

Sanskrit Mantras as a Medium Between the Human and The Divine

Agita Baltgalve

Director of the Center of Indian Studies and Culture
Associate Professor of the University of Latvia

Abstract

In India and Tibet, like in many ancient cultures, literary and religious heritage was usually handed down in oral form. This is one of the main reasons, why sound and word were attached a great importance. The repetition of the sacred phrases – *mantras* grew to play a crucial role both in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. Mantras represent one of the oldest religious meditation forms, and they function as a medium leading the human mind to the divine truth. These sacred phrases, originating from Indian Vedic culture, were later inherited in Tibet Tantric Buddhism, where they were related to definite deities.

Aryans who came from the North of India, present-day Iranian regions considered themselves as divine people and justified their superiority on the bases of their euphonic and grammatically complex ritual language – *Sanskrit*. It was juxtaposed to the common speech – Dravidian dialects of Central India. Aryans excelled their culture, calling local people *barbarians* who in their opinion had no access to the highest truth, because they could not use the medium of the divine speech.

Tibetan Buddhists inherited the ritual reciting practice of definite Sanskrit syllables and also distinguished them from all other words. Mantras were seen as a medium to combine micro-cosmos of humans with the all-embracing and divine macro-cosmos, for they did not concern with the conventional reality and did not differentiate between subject and object. They referred to the absolute value of things, transcending relativity and dualism.

The author approaches the research subject from two different aspects: firstly, there is a historical overview of the development of Sanskrit alphabet and phonemes and, secondly, an explanation of symbolical and sacred meaning from a philosophical and religious point of view. The article consists of three parts – the first one traces back origins, the second one explains the practice and the third one gives examples of definite phrases.

Keywords: Religion, Language History, Phonetics, Sanskrit, India, Tibet.

Divine origins of phonemes and letters

Words reveal human thoughts and the spiritual world of men. Therefore the role of sound, speech and language is emphasized in many cultures, but holy words and phrases in the form of prayers play central role in many religions and religious teachings. It is believed that the world arose from the sound. The Bible states that „*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” (John 1: 1). In ancient India the word was called the Mother of Gods.¹ Looking at the cultural and spiritual history of mankind, one can conclude that men began to express and identify themselves through folk songs, epic chants, incantations, and oracle spells consisting of strings of sounds and holy words. Sounds and words are often associated with the divine essence, with the manifestation of the eternal truth in the human world. However, each religion tends to see and to explain the divine in a different way. In Indian and Tibetan religious cultures one of the most popular methods to cognize and express the divine truth is the repetition of mantras.

Mantras represent one of the oldest forms of the meditation, and they emerged in the early Indian Vedic culture several thousand years before the Common Era. At that time word and language dominated as basic elements of the religious practice, and mantras were believed to preserve the anteriority of the sacred speech, even to be pre-linguistic and precede the speech, pointing backwards to the source of language, which was said to be the source of all creation². People stemming from regions of present-day North India and Iran called themselves *Āryans*³ and based their superiority on a special ritual language – *Sanskrit*⁴. *Āryans* cultivated a very specific, literary refined and grammatically sophisticated language in contrast to Dravidian dialects used in Central India.⁵

Due to this elitist language and specific rituals they defined themselves as members of higher castes and opposed their cultural zone to that of local residents by calling the latter *barbarians* (Skt. *mlecchas*).⁶ They believed that through this beautified and purified language, specific literary

1 **Padoux, André.** *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras.* Delhi, 1992, p.x.

2 **Wheelock, Wade T.** *Mantra in Vedic and Tantric Ritual.* In: Harvey, Alper (ed.) *Understanding mantras.* Albany, State Univ. of New York Press, 1989, p.120.

3 In Sanskrit: excellent, wise, worthy, noble, respectable and faithful men.

4 *Sanskrita*: put together, completely formed, perfected, purified, sanctified.

5 **Padoux, André.** *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras.* Delhi, 1992, p.xv.

6 **Cardona, George.** *On Attitudes towards Language in Ancient India.* In: Mair, Victor H. (ed.) *Sino-Platonic Papers.* Nr.15, 1990, p.1, 5.

and grammatical forms they could gain access to the highest truth. Those people who performed rituals using this specific language were said to enjoy the grace and mercy of gods and to become sages. But according to the opinion of Āryans, ordinary people who spoke only Indian colloquial dialects could not contact gods and could not disclose the divine truth.⁷

For a long time Indian religious teachings along with their rituals and sacred words were handed down in oral form. This is also one of reasons why orally uttered words and phrases gained a sacred value and played a decisive role in Hinduism and Buddhism. Only much later Sanskrit was written down in so-called *Devanāgarī* script that can be translated as *divine city writing*. Indian Vedic literature was characterized by two key elements: *shruti* (that what is heard) and *smṛiti* (that what is remembered). The first term characterized main Vedas, for it is believed that they were created by wise men who could perceive the absolute truth. The second term referred to writings by different authors who had no divine experience. Mantras' syllables were also considered to be divine words revealed by wise men who could hear the speech of gods.⁸

In Indian tradition sound, language and music are clearly associated with the female procreation principle, which was one of central religious topics since Rig-Vedic period. In the „Brāhmana of a hundred ways” from the White Yajur-Veda there is a legend about the language as a girl who first belonged to demons. But then sages kidnapped the girl and demons ultimately lost their power because of the loss of the language, they were left with only the ordinary local dialects.⁹ The Sanskrit word *vāk* can be translated as *speech, word, language, tone of voice* and its gender is feminine. In Rig-Veda *vāk* often refers to the divine power. Elsewhere it is correlated with Goddess Sarasvatī who is considered to be either the consort of creator God Brahma or his speech. She has many functions and manifestations, also being the goddess of literary eloquence and learning, as well as the guardian of art and music who leads people to the divine revelation.¹⁰ Later in Tibetan language, sacred culture artifacts and sacred nature sites were added feminine suffixes *-ma* or *-mo*.

In Shaivism and Shaktism there is goddess Shakti – Shiva's consort who also plays a special role related to mantras. She is believed to manifest as a sound of the transcendental power and therefore associated with sounds

7 **Ibid**, p.7, 12.

8 **Huchzermeyer, Wilfried**. Die heiligen Schriften Indiens: Geschichte der Sanskrit-Literatur. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, pp.63-64.

9 **Cardona, George**. *On Attitudes towards Language in Ancient India*. In: Mair, Victor H. (ed.) Sino-Platonic Papers. Nr.15, 1990, p.4.

