

The Science of Upanishads – Part 26: The Power of Mantras (Week of September 12-September 18, 2017)

“Mantra” is a Sanskrit word consisting of the root “Man”, meaning “Mind” and the suffix “Tra”, meaning “Instrument”, so the literal meaning of Mantra is “Instrument of Thought”. The earliest recorded Mantras are from Vedas and are at least 5000 years old, and the most basic mantra is ॐ (Om), which in Hinduism is known as the “Pranava Mantra,” the source of all mantras, elaborated in many Upanishads as discussed earlier. The other notable mantras include the “Gayatri Mantra ॐ भूर्भुवस्वः.. (Om, BhoorBhuvaSwaha...)”, “Pavamana Mantra असतोमा सद्गमय..(Asatoma Sadgamaya...)”, and many “Shanti Mantras, such as सहना ववतु...(Sahana Vavatu...)”.

While some mantras are targeted to invoke Gods, others are for conveying some important principles, and still others aim at the One Reality of this Universe, the Brahman. For thousands of years, our Scriptures have stressed the value of chanting mantra in stabilizing and clearing the mind, leading one to deeper spiritual awakening and awareness. Modern neuroscience is now beginning to discover the relationship between the way words are used and the impact on the functioning of the mind. A mantra is a precise sound, a frequency that conveys a directive into our sub-consciousness. Mantras are invoked towards the delivery of very specific results and are repeated a certain number of times. Mantras are used to open the heart and the mind and to aid in accessing and entering into a state of greater awareness. They are perfect tools for reaching a meditative state. The **Physical Benefits** of mantra chanting include relaxation by lowering the heart beat, calming the brain waves and regulating the breath patterns. The **Mental Benefits** of chanting and repetition of mantras are acquiring pure, divine thoughts, and flowing of good positive energy into our mind, which in turn leads to its purification. When the mind is purified, all the six enemies of the mind - lust, anger, greed, pride, delusion and jealousy - get weakened and lose their grip over you. The **Spiritual Benefits** of constant repetition of a Mantra are that one develops renunciation, which leads to liberation, and culminates in self-realization or attainment of ultimate Reality.

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