The Mantra That Changed My Life
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It has been said that the mantra is God in the form of sound. Shaivite scriptures say Mantra Maheshwara, "Mantra is the Lord Himself," who creates all letters, syllables and words. Therefore, words are an extension of that power. The mantra is an actual sound vibration of the creator. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says, "Among forms of worship, I am repetition of mantra."

My search for the "sound in the body" began about 10 years ago. I didn't know of any mantra tapes so the first mantra I tried for several years was "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," after reading The Way of the Pilgrim, a classic of Russian Orthodox mystical literature. I was disappointed with the results. The experience of my own divinity that I was so ardently seeking remained elusive. I began to practice zazen meditation on my own and doing japa (the silent repetition of the mantra) with the Tibetan Buddhist mantra Om Mani Padme Hum. Again, after a couple of years I still experienced a restless, agitated mind and a closed heart. This could have gone on for a long time. I have read there are 70 million mantras but a true mantra is described as Mantra Chaitanya Vignata which means that if we want to experience the Self we must receive a mantra from one who has realized its full conscious power. The previous mantras I had used were taken from books. They lacked chaitanya.

One day I went for a walk to calm my agitated mind. I tried using these mantras again and several others, but their inability to help just made me more agitated. Then at one point in my walk I just stopped. It was like an invisible force just halted me. My mind became very still and out of that stillness rose Om Namah Shivaya which means "I honor Shiva, the Self of all." I heard it within and without. The sound carried me home in an embrace of love and joy. That was four years ago, and this mantra has never stopped pulsating within me. I found out later that my wife, Cindy, had practiced japa at the same place where I had stopped to repeat

Om Namah Shivaya many times in the past six months. I had resisted this mantra and the tape she had been playing of it, but on my walk when I had let my psychic guard down, I had received the vibration of it at a spot overlooking Lake Erie, Pennsylvania. I am still amazed at how this happened.

Om Namah Shivaya has been my very best friend ever since. Scriptures explain that the word mantra has two roots-mana, means to know and understand; and tra, which refers to protection. Thus, the mantra is that which refers to protection. Thus, the mantra is that which protects the person who repeats and contemplates it. Om Namah Shivaya has protected me from the modifications of the mind. It has energized me when I'm tired, cured me of ailments like migraine headaches and taken me to my true resting place, my own Self. It is an immediate and constant source of bliss and balance. My marriage, 15 years strong, has improved in so many ways I could write a hook about it. My relationships with my five children are more playful, respectful and loving. In fact, so much has improved in my life that the mantra Om Namah Shivaya has changed my vision to see the divinity in everything. There is a heaven on Earth and it lives within the power of the mantra.

You may be "searching for the sound within the body," too. There are many great mantras to choose from: Om Namah Shivaya: Hare Rama; So' Ham; Rama Rama; Hare Krishna: Om Namo Narayanan; Guru Om. See which one you are drawn to. Test it. Can it transform you with almost no effort on your part? I don't repeat the mantra anymore, the mantra repeats me as it effortlessly merges me with my own Self.

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