna), (4) fire sacrifice (homa) and (5) feeding of Brahmins (brāhmaṇa abhojana). An auspicious place for this ritual is selected with the help of the tortoise diagram (kūrma-cakra) 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 (kārma) rites. The victim's name can be associated with the mantra in six different ways, viz. grathana, vidarbhana, samputa, 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 pīṇgālā, idā and susūmna nādīs.41

ABBREVIATIONS

Kauḷāvalinīyuma = Kauḷāvali. Ed. A. Avalon, Delhi, 1985. (Repr.)
Manorūmā See TR.
MMD = Mantramahāduḥliḥ saṃskāraḥ. Bombay, 1983. (Repr.)
PA = Padārthahāśa by Rāgahavadhaṣṭa. See ST.

40 This follows the statements in KT, 16, 42–43.
41 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.
REFERENCES


