

OK, time for true confessions. I have a love affair with the *OM Namah Shivaya* chant (& Shiva). Like anyone with an affair I hoped this one would go unnoticed. However, at the flash Urs of Pir Moineddin this past February 27th (thank you, Murshid Mariam and Hassan Raven Wolf for holding the space) one of the initial sharing was a short video of pictures of Pir Moineddin with him chanting *Oma Namah Shivaya* resonating in the background ([listen here](#)). When I asked Murshid Mariam if Pir Moineddin had a special attunement to this chant, she replied, he had an attunement to many chants, especially *Zikr*, *Ram Nam* and *Oma Namah Shivaya*.

I was first introduced to this chant through Radha Conrad, my initial teacher in spiritual psychology. I studied with her for 10 years with weekly sessions, couple sessions and numerous retreats a year. She integrated in her background with Siddha yoga, (a lineage that holds the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism) along with the Diamond Heart Work and her natural affinity as gestalt therapist. I remember morning after morning engaging in this chant for 20-25 minutes and then sitting in silence for another 35-40 minutes bathing my inner selves in the presence of Shiva. As a psychiatrist, I view Shiva as an archetype that embodies consciousness, expanding to the whole universe and the transformer of poison into nectar.

When it was being published, I subscribed to the magazine *Darshan*, a wonderful inter-spiritual offering from the Siddha Yoga lineage. There was an eight-part series by Professor Ortega Muller on this chant, which I read once a year. The following musings were mainly inspired by his series of articles.



The chant *Om Namah Shivaya* is a love song, to ourselves. A love song we sing to our own deepest inner nature. In this song we recognize that we are the source, like a hologram, a piece of God that also represents the whole. In the Siddha yoga lineage (from which this chant comes) it is considered to be the king of all mantras. The intelligent field of conscious energy of which the universe is made, and concentrates into the dense form we know of as matter, is represented by the god Shiva. Shiva is the totality.

Since the ancient Siddhas did not have the language and metaphors of modern physics, they represented the unified field of energy of the cosmos through the metaphors they could grasp, metaphors which allowed them to experience this vast field of conscious energy of which we are an interconnected part of. Their metaphor was the god Shiva. Through deep meditation they experienced the universe as Shiva, and themselves as Shiva. Shiva was said to dwell in the heart and be the size of a thumb and be the whole universe! When we chant this mantra, we are allowing the sound vibration tune into our true self, which is a manifestation of the universal energy field condensed into the unique and precious mystery of ourselves. The sound vibration of the mantra is said to be a very pure expression of our deepest nature.

The mantra is said to be the five-syllable mantra, *na ma si va ya*. In exploring the manifestations of the absolute the number five comes up. Five toes, fingers, senses, elements, acts, etc. Shiva is said to have five actions, to create, to maintain, to destroy, to conceal, and to gracefully reveal. This mantra purifies our actions and behaviors tuning them to the pure actions of Shiva, of the source. Our five senses of smelling, tasting, seeing, feeling, and hearing are also purified and refined. The different syllables of the chant are said to purify the five elements of our being and the chakras, or centers of subtle energies. The five elements are not literal elements like those of the periodic table, but fundamental ways that we and the world are structured. The solidity of earth, the liquidity of water, the fieriness of fire, the gaseous and invisible nature of air, and lastly ether or the quality of space. The alchemical process of chanting refines and purifies these elements or aspects of our being.

*Om* is said to be the heart of Lord Shiva. *Om* resonates in the head in the sixth chakra, located in the center of the forehead. It is also referred to as the third eye center. The emotional issues associated with it focus on the right to see. The sixth chakra is also the place of the guru (the one who sheds light on the darkness, another manifestation of our own deep nature) So the first part of the chant keys us into seeing the absolute on very refined levels.

*Na ma si va ya*. "*Na* represents earth, *ma* water, *si* fire, *va* air, and *ya* ether. The *na* drops into the first chakra, the foundation place which embodies earthiness and solidity and has a lot to do with survival issues on an emotional level, the right to belong and to have. It is found at the base of the spine between the anus and genitals. The *ma* rises to the second chakra, represented by the water element and issues around sexuality on an emotional level, the right to feel and to desire. It is located a little below the navel. The *si* rises to the third chakra or jeweled city and is located in the solar plexus. The element is fire and emotional issues center around themes of personal power, the right to act and stand in one's power. The *va* rises a little further to the fourth chakra or heart center. The element is air. This chakra is the first to move beyond the lower three densities of the animal soul and allows an opening to love, the right to love and be loved. The *ya* resonates in the fifth chakra or throat center, and is associated with the ether and space. It often deals with issues around expression, the right to speak and be heard.

In the chant the energy starts in the highest center, resting in the source and then dips down and rises up, purifying the elements, the chakras, and the emotional issues surrounding them. When I chant this mantra, I often visualize myself in front of me and sing the mantra lovingly to myself.

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References: *Play of Consciousness: A Spiritual Autobiography*, by Swami Muktananda; Talks on the Omá Namah Shivay Mantra, by Professor Muller Ortega in a course, “*The King of Mantra*” given at Shree Muktananda Ashram in December 1991; Image: internet I wish I knew the artist!