

Mantra for Wearing Mala

This mantra has to be administered by a Priest or a Guruswamy.

*Jnaanamudraam Shaastrumudraam Gurumudraam Namaamyaham
Vanamudraam Shuddhamudraam Rudramudraam Namaamyaham
Shaantamudraam Satyamudraam Vratamudraam Namaamyaham
Shabaryaashrama Satyena Mudraam Paatu Sadaapi Me*

*Gurudakshinayaa Poorvam Tasyaanugraha Kaarine
Sharanaagata Mudraakhyam Tvan Mudraam Dhaarayaamyaham
Chinmudraam Khechareemudraam Bhadramudraam Namaamyaham
Shabaryaachala Mudraayai Namastubhyam Namoh Namaha*

Meaning of Mala Dharana Mantra

When we wear the *mudra mala*, we are indeed making a physical, mental and spiritual commitment - with the Divine Self within, to prepare our body/mind/intellect for the arduous journey through the forests to reach His Divine abode, and to get His *darshan*. We commit to observing the *vrata* for at least one *mandalam* (of six weeks), go on the pilgrimage and present our Irumudi at HIS Holy Feet - for HIS *divya darshan*.

Given below are the shlokams we chant at the time of receiving our *mudra mala* from our guru, after having worshipped the Holy Feet of our Supreme Guru, Swami Ayyappa.

1. JnAna mudrAm, shAstra mudrAm, guru mudrAm namAmyaham | vana mudrAm, shuddha mudrAm, rudra mudrAm namAmyaham ||
2. ShAnta mudrAm, satya mudrAm, vrata mudrAm namAmyaham | shabaryAshrama satyena mudrAm pAtu sadApi me ||

3. Guru -dakshiNayA poorvam tasyAnugraha kAriNe | sharaNAgata
mudrAkhyam tvan mudrAm dhArayAmyaham ||
4. Chin mudrAm, khechari mudrAm, bhadra mudrAm namAmyaham |
shabaryAchala mudrAyai namas-tubhyam namo namaha ||

Let us explore the meaning and the significance of these four shlokams:

1. My salutations to this symbol representing wisdom, the sacred scriptures, the Guru, the forest (representing life itself, through which we take the journey towards attaining moksha), purity and the ever-present God.
2. I offer my salutations to this symbol of peace, truth, penance. May the Truth of Shabari's hermitage ever protect this symbol.
3. After seeking and securing the compassionate grace and blessings of my Guru, O Lord, I will wear this symbol of my complete surrender, and seek refuge in You.
4. I offer my salutation to this symbol of pure intellect, the celestial beings, and auspiciousness. O symbol of the shabari hill, I offer my salutations to you again and again.

There are a few important words and concepts to understand and appreciate in these shlokams. First, the word '*mudra*'. Literally, *mudra* means a symbol, a seal (as in a royal seal, a seal of authority), a special sign (as *mudras* used in *tantric* rituals and our puja), and a special pose conveying specific meanings (e.g. classical dance has numerous *mudras*).

To devotees of Swami Ayyappa, the *mudra maala* is a seal of approval they have received from HIM, their Supreme Guru, through the compassionate grace and blessings of their guru swami. It is the honourable duty of the guru swami to ensure that the *mudra maala* is given only to the deserving. It is also the guru swami's duty to guide the devotee through out the vratam, and help through the journey to attain our Lord's darshanam. Thus, each *mudra maala* represents a symbol of the guru swami's authority, commitment and responsibility to the devotee.

The shlokams detail the many aspects/attributes which the *mudra maala* symbolizes, from wisdom all the way to total surrender of the self (ego) and finally seeking refuge at the Holy Feet of our Lord. It is equally important to

appreciate that this surrender of self is not just at the feet of our Lord, but also at the feet of the guru swami.

It is also important to understand the expanded meaning of 'guru' or preceptor. It is said we have three preceptors who lead us to realization of the Divine Self within. The first of these is our mother, who bears us and nourishes us. The second is our father, who traditionally initiates us into Gayathri upaasana and leads us to the next preceptor - the one who imparts Vedic knowledge to us, preparing us for the *Atma-vichaarana* needed for realizing the Divine Self. Thus, it is essential to get the blessings of one's parents before approaching the guru swami for wearing a mudra maala and starting on the austerities leading to the *yatra* and the experience of bliss in His divine presence.

Which brings us to the next three key words: dakshina, anugraha and sharanaagati.

The word dakshina has several meanings - but the most important of them is, "Compassionate, ignorance-destroying glance/communication". Our Lord is called Dakshinaamoorthi, as HIS compassionate glance and the *chin-mudra* HE shows completely dispels the nescience of the greatest of sages who had been in penance for thousands of years at HIS feet to attain knowledge of the Self.

The *guru dakshina* we offer to our guru is a very humble and a miniscule token offering in exchange for this divine compassion we receive. In fact, in order to be truly deserving of this grace, we need to do a lot more, there is a shloka:

dhyAna moolam guror moortihi, poojA moolam guror padam
mantra moolam guror vAkhyam, moksha moolam guror krupA

The foundation of meditation is the form of our guru; the foundation of worship are the holy feet of our guru. His words are the foundation of mantrams to us. (By being so) HIS grace becomes the foundation for liberation from earthly bondage. There is another shloka that describes the *dakshina* to be given to a guru:

guru shushrUshayA vidya, pushkalena, dhanena cha
athavA vidyayA vidyA, chaturthi nopalabhyate

In order to gain knowledge from a guru, you have to serve the guru (caring for the guru), and offer the guru all forms of wealth including money. Else, you should be able to impart to the guru some knowledge being sought by the guru

(for example, I will teach you German, if you will teach me French). There is no fourth way (for gaining knowledge from a guru).

And Taittreeya Upanishad urges: '*AchAryAya priyam dhanam Ahrutya ...*' give as much as needed to please the preceptor. It also states: *shraddhayA deyam, a-shraddhayA a-deyam, shriyA deyam, hriyA deyam, bhiyA deyam, samvidA deyam* - with reverence should offerings be given, never with irreverence, and given with liberality, modesty, fear and in friendliness.

So, with the *dakshina* of our guru secured, and through guru's '*anugraha*' - which means, through the guru's decision to shower you with grace and blessings - you surrender your ego and seek refuge (*sharaNAgati*) at the Holy Feet of the Supreme Guru, our Lord Ayyappan. Note that this sholokam is directly addressing Lord Ayyappan - while the other three shlokams are focused on the *mudra mala* itself. The word literally means 'brought closely along' - the guru 'carries' you through the process from start to finish, till you are brought to the Divine presence of the Lord.

My prayers to Lord Ayyappan to bless us, his devotees with HIS *mudra mala* on the day of *vrishchika sankramaNam*, be our constant inspiration and guide through the *manDala vratam* and our journey to HIS Divine *sannidhAnam*.