



PRAYER AND MANTRA AS A PROVENANCE OF HEALING: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Prayer signifies a one dimensional between one individual and another abstract force. People pray towards those abstract forces which they believe would fulfill their needs, desires and would protect them from all harm in future. Prayer involves numerous benefits due to which it acts as a therapy among the people. prayer acts such a medium by which people can be healed from their times of distress. Mantras are refer to as energy based sounds which produces such physical vibrations that produces energy waves within one's body. It enhances one's subconscious level which leads to clarity of mind and thought. There are different religions in the world. Different culture involves different mantras achieve healing. The article thus tries to pen down the sociological relevance of prayer and mantra as two prime ways of spiritual healing.

Keywords: *prayer, mantra, religion, healing*



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Prayer signifies a one dimensional between one individual and another abstract force. People pray towards those abstract forces which they believe would fulfil their needs, desires and would protect them from all harm in future. According to Wayne Grudem, “prayer is personal communication with God”¹. Prayer is a reality by which people tries to develop a connection with the abstract supernatural forces. Prayer can be of many forms. It can take the shape of a

¹ Source: <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/prayer-wayne-grudem>

song, dance, silence and so on. Larry Dossey also provided an insightful approach on the definition of prayer, “If prayer has its roots in the unconscious, ...a complete definition of prayer can never be given”(1993, p.6). Different religions have different words and ways by which the followers can connect with their God. Buddhism doesn't promote the believe in any personal God among its followers but it holds prayer as a prime component which the followers must practice in order to heal themselves from their distressing situations.

Mantras, on the other hand, are known as the words which act as a medium to pray to a supernatural and abstract force which are believed to have transcendental power. The word "mantra" is borrowed from two Sanskrit words. The first meaning stands for "manas" or "mind," which designates the "man" syllable while on the other side of the same coin, the second consonant is derived from the word "tra" which means to "protect" or to be "free" from any harm². Therefore, the word mantra in its most literal sense means "to free from the mind." Citing the words penned down by a famous organisation Oshum karam—“Mantras are energy-based sounds. A mantra can be a sound, a word or a group of words, which can vary depending on the philosophy associated with the mantra, but it has been said that mantras are capable of helping to create transformation”³. Mantra is such a word or phrase which is repeated by the people during meditation. Mantras are considered to be sacred in nature and is uttered when people meditates during their stipulated time.

Prayer and mantra together invokes within human beings the power to meditate. Meditation is such a practice among the human beings which brings calmness and serenity among the people. It increases the concentration level of the people and helps them to have focus in their life. It is one form of brain exercise which enhances the intellectual and memory capacity of an individual.

Studies of Prayer as a Complementary Alternative Medicine: A famous quotation goes as—

“Everyone prays in their own language, and there is no language that God does not understand”—Duke Ellington

Prayer is believed by numerous researchers and scientists to be a “complementary and alternative medicine” in nature. Alternative medicine includes a varied therapeutic or preventive health care

² Source: <http://spiritsound.net/32-what-is-chanting/2-mantra-chanting.html>

³ Source: www.oshumkaram.com

⁴ Source: <http://www.dailycelebrations.com/pray.htm>

practices. On the other hand, complementary medicine implies the medicines that are used along with the conventional treatment. These non-mainstream health care practices can also be associated with the concept of integrative medicine, (or integrative health care), which combines both the mainstream medical therapies as well as complementary and alternative medicine. Many a times the people who suffer from cancer are provided with integrative health care approaches. The integrative health care approaches includes either providing the service of acupuncture or meditation or even yoga to help manage symptoms as well as the effect of the bio-medicines that are applied to the individuals for the cure of their disease.

Since time unknown, people have classified prayer as a complementary therapy to treat human pathologies. In the traditional era, prayer was not connected as a means of approaching God; it was regarded as one of the behavior therapies. It was a meditative training as the core of psychological intervention for example, Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy. This therapy had a positive impact in the human body. It was even noted in the field of science named as psychoneuroimmunology that there is a positive linkage between psychological states and the immune function of human body (Hathaway, 2009).