10 **Padoux, André**. *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*. Delhi, 1992, p.7.

of mantras. One of manifestation forms of Shakti is called *Kundalinī* (the Curled One) referring to the indwelling spiritual energy that can be awakened in order to bestow the divine union upon seekers of truth. According to Yoga-Upanishads Kundalinī is lying coiled at the base of the human spine, represented either as a goddess or as a sleeping serpent waiting to be awaked. This is a dynamic spatial power innate to each person. Usually it is stationary at rest and works as a latent psychic energy potential. But upon joining with Shiva the energy of Shakti is waked and gradually climbs upward the human body and central energetic points – cakras, until the top of the head. By the time she reaches the highest point, the man is liberated from limitation of space and time and conjoins all unconscious energies of six cakras in himself, finally merging with the light source and the absolute truth.¹¹

When Kundalinī awakes and gradually twines up to the neck and tongue, the activity of her divine energy is believed to produce the sound. The sequence of phonemes in Indian Devanagārī and later also Tibetan alphabet reflects this idea. Letters are ordered according to the formation place of sounds in the human larynx, i.e. from inside to outside and from bottom to top.¹²

Consonants: *guttural* ka, kha, ga, gha, ña
palatal ca, cha, ja, cha, ña
lingual ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṇa
dental ta, tha, da, dha, na
labial pa, pha, ba, bha, ma

Semivowels: *palatal* ya, *lingual* ra, *dental* la, *labial* va

It is believed that exactly this sequence of letters reflect order and harmony of the universe, in meantime generating mental energy in the world of sounds. For this reason Indians attribute the creation of the alphabet to gods and not to humans.¹³

Sanskrit phonemes are called *mātrikā* (little mothers or mother goddesses) and this name refers to a group of seven or eight goddesses of Hinduism. According to Krishna Aryan seven mother goddesses¹⁴ correspond to seven consonant groups; when the vocalic (A) group is added,

11 Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu. Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung. München, Barth, 1987, pp.124-126.

12 Whitney, William Dwight. Sanskrit Grammar: Including Both, the Classical Language and the Older Dialects of Veda and Brāhmaṇa. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1993, pp.2-3; Huchzermeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache: Mantra-Yoga-Linguistik. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.8.

13 Stecher, Christine. Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.94.

14 Sanskrit: saptamātrikās.

the eight mother goddesses¹⁵ come forth.¹⁶ Fifty letters of Devanāgarī alphabet are associated with fifty mātṛikās. They represent the subtle form of letters, therefore people believe that they are infused with the power of gods. Letters make up syllables; syllables are combined in sentences. These are also the basic elements of mantras.¹⁷ Thus the power of mantras derives from the fact that letters of the alphabet are forms of goddess.¹⁸

Both Devanāgarī and Tibetan alphabets are syllabic, and each consonant is automatically followed by the vowel A. Other vowels have to be added extra. Vowel sound A is considered to be the most important one, and it is also a separate letter of the alphabet. The shape of this grapheme can be interpreted as a movement of Kundalinī snake curled up in the form of joining with Shiva. It is believed that after her merging with Shiva other forms of letters and syllables appear.¹⁹

Tantric feminine and masculine aspect can be implied for all 50 Devanāgarī letters as a whole. Vowels are listed first, and they are associated with the masculine energy. They are followed by consonants, which are related to the feminine energy.²⁰ In Buddhist „Kālacakra-Tantra” it is mentioned that vowels correspond to five Buddha-families as well as five basic elements (space, wind, fire, water and earth). They play a distinctive role in the calculation of time periods, as well as in astrological forecasts.²¹

In Hindu Tantrism each letter of the alphabet has its own symbolism. The group of consonants from TA to NA are associated with willpower, the group from PA to MA – with insight, the sibilant SA symbolizes the highest bliss of meditation, but semivowels YA, RA, VA and LA create illusion (Skt. māyā) and cover up the true human nature with mundane affections and worldly knowledge.²²

However, the most important is the symbolic meaning of the special letters *anusvāra*, *anunāsika* and *visarga*, they are associated with the highest divine power. It is said that only due to them all other sounds can appear. The grapheme of *anusvāra* is a point, that of *anunāsika* is a point above a curved line, that of *visarga* – two points one above each other. These signs

15 Sanskrit: ashtamātṛikās.

16 **Aryan, Krishna C.** The Little Goddesses (Matrikas). New Delhi, Rekha Prakashan, 1980, p.9.

17 **Aryan, Krishna C.** The Little Goddesses (Matrikas). New Delhi, Rekha Prakashan, 1980, pp.24-28.

18 **Woodroffe, John.** The Garland of Letters. Madras, Ganesh & Co, 2001, p.103.

19 **Padoux, André.** Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, p.127, 242.

20 **Ibid**, p.154, 293.

21 **Berzin, Alexander.** Kalacakra: Das Rad der Zeit. New York, Barth, 2002, p.63.

22 **Padoux, André.** Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, pp.296-309.

usually stand at the end of phrases and their fading sound symbolizes silence – the sound potential of the absolute quintessence. Anusvāra and anunāsika are nasal sounds, but visarga – a pharyngolaryngeal sound. Visarga sounds like HA and is associated with the breath (Skt. prāna) and the wind (Skt. vāyu). In mantras anunāsika is particularly important, for it consists of a growing crescent line and its M sound expresses a kind of vibration. It is used to write the mantra OM.²³ Anunāsika point is associated with a drop, the first mundane sound OM came out of it, and consequently the whole universe.²⁴

In tantric practices each cakra corresponds to one vowel and one mantra. During the meditation these letters are usually visualized standing upright on lotus petals. For example, the root cakra below the spine corresponds to letter U that indicates the unification of the lowest with the highest. The cakra of solar plexus is associated with the letter O – solemnity; the heart cakra and letter A represent the unity of the universe. On the neck there is E – joy and happiness, but letter I is located on the forehead as a symbol of focusing and determination.²⁵ In different texts and religious denominations the symbolic of letters and syllables as well as their compliance with cakras may vary. Indian Vedic researcher Sri Aurobindo interprets Devanāgarī letters as follows:²⁶

- A – absolute existence;
- U – progressing existence;
- BA – relative existence;
- KA – skills, creation, activity;
- CHA – rapid action, swiftness;
- MA – limits, extreme, conclusion;
- YA – connections, relations;
- LA – love, loveliness;
- RA – vibration, playfulness;
- VA – apparent existence;
- SHA – tightness of the union;
- SA – peace of the union;
- HA – power, strength.

Letters of the alphabet contain potential interactions of all sounds and all sounds. Syllables and words arise from them, hence the origin of all

23 **Ibid**, pp.272-286.

