

[From the Agamas: On the Importance of Sacred Sound](#)

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From the Agamas

On the Importance of Sacred Sound Mantras "should be treated with utmost diligence and sincerity"

The following text is from chapter three of the knowledge section of Raurava Agama, "Transmission of Scriptures." The chapter discusses gurus, mantras, mandalas (sacred diagrams), tattvas (categories of existence) and lokas (the various worlds). Following is the section on mantra, a sound, word or phrase endowed with special power.

Siva tattva is an ever-existing principle. It is never created afresh. It is in identical existence with Ishvara. It is the causal source for the origin, sustenance and dissolution of all other tattvas. Having heard the exact nature of such Siva tattva, the sages, being desirous of attaining oneness with the Eternal Existence (e.g., Siva), bowed down before Ruru, the son of Bhrigu and spoke these words:

"O, most celebrated sage among the knowers of the Agamas! How was this Agama brought down to us through continued transmission? In this Agama, many gurus have been mentioned. What is the total number of such gurus? How many mantras and how many mandalas have been enumerated? How many tattvas and worlds are there? Kindly instruct us on these details as they really are."

[Regarding mantras, Ruru replied]: "After observing that the creation done by Brahma is associated with the ever-going phenomenon of birth and death, these mantras assumed the distinct forms energized by the rays of Sivasakti. With these forms assumed by them, the mantras are guiding and guarding the aspirants. In these mantras, the supreme Lord called Mantra Rajeshvara, who is eternally free from the limiting bonds, presents Himself in a concealed way. Wishing for the welfare of all the worlds, Lord Siva formulated these mantras and revealed them. For the welfare of the worlds, the Supreme Lord brought into existence the everlasting benefits to be accomplished through mantras and yajnas (sacrifice).

"For the benefit of pure souls (gurus) who are intent on attaining total identity with the mantras, the systematic process of mandala-worship was formulated by Him. There are eight primary mandalas (diagrams) which belong to the system of secret science. Apart from these, there are hundreds of mandalas, the details of which have been set forth well in this Agama.

"In the rituals performed with mandalas, Lord Siva becomes known as Mandali, in view of the fact that He occupies these mandalas and presents Himself there eternally. These great mandalas are worshiped by the sages, celestial beings, asuras, human beings and by all those who are desirous of attaining final liberation and bliss. The king of Vidyeshvaras and Mandaleshas and those who have manifested with elegance and greatness as the unfailing associates of Mantreshvaras and Mandalehsas present themselves in these mandalas through the appropriate mantras. Verily, they are of the nature of these mantras. They are the souls of these mantras. Even for the highly enlightened sages, it is not possible to give the exact number of such mantras.

"There are as many mantras as there are Rudras, Devas, Rakshasas, Yakshas and Maheshvaras. Their exact number cannot be known. They have been designed and composed in a language suitable to each division of the Earth and other worlds. They have been associated with relevant seed letters and words, which are divine, effulgent and vibrant. These mantras have the power of knowing all. They have the power of reaching all the places and all the divisions of time. They are pure. They are in identical existence with those who have attained the power of knowing all.

"They are not to be analyzed and examined either with the doctrines of mimamsa or by those who are with insignificant and erroneous knowledge. Keeping the Agama as the most authoritative text for the unfailing validity of these facts, the mantras should be treated with utmost diligence and sincerity by those who contemplate on the goodness and welfare of all beings."

Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam Sivacharyar, 67, of the Adisaiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the Vedas, Agamas and Silpa Shastras. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the revered Raurava Agama.

The Vedas and Agamas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, shruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). The oldest portions of the Vedas may date back as far as 6,000 bce. The Saiva Agamas are also ancient, but dating is uncertain.