

IS THERE ANY SENSE IN CHANTING AVESTA PRAYERS?

Divine Science of Mantra (Manthra) as Revealed by the Mystic Masters.

It is well known that our ancestors introducing themselves to Jadi Rana, the king at Sanjan, briefly narrated the Parsi Religion, Traditions, Disposition and way of life. This introduction was embodied in the famous sixteen Sanskrit Shloka's. The very first of the 16 Shloka's says:

"(We are those) who, three times a day worship **through the Niyalsh Mantras** the Sun and the five elements, Atash, Wind, Earth, Aakaash and Water and the three Worlds (Tribhuvan) and Shri Ahuramazda, the most merciful, the Lord of the Yazata's, who is sublime (Exalted) due to His manifold attributes -----"

We pray to Hormazd and His creation **through Mantra**. Our address and entreaties, pleadings and petitions to Him and our attunement with His Yazata's are through the holy words of our Scriptures, our Manthra's. That is our age-long way of life.

OUR MANTHRIC TREASURE

We followed that way for 12 long centuries and many of us do it to-day. We have an inherent faith and belief that our Khordeh Avesta prayers have a potent and powerful effect within us and outside us. There are numerous Parsis, who, in the midst of all the toils and turmoils of modern life, find time to chant at least Sarosh Baaj, Gah and Khorshed-Meher Niyash. They do not understand a word of what they are chanting; yet they do it with intense devotion and fervor. Many of them go on praying Niyash's and Yashta's for hours together. They have an inner urge to go on. Not knowing the meaning does not affect them and does not tire them. Some inexplicable bliss and ecstasy is felt while and after praying.

Our **Kushti Prayer** is a Manthric composition, which we are required to do several times a day and on various occasions. (please see Parsi Pukar Vol. 1.1 July 1995)

We have, then, our "**Kriya-kaam**", loosely called rituals and ceremonies, which are also Manthric compositions, some short, like 'stoom' and some marathon, like Vendidad and Nirangdin. Each of them requires some apparatus, some objects, some things, over which certain actions are to be carried out. These 'Kriya-kaam' are mostly directed towards the Ruvan's (souls) of our deceased dear ones. We get them performed with a firm idea that they reach the departed Ruvan in the other world and help them in their journey. In larger ceremonies like Yazashney and Vendidad, a Mobed has to recite specific Manthra's performing at the same time certain movements and maneuvers on the specified apparatus and implements. Manthra is therefore the foundation of all Kriya-kaam.

Now, are all these Manthra Prayers and ceremonies humbugs and gibberish? To preserve them, our ancestors left their centuries old mother land, and here, in this holy land of Bharata, strived and strained to protect them for 12 long centuries. Were they fools? **Are we the descendants of silly and ignorant people?**

VENOMOUS WINDS FROM THE WEST

The most unfortunate thing which happened to us in the latter part of the last century was that we cultivated a great lure for the Western thought and culture which was Godless and faithless. The alleged "progressive intellectualism" had taken full control. The humans of the West drifted so much away from the Path of God and Jesus that the **divine Brotherhood of Religions had to Intervene**.

Every Religion is a spiritual Institution in Nature, and has a divine Power station of its own. These Power-stations are connected with each other in some way. There exists a Brotherhood of Religions and a calamity on one is sometimes tried to be counteracted by the others. To resist the onslaught of atheism and Godlessness in the West, the Brotherhood swung into action. In 1875, the Tibetan Masters inspired **Mme. Blavatsky** to establish the Theosophical Movement. **Swami Vivekanand** was inspired by his Guru Ramkrishna's to go to the West in 1893. (This happened at Cape Comorin after Ramakrishna's death). In a corner of a school at Ranchi, **Swami Yoganand** received a divine message to go to America. His Guru Yuktेश्वर Giri and their Param-Guru confirmed the message. In August 1920 Swamiji left India----

In 1910, a Moslem Musician Saint, **Hazrat Inayat Khan** was lovingly told by his master, Khwaja Abu Hashim Madani of the Sufi Chishti Order: "**Fare forth to the West as a musician of the soul and tune the hearts of men to the divine harmony**". Hazrat Inayat Khan did that from 1910 to 1927.

ANYTHING BUT RELIGION!

When the spiritual Masters were busy transmitting the Divine Messages to the West, we Parsis were busy sending would-be "scholars" there to "learn" Religion - to that West where Religion and Divinity were dying; to that West, which reduced Religion to "a primitive fear complex"; to that West where the dwarfy humans thought their own brains to be supreme and subjected God to an "intellectual scrutiny;" where stark immorality was branded as "freedom"; and where the pompous scholarship exerted itself to find out "corrupt forms" in our Holy scriptures!