Praying for one's own self or a group prayer is always regarded to be effective as it promotes relaxation response among the patients. It thereby leads to trimming down of distress and elevates the hope level of the individual by having increasing social support. Thus, prayer is classified as a "Mind-Body" Therapy (Ayers, 2010). One study by William et al tried to determine the effect of prayer on outcomes in patients admitted to the Coronary Care Unit (CCU). 990 patients were admitted in the CCU. During the time of their admission, patients were made to be a part of a prayer group and the prayer group prayed for their wellbeing and quick healing. Patients themselves were unaware that a prayer group was praying for them. The results of the CCU course score was much lower for the patients for whom prayers were conducted. Therefore, it can be predicted that prayer indeed has the power to have an effective medical care. Various researches prove the fact that prayer acts as a complementary therapy.

Mantra: A source of Spiritual Healing: Mantras are referred to by people as energy based sounds which fabricate physical vibrations in the human being's body which thereby produces energy waves within one's body. It enhances one's subconscious level which leads to clarity of mind and thought. The powerful sounds of mantra create energy which helps him/her to heal faster from any pathology. The ancient Vedic literature opined that the first cosmic sound which

created the whole universe was “AUM”. Vasant Lad (2007), indicated that the word AUM can be broken down into three parts—that is A signifies the beginning, U signifies sustenance and M signifies completion of the cycle.

Quoting the words of **Red Auerbach**⁵—

“Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

Thus, sound is the sole corridor which can lead to inner pharmacy. There are different sounds involved according to each of the organs of the body. In the words of Vasant Lad (2007), it can be seen that how the organs of the body gets connected through sounds:



Fig: 1—Organs of the Human Being’s body creates a liaison through Mantra

It is portrayed in the Vedas of the Hindus that mantras are a prime part of all the Vedic literatures. Each and every organ and parts of a human being can be connected by one way or the other through mantra. If one follows the Vedic literature, then it is penned down that one can procure the entire benefit of mantra therapy if he/she follows a Sattvic diet, vegetarian food, speak less, concentrate more and engulf himself/herself with a positive outlook to society. This will make him/her lead a sacred life as well as will promote faster healing. Vasant lad (2007) projected this thought with a diagram below—

⁵ Source: <http://altered-states.net/barry/newsletter463/quotes.htm>

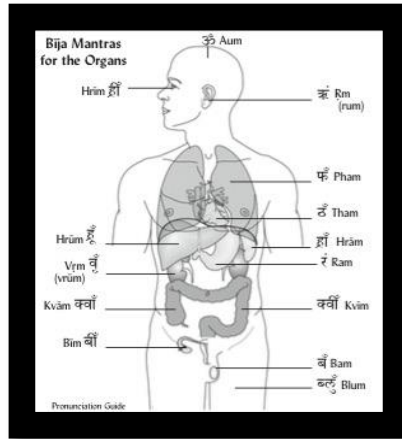


Fig: 2—Bija mantras for the Organs of Human body

Healing through Mantras in Different Religions: Defining religion⁶ is one of the most crucial tasks to any theorist. The etymological meaning of the term lies with the Latin word ‘religare’. This Latin root word implicates the meaning ‘to tie, to bind’. People across the world have tried to put forward the definition of religion in their own ways. This accounted to the development of various meanings of the term religion. Religions of the world adhere to the healing power involved in mantra. In Hinduism, the gayatri mantra is the most powerful mantra of all—
Aum bhoor, bhuwah swaha, tat savitur varenyam, bhargo devasaya deemahi, diyo yo naha prachodayat

The Gayatri Mantra is believed to inculcate wisdom among the people of the world. The Vedas indicates that⁷:

“To chant the Gayatri Mantra

purifies the chanter

To listen to the Gayatri Mantra

purifies the listener”

In **Islam**, the different mantras for its followers are⁸—

⁶ According to the Oxford Dictionary of sociology, religion is a set of beliefs, symbols and practices which is based on the idea of the sacred and which unites believers into a socio-religious community.