24 **Stecher, Christine**. Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.32.

25 **Ibid**, p 43, 44, 229.

26 **Huchzermeyer, Wilfried** (Hrsg.) Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache: Mantra-Yoga-Linguistik. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, pp.118-119.

mantras and sacred texts ir to be found here, too. In India there is a well known goddess Mālinī who is adorned with a letter thread (Skr. mālā) and who personifies letter combinations into syllables and mantras.²⁷ The symbolism of Devanāgarī alphabet and letters is further extended to mantras which possess also a special ritual and religious value.

Meaning and practice of mantras

In Vedas the word „mantra” usually designates one or more poetic stanzas.²⁸ However, they differ from ordinary words because they are not „products of discursive thought, human wisdom or poetic phantasy, but flash-lights of the eternal truth, seen by those eminent men who have come into a super-sensuous contact with the Unseen”²⁹ Their value is determined by their bless, energy and application in practice. For example, if a ritual is accomplished without recitation of sacred syllables, if painting is painted without prayers, it is like a good work carried out unconsciously, without beneficial thoughts for others. It results in mere automatic karma. On the other hand, if rituals or other activities are accompanied by holy words and mantras, cognizing their positive and divine influence, the practitioner achieves bliss and spiritual happiness.³⁰

In Hindu Tantrism and also Shaivism there is a six-fold cycle (Skr. sadadhvan), which includes three levels associated with sounds (phonemes, words and mantras) and three levels associated with objects (abilities, principles and places of mundane existence). The level of phonemes is the finest one, but the worldly existence – the harshest one. Mantras are classified as the second finest level after 50 alphabet phonemes.³¹

Tibetan Tantric Buddhism has two kinds of practice: 1) the cause vehicle which is explicated in Mahāyāna scriptures – Sūtras and 2) the effect vehicle which refers to Vajrayāna texts – Tantras. Mantras are an integral part of the latter, so the designations *Tantrayāna* (wheel of tantras) and *Mantrayāna* (wheel of mantras) are often used as synonyms. Sometimes they are even merged together and called *Mantra-Tantra* (in Tibetan: sngags-rgyud).³²

27 **Padoux, André.** Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, p.320.

28 **Ibid**, pp.377-378.

29 **Gonda, Jan.** *The Indian Mantra*. In: Oriens., Vol.16, Dec.31, 1963, pp. 244-297, p.247.

30 **Cardona, George.** *On Attitudes towards Language in Ancient India*. In: Mair, Victor H. (ed.) Sino-Platonic Papers. Nr.15, 1990, pp.11-12.

31 **Padoux, André.** Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, from p.220.

32 **Hopkins, Jeffrey** (Hrsg.). *Tantra in Tibet. Das Geheime Mantra des Tsong-ka-pa*, eingeleitet vom 14.Dalai Lama. München, Diederichs, 1999, p.100.

In Tibetan Buddhist ethics there are three kinds of vows: 1) the personal liberation or pratimoksha vow, 2) the vow of enlightened beings or bodhisattvas and 3) the vow of the knowledge holder or tantric vow. The first refers to the moral code of Theravāda monks and leads an individual to his own perfection. The second is related to Bodhisattvas who have potential to become Buddhas, yet out of mercy and love for others, they do not renounce the worldly life, but remain to save all living beings. The third vow is also called „the mysterious way of mantra”, here the spontaneous energy created through the ritual and meditation practice awakens the divine nature of men that is normally abiding in subconscious and neutral state.³³ However, the recitation of mantras is usually more practiced on the preliminary level or so called „generation stage” (Tib. *bskjed-rim*), when practitioners focus on the visualization of deities via shapes, sounds and thoughts of the conventional reality.³⁴

Etymologically there are two most common explanations of the Sanskrit word *mantra*. The first syllable *man* is translated as „mind” (Skr. *manas*). The second syllable *tra* in Vedic scriptures is explained as a suffix of the main word denoting *tool* or *object*. Thus, taken together with the first syllable it means „tool or object of the mind”.³⁵ In Buddhism a more common derivative of the syllable *tra* is „to save” or „to guard”.³⁶ In the translation to Tibetan language we also find this latter meaning – „guardian of the mind” (Tib. *yid-skyob*).³⁷ It means that mantras protect human mind from all forms of negative spiritual influences, such as evil thoughts, fear, greed, envy, passions etc. Tantric Buddhism associates the second syllable also with the divine compassion which saves sentient beings from the cycle of rebirth.³⁸

According to the traditional view there are around 70 million mantras in India, each of them has its own special meaning and usage. The oldest mantras come from the Rig-Vedic times, that is at least 1500 years B.C. French indologist André Padoux defines the mantra as a transcendental form of energy, that is pronounced by living beings. According to him mantras are

33 **Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye**. *Buddhist Ethics*. Ithaka/NY, Snow Lion Publications, 1998, p.23.

34 **Coleman, Graham** (ed.) *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture*. London, Rider, 1993, p.316.

35 **Mittwede, Martin**. *Spirituelles Wörterbuch: Sanskrit-Deutsch*. Heidelberg, Sathya Sai Vereinigung, 2007, p.144.

36 **Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye**. *Buddhist Ethics*. Ithaka/NY, Snow Lion Publications, 1998, p.17.

37 **Coleman, Graham** (ed.) *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture*. London, Rider, 1993, p.343.

38 **Hopkins, Jeffrey** (Hrsg.). *Tantra in Tibet. Das Geheime Mantra des Tsong-ka-pa*, eingeleitet vom 14. Dalai Lama. München, Diederichs, 1999, p.101.

sacred phonemes that connect discriminatory thoughts with the pure conscience.³⁹

It is possible to conclude that mantra syllables possess dual nature: on one hand they are transcendental, on the other – empirical. Thanks to this characteristic mantras with their innate provide men with the opportunity to join themselves with the macro-cosmic whole, although their human thoughts come from the relative and changing mundane reality. For this reason mantras are often sung in a group, where they create a particularly intense awareness of the unification. Unlike words they do not refer to the conventional reality and are not bound to objects or subjects. They do not differentiate things, but rather denote to the absolute value of phenomena. They serve as a string unifying the mundane micro-cosmos of common people with the divine macro-cosmos that includes everything.

Words and syllables of the mundane language describe things and phenomena, pointing to their role and functions, but mantras affect the human mind intuitively and spontaneously, they embody vibrations of the consciousness and movements of the breath energy. Through their effective implementation the human mind is able to experience much deeper knowledge and wisdom than the one that can be described in ordinary words.⁴⁰ Thanks to this transcendental activity mantras release the human spirit from limits of the relativity, from constraints of words and material things. Consequently they offer a way to free oneself from hatred, anger, greed and misperceptions that lead people to mutual misunderstandings and conflicts.