Those Western Studies did not believe in the power of Mantra. For them our Holy Avesta was a mere exercise in grammar and etymology. What is the sense in praying in Avesta without knowing the meaning? That was the pompous question raised by West-inflated Parsis. And when the meanings were imported from their alleged Science of philology, they were found to be speculative, conjectural, indefinite, indeterminate and at several places absurd and ludicrous!

WHAT IS MANTRA?

This humble writer has come across an excellent definition of Mantra given by a modern Tibetan master, who is one of those who tries to shake up the West towards the Path of God: -

"The definition of 'mantra', is 'that which protects the mind.' That which protects the mind from negativity, or that which protects you from your own mind, is called mantra

Sogyal Rinpoche, further says in his book, "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying" (Harper-1992. Rupa & Co. 1993) that "**Mantra is the essence of sound and the embodiment of the truth in the form of sound**"; **each syllable of a Mantra is impregnated with spiritual power, condenses a spiritual truth and vibrates with the blessing of the Divine Beings. The chanting of a mantra charges the breath and liberates divine energy within the chanter.**

The Avesta Scriptures declare that Manthra's are founded on "Staota Yasna", the First Divine Vibrations which emanated at the beginning of Creation, and have the power to attune the Chanter with the Yazata's, the Conscious and Living Divine Energy Channels of Ahura.

We will some day delve a little in this Divine Science of Manthra. In the meantime here are the words of Hazrat Inayat Khan:

"As to the power of the WORD, a new idea has been coming from various places under different names, and it is that the repetition of a certain word or phrase is of great help in curing oneself of certain illnesses. Psychology in the Western world is discovering this today. But what about **the Buddhists**, who for so many centuries have repeated the different **mantrams**, sitting in their temples repeating them two thousand, three thousand times a day? What about **the Hindus**, who have preserved their age-old **sacred mantrams and chants**. Even though the language is extinct, they have preserved these ancient chants upto now. What about **the Jewish** people, who still preserve the sacred songs that they have inherited from the Prophets of Beni Israel? What about **the Muslims**, who for ages have repeated the Quran every day for so many hours and who still continue to repeat the verses of the same book today? And think of the secret there is behind the repetitions of **the Catholic mystics!**

The Zoroastrians, the Parsees whose religion dates from perhaps eight thousand years ago, have still maintained their sacred words, and they chant their prayers several times a day, repeating the same words every day. But the modern person reads a newspaper today and throws it away and tomorrow he will ask for another newspaper.

No doubt there is a great value in the fact that millions of people have been clinging to these mantrams, repeating them day after day perhaps all their lives and never becoming tired of doing so. If it were, as it is sometimes called, a religious fanaticism, then nobody could continue those repetitions, as **no intoxication can continue longer than its influence lasts; then it goes and a person is**

disillusioned."

"The Music of Life" (Omega - 1983 - 1988) (Also "The Sufi Message" Vol. II)

Don't you wonder, my reader, that these golden words were spoken by a **Moslem**? But the music of God's Truth is the same in all Religions. Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1928 A.D.) was an accomplished musician of India, a player of a traditional but very difficult instrument, Sarswati Veena.

Hazrat Saheb points out to the spiritually starving West that every Religion has its own 'mantra's. They are chanted since ages. They are not just words of some worldly man-to-man communication. They have spiritual power and divine energy. This is not just a matter of grammar and philology, anthropology, history or geography. **Mantra's are the streams of Divine Music transmuted into divine words.** And here is a saint saying so, one who was born and nurtured in the divine music of India and had experienced within himself the resonance and the rhythm of the music of God's Truth. He is infinite times more authentic than Bartholomae and party who are constantly looking for "corrupt forms" in our Holy Manthra's. Hazrat Saheb had once said that the songs of birds have no grammar. And mark his words about us, the Parsis and our love for our Manthra Prayers, and his coincidental reference to Newspapers in the same Para!

So my faithful reader! Go on praying your Khordeh Avesta. It is a divine exercise, accumulation of spiritual wealth, a weapon during the life on earth, preparation for the life after death, attunement with Yazata's and dialogue with Ahura.

- *CANDOUR* -

68TH KANCHI SHANKARACHARYA ON MANTRA

" We may or may not know the meaning or significance of religious rite, but we will be duly rewarded if we perform it in deference to the great men who have urged us to do it or because we follow the examples of our forefathers who have done it What matters is the faith inspiring our action. This applies particularly **to mantra - upasana (worship through chanting mantras)** more than in anything else. **The reason is that in such worship the proper voicing of the syllables of the mantra and the vibrations created are what matter in bringing beneficial results. The meaning og the mantras come later: -"**

"..... Vedas are not the work of mere mortals. Followers of other religions too ascribe a divine origin to their scriptures. Jesus says he merely repants the words of God, and according to the Muslims, the Prophet speaks the words of Allah. What we call 'apauruseya' is revealed text in their case. The word of the Lord has come through the agency of great men to constitute religious texts."

- Chandrashekharandra Swami in "Hindu Dharma" (Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan
- 1995 p. 165)

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