⁷ Source: <http://www.gayatri-mantra-download.com/the-gayatri-mantra/>

⁸ Source: 3.imimg.com/data3/XK/.../muslim-mantra-for-vashikaran-specialist.pdf

- ALLAHU AKBAR God is Great
- BISMILLAH Al-RAHMAN, Al-RAHIM in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful
- YA-RAHMAN God, the Beneficent
- YA-SALAAM The Source of Peace
- YA-MUTAKABIR God, the Majestic
- YA-GHAFFAR God, the Forgiver
- YA-FATTAH God, the Opener
- YA-HAFIZ God, the Preserver
- YA-SABUR God, the Patient

In Buddhism, the prime mantra which every Buddhist are expected to utter to promote consciousness and clarity of mind is—

Om Mani Padme Hum

This mantra in Buddhism purifies one's soul and promotes bliss within one's self. It helps man to focus in their life and act accordingly.

In **Christianity**, the mantra that is followed is like—

YESU CHRISTU

OM YESU CHRISTU - "Om, Jesus Christ" LORD JESUS CHRIST

HAIL MARY

GOSPODI POMILUI- "Lord, have mercy"

It means, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee. The followers are reported to be healed from within by uttering these mantras in their day to day lives.

In **Sikhism**, the mantra which is used for the healing of the people is—

*Ek onkaar, satnam, karta puruk, nirbhoo, nirvair, akaal moorat ajonee saibhang gurparsad. Jab aad sach, jugaad sach hai bhee sach, nanak hosee bhee sach*⁹

The mantra is expected to be recited for 11 mins a day in order to get rid from fear and to bring serenity to the soul of an individual.

⁹ Source: www.oshumkaram.com

Mantras which are mentally recited (known as japa) are known as mantra yoga. It means that the mantras acts as an exercise to the brain of the human beings. “Japa” refers to the repetition of a mantra in the minds of an individual. The count of the mantra is mainly done with the help of strands of bead or a mala. “Japa” cures an individual from the attitudes of pride, fear, arrogance, jealousy as well as confusion. It creates balance in the three doshas present in the body of a human being, i.e. the data, kappa and the pitta.

Thus, mantras have healing elements as each increases the energy level of the people thereby helping them to heal fast. It creates a peaceful connection of the mind-body-spirit. It eradicates all the unpleasant thoughts and creates positive energies along with positive thoughts for leading a better life ahead.

Types of prayer: There are different types of prayer which an individual follows. Different situations many a times compel an individual to be involves with different types of prayers. A list of varied types of prayer are as follows—

- Prayer of Faith: People follows prayer of faith when they encounter any problem in their life and finding no other solution they resort to the “superpower”(personified as God) and entrusts their faith on the superpower so that they can come out of the problem.
- Prayer of Petition: People entrusts their faith on God and demands for things in the form of a petition. It acts as a simple request which an individual makes to God. in the words of Jesus: “Ask and ye shall receive”.
- Prayer of Forgiveness: When individuals realises their mistake then they ask for forgiveness from God through their prayer. It helps them to remove the feeling of guiltiness and encourages them to not to repeat the mistake later in their life.
- Prayer of Supplication: This types of prayer involves desperately asking for the fulfilment of a wish. When petitions doesn't work out people go in for prayer of supplication.
- Prayer of Committal: When individuals goes through a difficult phase of life and tries their best to come out of their difficult period then they go in for prayer of committal. It is believed that God will take of the difficult situation and will bury all the worries, thereby re-establishing peace and happiness in one’s life.

Therefore, these are the various types of healing present in the society which are followed by the people at large. People prays regularly not by keeping in mind the benefits that they can incur out of it but to meditate and bring peace and serenity in life.

Conclusion: Sociologically speaking about prayer and mantra as a source of healing would make one come to the conclusion that both these aspects of spiritual healing promotes solidarity and integrity among the people of the society. It promotes a positive outlook to life thereby to upgrade social interaction. Both prayer and mantra are a chained up dimension. Each is interlinked with the other. while doing prayer an individual uses mantras and while doing prayer the mind of the human beings solely concentrates on the mantras and thus they inevitably meditate while praying. Thus, praying is linked with use of mantras and these two leads people to meditate. Various research indicates that prayer, use of mantra and meditation involves a connection in one's wellbeing. It is one of the most important aspect of the society which is silently followed under the banner of religion, but primarily both the methods can be portrayed as useful mediums for healing people around the world.

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