Mantras usually have a religious function and they become active through specific ritual practices. Exactly these religious practices define the fundamental values of mantras, and their resulting influence on the human mind may vary according to the extent of practical application. Mantras do not have much effect, if they are recited only with tongue and lips, they must be recited with a focused and devoted mind.

Mantras play an important role in worshipping gods and divine beings that are usually perceived by people as being different from themselves, located somewhere outside or beyond the human world. Mantras enable men to tear down this mental barrier, showing that everybody has an innate form of the absolute existence and can merge with the divine. Indians believed that in Vedic times there were wise men who had ability to see gods, so they were called *seers* (Skt. *rishi*). The form can also manifest in sounds, therefore it was said that seers, thanks to their mental visions and

39 **Padoux, André.** *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras.* Delhi, 1992, p.376.

40 **Staal, Frits.** *Vedic Mantras.* In: Harvey, Alper (ed.) *Understanding mantras.* Albany, State Univ. of New York Press, 1989, pp.69-70.

spiritual skills, could percept the sonic body of gods and could show it to people via mantras.⁴¹

As already stated above practitioners often invoke a deity through sound vibrations of mantra, besides they also obtain pride and courage to equalize themselves with the deity and join up with it.⁴² In turn, the deity guarantees a person shelter and security, helping to remove certain negative defilements, to obtain positive thoughts and correct behavior.⁴³ In Tantric Buddhism mantras most often are associated with a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. Since each Buddha and Bodhisattva have their own specified field of action, it is necessary to realize it when reciting mantras. If the repetition of mantras is performed without this background knowledge, the efficiency and the depth of revelation will decrease.⁴⁴

In ancient Vedic religious practices the knowledge was handed down in oral form, that is, directly from the teacher to the student. Therefore in order to activate vibration and energy of a mantra, it was necessary to receive it directly from the master (Skt. guru) in oral form with accompanying explanations and initiations. Only in this way disciples could acquire bliss and power of the whole lineage of spiritual masters.⁴⁵

In Hindu Tantrism there are several kinds of rituals where a teacher bestows students with his blessing and energy. One of these rituals is called *māntrī* and during this ritual the teacher gives every practitioner a certain mantra for daily recitation. A good master knows the spiritual advancement level of his followers, he also knows shortcomings of their characters and is able to choose an appropriate mantra for each of them.⁴⁶ An auspicious day and hour according to the lunar calendar is selected for this ritual, in some cases, person's birth date and place are considered, as well. The master chooses a specific deity which corresponds to abilities and spiritual needs of the disciple. After the ceremony where the teacher has also recited mantra and prayers to his own protective deity, he discloses the chosen mantra to his student in utmost secrecy.⁴⁷

41 **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.55.

42 **Hopkins, Jeffrey** (Hrsg.). *Tantra in Tibet. Das Geheime Mantra des Tsong-ka-pa*, eingeleitet vom 14. Dalai Lama. München, Diederichs, 1999, p.43.

43 **Lama Dagsay Tulku**. *Tibetische Mantras*. Freiburg i.Br., Bauer, 2002, p.50.

44 **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.58.

45 **Ibid**, p.63.

46 **Huchzemeyer, Wilfried**. *Die heiligen Schriften Indiens: Geschichte der Sanskrit-Literatur*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.65.

47 **Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu**. *Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung*. München, Barth, 1987, p.166.

Further implementation and effecting intensity of the mantra depend on the practitioner's own effort. Mantras never function automatically by themselves, so faith, zeal and consciousness of the practitioner play key role in all cases. The task of the student is to follow teacher's instructions as close as possible and to unify his or her consciousness with the given syllables. Thus gradually it is possible to equalize oneself with the deity of the mantra. Because of these diverse and complex rituals Hindu and Buddhist Tantric practice keep mantras in secret, they can be „awakened” only through the initiation and teaching of masters. It is believed that mantras can lose their efficacy when heard by others or even when put down in written form.⁴⁸

Indians believe that the pronunciation of mantra syllables is closely related with the breath, that they also control and harmonize breathing, affecting both mental and physical body. There is even an assumption that the breath itself is the first and basic mantra. Mantra sounds cause a kind of vibration in energy centers (cakras) of the human body, and in this way they also create a certain effect upon the physical body.⁴⁹ Some teachers recommend to do the practice of reciting mantra three times a day – at sunrise, at noon and at sunset, for these are the phases where due to the change of the solar trajectory the cosmic energy is the strongest.⁵⁰

In order to intensify the divine power, mantras must be repeated innumerable times. Tibetan Buddhists may repeat one mantra four thousand, hundred thousand or even million times, and only then its divine influence unfolds entirely. This long-term practice also help to develop concentration, patience and faith, so that these qualities become an inseparable part mantra recitation practice, in meantime playing a crucial role in the spiritual development. Mantras deliberate recitation must grow into a natural process of everyday life, then the human mind merges with the sound and becomes the sound itself. Only in this way one can equal oneself with the deity of the mantra and surpass the conventional reality.⁵¹

Tibetans use prayer beads (Skrt.mālā, Tib.phreng-ba) consisting of 108 pellets to fix the number of syllables repeated. 108 is a symbolic number, where 1 means the unifying power of the divine, 0 – the absolute perfection, but 8 – the infinity and perpetual changes.⁵² Besides there is also one bigger pellet which points out beginning and end of the beads, it symbolizes mount Meru – the center of the universe and the seat of gods.

48 **Padoux, André.** Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, p.4, 388, pp.391-394.

49 **Stecher, Christine.** Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, pp.62-63.

50 **Ibid,** p.84, 109.

51 **Ibid,** p.13, 82.

52 **Ibid,** p.103.

When it comes to this pellet, one cycle of recitation ends and another one can be started, trimming pellets in the opposite direction.⁵³ Repeating mantras many times and moving pellets forward and backward, beads are gradually charged with the spiritual energy and thus turn into a sacred object.

