Mantra Doshams

Undoubtedly mantras are the most invaluable form in which the compassion of our rushis is available to us. Mantras are a result of enormous number of life-time penances of these great rushis. By the grace of God, they discovered many kinds of mantras, which are suitable for the different kinds of humans and their diverse backgrounds. Mantras like “Hare Raama Hare Raama ....” and the transcendental names of God like Raama, Krishna, Sadashiva, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Durga etc., are on one hand accessible and usable by all (irrespective of their caste and sex), and on the other hand they belong to the category of Taaraka-mantras, which are the ultimate class of mantras. The only requirement for chanting such mantras is basic Shaucham.

However, most of the other mantras for eg. Om, Gayatri, Mrutyunjaya etc., impose very many restrictions and are not usable by all. For e.g., only Sanyasis can chant the Om (pranava) mantra etc. Apart from these caste and sex based restrictions, there are many other precautions one needs to take for chanting these mantras. Again, thankfully, our rushis themselves listed all the restrictions and precautions for chanting these mantras in the various mantra-shastras. This document list 9 basic defects a mantra can get and their consequences. We direct more interested readers to the shastras themselves.

The following nine important points have to be remembered by anybody who chants these (restricted) mantras:

1. शिरोहीनः मृतः प्रोक्तः । Every mantra has a part, which is referred to as its “head”. For e.g., it is the first line (of the four lines) in Gayatri mantra. If one chants a mantra without identifying and reciting this head (correctly), then it is equivalent to killing the mantra. Needless to say, the consequence of this is the tremendous paapam associated with killing the mantra.

2. सुप्तश्च आसनं शिशा । If the person chanting the mantra does not sit on an appropriate aasana, then the mantra is said to be “sleeping”. Needless to say, a sleeping mantra is not active and the person chanting is thereby simply wasting his time. Shastras specify which aasanas are appropriate for whom. Here instead of presenting the details, we subscribe to sitting on a wooden aasana.

3. न्यासहीनो मूकश्च । For every mantra there is a specific anga-nyasam and kara-nyasam, by which the Mantra devata is invited onto the person chanting. If a person chants the mantra without performing the anga, kara nyasams, as specified by the rushi, then the mantra turns “dumb”. Needless to say, the person chanting without nyasams acquires the associate paapam of making the mantra dumb and hence ridiculing it.
4. नग्नः पल्लव वर्जिता । For every mantra, the rushi specifies “pallavam”, which is a representation for the fruit/benefit of the mantra. If one chants a mantra without identifying and reciting these pallavams (correctly), then it is equivalent to making the mantra nude. The associated paapam is enormous and un-pardonable. For Gayatri mantra, these pallavams appear inside the nyasa-mantras itself.

5. जपकाले श्युनोतु अन्यस्य, मन्त्रं नुस्बिेत् । If during the chanting of a mantra, the person hears (or focuses his attention on) other things, then the mantra being chanted is nullified. Note that even if a person is listening to or focusing on (other than the mantra) on a great thing, for e.g., it may be some other great mantra, then also the mantra being chanted will be nullified. In other words, while chanting a mantra, the person should have 100% concentration on that mantra only. Needless to say, a mantra that is nullified is not of any use.

6. गुरूपदेशां विना वृक्षाक्षरः । If one chants a mantra without obtaining it from an appropriate Guru for the mantra, then the letters of the mantra become futile and are wasted. Hence one must always approach a guru, serve him, and have mantra upadesham from him. For e.g., Karna obtained the brahmastra mantra by cheating his Guru, and hence it turned out to be a waste and futile for him! Moreover, chanting it only resulted in increasing his pride and arrogance.

7. ऋषिर्छदो विना भुजङ्गः । Every mantra has a rushi and a Chandas. For e.g., the rushi for Gayatri mantra is Vishwamitra and the chandas is Gayatri. If one chants a mantra without remembering and chanting the name of the rushi and the chandas, then the mantra will turn into a dangerous serpent and bites him.

8. अक्षरहीनः वीर्यहीनः । If the mantra is chanted by dropping any of its aksharas (i.e., the characters or the associated swaras), then the mantra becomes power-less. Chanting in such a way is only a waste of time.

9. अधिकाक्षरः कीलः । If the mantra is chanted by introducing a new akshara (i.e., a new character or a new swara), then the mantra becomes fire and burns the person. Since singing a mantra in one’s own style is committing both the doshams no. 8 and 9, the consequence is that the mantra will lose its power and become a devastating fire.