There are several methods to recite mantras. Repetition of mantras can be done 1) aloud, so that the sound can be heard; 2) whispering when only lips move, but the sound is almost inaudible; 3) in thoughts without any sound, 4) and in written form. Usually the third way of reciting mantras is considered the most preferable and effective, because it represents the moment when the word passes into silence, exceeding limits of the conventional truth, and bringing the human in direct contact with the divine in its absolute form of expression.⁵⁴

Among believers there are different views about the issue how important is the correct pronunciation of mantra syllables. In ancient India, a precise pronunciation of the sacred syllable was considered to be extremely important. Indian linguist Patañjali (ca. 2nd cent. B.C.) wrote that „*one who knows grammar and uses correct forms thereby practices a type of yoga which gains him merit, felicity, and ultimate union with the absolute being.*”⁵⁵

However, there are some stories about cases where an incorrect recitation of mantras has also brought unexpectedly good results. Once one Buddhist monk came across a lonely ascetic and noticed that his mantra pronunciation was incorrect. He told the ascetic the right way how to say the mantra in Sanskrit. The hermit listened to him very attentively and had a long look at the monk by departure. The monk took a boat across the river, but when he had reached the middle of the river, he suddenly heard a voice behind him: „Listen, is my pronunciation now correct?” Monk turned his head and was taken aback when he saw the ascetic walking easily on the water surface. Faith, perseverance and dedication had played crucial role, but the correct pronunciation of mantras turned out to be just an irrelevant factor.⁵⁶

53 Compare: **Stecher, Christine**. *Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter*. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.104; **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.60.

54 **Stecher, Christine**. *Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter*. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, pp.81-82; **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.59.

55 **Cardona, George**. *On Attitudes towards Language in Ancient India*. In: Mair, Victor H. (ed.) *Sino-Platonic Papers*. Nr.15, 1990, p.13.

56 **Stecher, Christine**. *Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter*. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.76; **Too, Lilian**. *Mantras & Mudras*. Neuhausen/Schweiz, Urania Verlag AGMüller, 2003, p.x.

Mantra recitation played an important religious role in Rig-Veda and the Bhagavad Gita.⁵⁷ Later they took central position in Hindu Tantrism and Tibetan Buddhism, where Sanskrit syllables were haloed in an esoteric aura. Mantras traveled a long way, through many lands and cultures, where people spoke different languages. Although they were always transcribed, not translated, Sanskrit pronunciation was forced to adapt to regional languages and thus slightly changed. For example, the mantra of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara OM MANI PADME HUM in Tibetan language is pronounced as OM MANI PEME HUN, but the concluding mantra of the „Heart Sūtra” in Sanskrit is going as follows: GĀTE GĀTE PARAGĀTE PARASAMGĀTE BODHI SWĀHĀ, in modern Chinese is pronounced as JIEDI JIEDI BOLUOJIEDI BOLUOSENJIJIEDI PUTI SUOHE.⁵⁸ In order to preserve as much as possible from the authentic tradition, it is usually suggested to follow the advice of the personal teacher. In case there is no live teacher, one is better to look for pronunciation samples, nowadays so abundant in virtual media.

Mantra practices in Hindu Tantrism and in Tibetan Buddhism are highly different. They may be applied in large numbers in rituals, prayers and in individual meditation practices. There are tantric practice texts, called *sadhana* that serve as auxiliary means for meditation and visualization. Sadhanas describe precisely the ritual sequence, application and symbolism of mantras, their deities and the way they manifest during the visualization.⁵⁹ Mantras can also be recited during sacrificial ceremonies, invoking definite deities. In these cases mantras emerge as a very essential ritual element. In everyday life mantras can be used to bless various objects, like prayer beads, stūpas, religious paintings, which consequently gain a special energy. With certain mantra syllables one blesses food, dedicating it as a gift for all living beings.⁶⁰

In Tibetan Buddhist culture mantras are often used as a healing spell to drive away evil spirits that have caused an illness. Tibetans recite mantras, circumambulating sacred objects (mountains, monasteries or stūpas), they recite mantras when turning prayer wheels or when hanging out wind-horse flags.⁶¹ Inside all prayer wheels there are rolls of paper imprinted with

57 **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.54.

58 **Xuanzang / 玄奘** (transl.). *Bore boluomiduo xinjing / 般若波羅蜜多心經*. In: Wittern, Christian (ed.) *Taisho Tripitaka, T08n0251*. Taipei, 1998-2006, 0848c22-0848c23.

59 **Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu**. *Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung*. München, Barth, 1987, p.158.

60 **Too, Lilian**. *Mantras & Mudras*. Neuhausen/Schweiz, Urania Verlag AGMüller, 2003, pp.93-95.

61 **Ibid**, pp.121-133.

Sanskrit mantras, therefore when turning wheels mantras are also set in motion by physical force. There are large prayer wheels, rotated by water or wind day and night, thus spreading the blessing of sacred words all around. Tibetan wind-horse flags are usually in five colors, symbolizing the five basic elements. There are mantras, prayers and a variety of symbolic animals (wind-horse and others) featured on them. Flags are usually hung on the tops of mountains or on the roofs of buildings, so that wind-horses can carry the energy of mantras as a blessing for all travellers.

Essential mantras

Mantras can be as long as sentences, they can contain one or several phrases, one or several words. The basis of all mantras are so-called „seed mantras” (skrt. bījamantra) which consist of only one syllable. They are also most important ones, because longer ones usually start or end with them. Indian yoga tradition maintains that seed mantras connect sound with silence, they arise from emptiness, and therefore they are able to turn the mundane reality into the transcendental absolute form of existence.⁶²

A number of mantras come from Vedic times, and have been later incorporated in Hinduism or Buddhism. Primary meaning might be common in all these religions, though their symbolism and application may differ. Most important bīyamantra in all these religious traditions is the syllable OM and its meaning and symbolism has been inherited from one generation to another, from one belief to another. According to Vedas when the creation began, the divine and all-encompassing consciousness took form of the first vibration manifesting as sound OM.⁶³ In Vedas every text starts with OM and many mantras in Buddhism start with this syllable, too. So this syllable can be viewed as the source of all words, mantras and sacred texts.⁶⁴ The syllable OM is first described as all-encompassing mystical entity in Upanishads: „*It is the eternal word [...] Past, Present and Future – all that was, is and will be.*”⁶⁵ Today, all over Nepal, India and Tibet OM can be seen virtually everywhere. This syllable symbolizes the infinite universe, so it is metaphorically called „*the space quintessence of all the kings of sound,*

62 **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, pp.60-62.

63 **Maheshwarananda, Paramhans Swami.** *The hidden power in humans – chakras and kundalinī*. Wien, Ibero Verlag, 2004, p.15.

64 **Padoux, André.** *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*. Delhi, 1992, p.19.

65 **Huchzemeyer, Wilfried.** *Die heiligen Schriften Indiens: Geschichte der Sanskrit-Literatur*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.27.

vibration mother, eternal wisdom and the key strength of all living beings” etc.⁶⁶

OM is composed of three sounds: A, U and M. In Buddhist Tantrism they symbolize body, speech and mind, so by saying this mantra, the human body, speech and mind are connect with the universe. In India there are also other explanations for these three letters:⁶⁷

- Vowel A symbolizes the creation of the universe creation, as well as the causal body of deities, it also refers to Rig-Veda and God Vishnu;
- Vowel U or O symbolizes the continuity of the universe, as well as the astral body of deities, it also refers to Sāma-Veda and God Shiva;
- Consonant M symbolizes the disappearance of created things and beings, as well as the manifestation body of deities in the mundane world, it also refers to Atharva-Veda and God Brahma. The sound M is the most important one, because it includes the point or the drop (Skt. bindu) – a symbol for the potential of the universe.

Graphically the syllable OM is depicted as a Sanskrit or Tibetan letter. The grapheme consists of three curved lines and a point on the top. The first curved line represents the state of wakefulness, relative phenomena and worldly activities. The second curved line represents the state of dream, mental visions and images. But the third shows the state of deep sleep, when the subconscious is the closest to the absolute reality – the point M. The curved line below the point is left infinite, thus symbolizing the eternity of the universe. Three curved lines do not touch the point, because humans, while still living in the mundane world of relativity, are restricted by apparent phenomena and thought conventions. Only when one has gone beyond all these three states – awakened state, dream and deep sleep, his or her consciousness can merge with the eternity of the universe.⁶⁸

A very important bījamantra is also HŪM, in Tibetan Buddhism it is related to the wrathful deity Vajrakīlāya. The name Vajrakīlāya means „diamond scepter” and this deity can remove all obstacles, destroy all enemies. It is known that around the 5th cent. B.C. in Pakistan region of Gilgit a dagger was used as a ritual weapon for repelling demons. Later, when Vajrayāna Buddhist teacher Padmasambhava came from Uddiyāna⁶⁹ to

66 Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu. Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung. München, Barth, 1987, pp.169-170.

67 Compare: Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu. Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung. München, Barth, 1987, p.41; Mittwede, Martin. Spirituelles Wörterbuch: Sanskrit-Deutsch. Heidelberg, Sathya Sai Vereinigung, 2007, pp.167-168; Padoux, André. Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, pp.402-411.

68 Stecher, Christine. Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.32, 128.

69 Situated in Swat valley, today belonging to Pakistan.

Tibet he gave his disciples the first teaching and handed down „Vajrakilāya-Tantra” that could be used to repel wild spirits and harming demons.⁷⁰

Bījamantra HŪM in Sanskrit and Tibetan languages consists of 5 parts that symbolize five kinds of wisdom:⁷¹

- Basic letter H is the equanimity wisdom;
- Vowel U is the all-accomplishing wisdom;
- Long vowel sound of Ū is the discerning wisdom;
- Curved line of the letter M is the mirror-like wisdom;
- Point of the letter M is the dharmadhātu wisdom.

Some Tantric schools divide bījamantras into masculine and feminine syllables: HŪM and PHAT refer to male deities, but SVĀ HĀ to female deities.⁷² Besides, each deity has its own bījamantra, for example Avalokiteshvara – the most important Bodhisattva in Tibetan Buddhism manifests himself in the syllable HRĪ. In Tantric Buddhism the meditation practice five Buddha-families are often invoked. Each of them is represented by one main Buddha who are visualized through the following bījamantras:⁷³

- Vairocana – OM;
- Akshobhya – HŪM;
- Ratnasambhava – SVĀ;
- Amitābha – Ā;
- Amoghasiddhi – HA.

Bījamantras OM, Ā, HŪM in Buddhism symbolize three aspects of Buddha: Buddha's body, speech and mind. But bījamantras A, SU, NRI, TRI, PRE and DU refer to the six worldly spheres of existence: gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry spirits and hell creatures.⁷⁴ In the human body a certain bījamantra corresponds to each cakra:⁷⁵

- Root cakra (below the spine) – LAM;
- Sacral cakra (below the navel) – VAM;
- Solar plexus cakra (above the abdomen, between breasts) – RAM;
- Heart cakra – JAM;
- Throat cakra – HAM;

70 **Beer, Robert.** *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols.* Boston, Shambhala, 2003, p.99.

71 **Tharchin Rinpoche.** *Teaching on Dorje Phurpa.* Tibetan Language Institute. Los Angeles, California May 1997, p.1.

72 **Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu.** *Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung.* München, Barth, 1987, p.167.

73 **Coleman, Graham** (ed.) *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture.* London, Rider, 1993, p.375.

74 **Ibid,** p.375.

75 Compare: **Stecher, Christine.** *Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter.* Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.49; **Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu.** *Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung.* München, Barth, 1987, pp.190-194.

- Third eye cakra – OM;
- Crown cakra includes all above mentioned bījamantras.

The first mantra every person acquires already at birth is breath. Consequently, in Indian Tantrism there are two bījamantras HAM and SA which symbolize the finest sonic energy: breathing-in corresponds to HAM, but breathing-out – to SA. In the reverse order the two Sanskrit syllables form the statement: „I am That”, pointing to the divine power or the highest god.⁷⁶ These two bīyamantras help the believer to merge with the visualized deity. In Vedas one can also find the word *hamsa* – divine swan who lives in the clear sky, in the endless space and symbolizes the freedom, the true reality and the complete unity of the individual with the universe.⁷⁷

Except for single-syllabic bīyamantras, there are other extremely short mantras, for example A HAM. In India these two sounds are very significant, because they represent all sounds of the sacred language. A is the first letter and the main vowel in Devanāgarī alphabet, it represents all vowels. But HA is the last consonant, so it symbolizes all consonants. The letter M is graphically depicted as a point above the letter H. It represents three special letters (anusvāra, anunāsika, visarga) and as a drop symbolizes the potential of the universe.⁷⁸

In Tantric Buddhism the three-syllabic mantra OM Ā HŪM is used most often and these three syllables refer to three levels of reality: the absolute, the ideal and the individual reality. They may as well show the perfected body, speech and mind of Buddha, in this way purifying the human body, speech and mind. They may represent three main Buddhas: Vairocana, Amitābha and Akshobhya or in Tibetan Buddhism also the Buddha of the endless light – Amitābha together with Bodhisattva of compassion – Avalokiteshvara and the founder of Tibetan Tantrism – Guru Padmasambhava. This mantra is often used in rituals and then it has the following symbolism.⁷⁹

- Syllable OM is visualized on the crown cakra of the summoned deity and symbolizes innumerable amounts of offerings;
- Syllable Ā is visualized on the throat cakra of the deity, all offerings flowing through it turn into the nectar of immortality;

76 Compare: **Pandit, M.P.** *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, p.62; **Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu**. *Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung*. München, Barth, 1987, p.171.

77 **Padoux, André**. *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*. Delhi, 1992, p.140.

78 **Ibid**, p.287, pp.386-387.

79 **Stecher, Christine**. *Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter*. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, pp.132-133.

- Syllable HŪM is placed in the heart cakra and purifies all human misconception about the lack and plainness of offerings.

Most mantras consist of longer phrases and sentences. They also have a multi-layered symbolic meaning. Without doubt the most famous in the world is OM MANI PADME HŪM which has become so popular due to Tibetan Buddhist practices. Here this mantra is associated with Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Religious people in Tibet recite this mantra all the time and it can be heard everywhere – both in the streets, in monasteries and at people’s homes. One often sees it carved or painted on stones and printed on wind-horse flags. People believe that if a person repeats this mantra 100,000 times, he or she acquires strength to get free from all the fear, worries and doubt, besides, one can then hear all prayers that are being said.⁸⁰

Literal meaning of the mantra can be explained as follows:

- OM – essence syllable of the mantra;
- MANI – jewel;
- PADME – lotus;
- HŪM – exclamation syllable that indicates arrival of the deity.

One should pay attention to the two symbols – jewel and lotus. The lotus is one of eight auspicious Buddhist signs. It grows in ponds, often in muddy water, but regardless of that its flowers are clean and beautiful. Thus the lotus symbolizes purity and asceticism. Wholesome activities flourish in its blossoms, they are done without attachment to the cyclic existence and lead living beings to the absolute freedom. Many deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are depicted in paintings sitting on a lotus throne. This is their manifestation form in the world of men, for their body, speech and mind are perfect and transcend the conventional reality. Besides, Buddhas often hold a lotus flower in their hand lifted to the heart cakra, this shows how sincerely and willingly Buddha preached his doctrine for living beings.⁸¹

The jewel symbolizes various spiritual and material values that are offered to gods and Buddhas. In Tibet the word „large precious stone” (Tib. rin-po-che) is an epithet for incarnate lamas, it is also used in the meaning „precious” for important ritual accessories. In Buddhist art jewels or gemstones are one of eight main decorative elements for Bodhisattvas. They can often be seen in Tibetan Buddhist paintings – thangkas, depicted as round or oval stones with a number of lines on them showing their magnificent glitter. As offerings for Buddha they symbolize objects of unchangeable value. Gemstones often decorate head cakra of deities. There

80 **Too, Lilian.** Mantras & Mudras. Neuhausen/Schweiz, Urania Verlag AGMüller, 2003, pp.32-33.

81 **Beer, Robert.** The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols. Boston, Shambhala, 2003, pp.7-9, 168-171.

is also the wish-fulfilling jewel in Tibetan ritual practices; it is one of seven accessories of the ruler of the universe – Cakravartin.⁸²

Lotus is also the symbol of purity and energy intersection in the heart cakra, but the jewel is associated with Three Jewels of Buddhism (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha). Therefore, the mantra OM MANI PADME HŪM also highlights the fact that Buddha's heart (that is – the potential of enlightenment) dwells in the heart of every person.⁸³

In tantric practices this mantra can also be interpreted as a union between man and woman. Indians believe that God Brahma was born from lotus, Tibetans called their first master – Padmasambhava which literally means „Lotus born”. A gemstone can also point out the male organ, but a lotus flower – the female pudendum. So it is possible to translate the two words of the mantra as a phrase – „the jewel in the lotus”.⁸⁴

The main objective of the mantra OM MANI PADME HŪM is to cause indiscriminate love and compassion towards all living beings: both to friends and relatives whom we are attached to and whom we love; as well as to enemies whom we dislike or even hate; and to strangers to whom we feel indifferent. With the help of this mantra Avalokiteshvara – Bodhisattva of compassion plants into people hearts the wish that all living beings may experience happiness. Moreover, it eliminates hatred, anger and indifference, in meantime developing compassion and desire to help others. Mantra is composed of six syllables that symbolize six spheres of the mundane existence, indicating that one should think not only about the people around, but also of those beings in other spheres.⁸⁵

One of the most important mantras both in Indian and Tibetan Tantrism is OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVĀHĀ, which is associated with Goddess Tara. Her name in Sanskrit means „Savior” or „Liberator”. Therefore, the mantra gradually intensifies and invokes Tara every time on a more intensive level. It can be literally translated as follows:

- OM – essence syllable of the mantra;
- TARE – liberator;
- TUTTARE – supreme liberator;
- TURE – the most supreme liberator;

82 **Ibid**, p.192.

83 **Stecher, Christine**. Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, p.133.

84 **Tenzin Gyatso** (The Fourteenth Dalai Lama). On the meaning of: OM MANI PADME HUM.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tib/omph.htm> (last accessed 25.01.2015.)

85 **Lama Dagsay Tulku**. Tibetische Mantras. Freiburg i.Br., Bauer, 2002, pp.86-88.

- SVĀHĀ – to worship respectfully (concluding syllable of the invocation).⁸⁶

A legend tells that Tara was born from tears of Avalokiteshvara's compassion, therefore she can hear all prayers, eliminate difficulties, troubles and disasters, thus and so she rescues and liberates all sentient beings. She protects living beings from eight dangers.⁸⁷

- Anger that is like fire;
- Desire that is like water;
- Pride that is like a lion;
- Envy that is like a snake;
- Ignorance that is like an elephant;
- Stinginess that binds like shackles;
- Incorrect views that are like thieves;
- Doubts that are like ghosts.

By reciting the mantra of Tara, it is possible to ward off these defilements, evil thoughts, and to gain spiritual freedom. On the first level, when the deity is called by word TARE, she sets people free from external obstacles and calamities. On the second level, when she is called by word TUTTARE, she removes internal limitations, such as ignorance, evil thoughts and bad behavior. On the third level, then she is called by word TURE, she saves people from the conventional reality, from dualism and differentiation. At this level she also sets free the most advanced practitioners, when they get attached to the wish for the personal liberation and for the attainment of Nirvāna.⁸⁸

The supreme goal of mantras is best illustrated by the mantra that has been added to the most often recited Buddhist prayer – „Heart sutra” revealing the nature of emptiness. Mantra goes as follows: GĀTE GĀTE PARAGĀTE PARASAMGĀTE BODHI SVHĀ. Just like Tara's mantra, it signifies spiritual progression in three stages with a culmination in an end.⁸⁹ *gone, gone* (GĀTE GĀTE), *gone beyond everything* (PARAGĀTE); *completely gone beyond everything* (PARASAMGĀTE). So step by step the mantra guides practitioners towards the awakened state or enlightenment (BODHI).

The word GĀTE can also be translated from Sanskrit as „understand”, so the whole mantra can as well indicate the insight or understanding, which reminds the enlightenment experience of historical Buddha Shākyamuni.

86 **Ibid**, p.95.

87 **Ibid**, pp.96-97.

88 **Ibid**, p.98.

89 **Lopez, Donald S.** *Inscribing the Bodhisattva's Speech: On the „Heart Sūtra' s” Mantra.* In: History of Religions, Vol.29, No.4, May, 1990, p.364.

Then it can be translated in the following way: „*understood, understood; understood, what is beyond; completely understood what is beyond*”.⁹⁰ 19th cent. Tibetan Gelug master Gung-thang translated the verbs in imperative: „*Proceed, proceed, proceed beyond, proceed completely beyond, be established in enlightenment!*”⁹¹ In all cases the mantra contains a code for the whole gradual path to enlightenment. In the end it brings to the unification of opposites, merging subject and object into the emptiness.⁹²

References:

- Aryan, Krishna C. *The Little Goddesses (Matrikas)*. New Delhi, Rekha Prakashan, 1980, 74 p.
- Beer, Robert. *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*. Boston, Shambhala, 2003, 262 p.
- Cardona, George. *On Attitudes towards Language in Ancient India*. In: Mair, Victor H. (ed.) *Sino-Platonic Papers*. Nr.15, 1990, pp.1-18.
- Berzin, Alexander. *Kalacakra: Das Rad der Zeit*. New York, Barth, 2002, 255 p.
- Coleman, Graham (ed.) *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture*. London, Rider, 1993, 430 p.
- Gonda, Jan. *The Indian Mantra*. In: *Oriens.*, Vol.16, Dec.31, 1963, pp.244-297.
- Gonsar Rinpotsche. *Tantra der 21 Taras*. Le Mont-Pèlerin, Rabten, 2001, 183 p.
- Hopkins, Jeffrey (Hrsg.). *Tantra in Tibet. Das Geheime Mantra des Tsongka-pa, eingeleitet vom 14. Dalai Lama*. München, Diederichs, 1999, 239 p.
- Huchzermeyer, Wilfried. *Die heiligen Schriften Indiens: Geschichte der Sanskrit-Literatur*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, 130 p.
- Huchzermeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache: Mantra-Yoga-Linguistik*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, 126 p.
- Huchzermeyer, Wilfried. *Sanskrit und die europäischen Sprachen*. In: Huchzermeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) *Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache*. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, pp.11-18.
- Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye. *Buddhist Ethics*. Ithaka/NY, Snow Lion Publications, 1998, 564 p.
- Lama Dagsay Tulku. *Tibetische Mantras*. Freiburg i.Br., Bauer, 2002, 107 p.
- Lopez, Donald S. *Inscribing the Bodhisattva's Speech: On the „Heart Sūtra's” Mantra*. In: *History of Religions*, Vol.29, No.4, May, 1990, pp.351-372.

90 **Ibid**, p.358.

91 **Ibid**, p.365.

92 **Ibid**, p.356, 367.

- Mair, Victor H. (ed.) Sino-Platonic Papers. Nr.15, Philadelphia, January 1990. www.sino-platonic.org (last accessed 21.06.2010).
- Malten, Thomas (ed.). Sanskrit and Tamil Dictionaries.1997. <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/tamil/index.html> (last accessed 25.01.2015)
- Mittwede, Martin. Spirituelles Wörterbuch: Sanskrit-Deutsch. Heidelberg, Sathya Sai Vereinigung, 2007, 301 p.
- Mookerjee, Ajit; Khanna, Madhu. Die Welt des Tantra in Bild und Deutung. München, Barth, 1987, 255 p.
- Padoux, André. Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. Delhi, 1992, 460 p.
- Pandit, M.P. *Mantra Yoga*. In: Huchzemeyer, Wilfried (Hrsg.) Erlebnis: Sanskrit-Sprache. Karlsruhe, Sawitri, 2005, pp. 53-67.
- Maheshwarananda, Paramhans Swami. The hidden power in humans – chakras and kundalinī. Wien, Ibero Verlag, 2004, 272 p.
- Schefczyk, Susanne (Hrsg.); Chogyur Lingpa; Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye. Die tägliche Praxis der Grünen Tara. Ottobrunn, Yeshe Khorlo Deutschland, 2003, 52 p.
- Shiyong fojiao cidian / 實用佛教辭典. Gaoxiong, Gaoxiong jingzong xuehui / 高雄淨宗學會 (ed.) 1995, 1936 p.
- Staal, Frits. *Vedic Mantras*. In: Harvey, Alper (ed.) Understanding mantras. Albany, State Univ. of New York Press, 1989, pp.48-96.
- Stecher, Christine. Mantras: Die Sprache der Götter. Darmstadt, Schirner, 2007, 264 p.
- Tenzin Gyatso (The Fourteenth Dalai Lama). On the meaning of: OM MANI PADME HUM. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tib/omph.htm> (last accessed 25.01.2015).
- Tharchin Rinpoche. *Teaching on Dorje Phurpa*. Tibetan Language Institute. Los Angeles, California May 1997. http://www.tibetanlanguage.org/images/Free_Study_Aids/vajrakilaya_notes.jpg (last accessed 25.01.2015).
- Too, Lilian. Mantras & Mudras. Neuhausen/Schweiz, Urania Verlag AGMüller, 2003, 146 p.
- Wheelock, Wade T. *Mantra in Vedic and Tantric Ritual*. In: Harvey, Alper (ed.) Understanding mantras. Albany, State Univ. of New York Press, 1989, pp.96.-123.
- Whitney, William Dwight. Sanskrit Grammar: Including Both, the Classical Language and the Older Dialects of Veda and Brāhmaṇa. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1993, 551 p.
- Woodroffe, John. The Garland of Letters. Madras, Ganesh & Co, 2001, 318 p.

Xuanzang / 玄奘 (transl.). Bore boluomiduo xinjing / 般若波羅蜜多心經.
In: Wittern, Christian (ed.) Taisho Tripitaka, T08n0251. Taipei, 1998-2006.
<http://www.kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~wittern/can/can2/ind/canwww.htm>
(last accessed 25.01.2015).