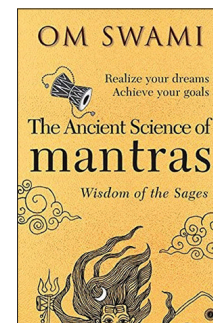


Ancient Science of Mantras – Wisdom of the Sages

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“Mananāt trāyatē iti mantrah” is the definition of the word *mantra* in Sanskrit.

Sustained repetition (Mananāt) of that which protects (trāyatē) from all miseries arising from bondage or cycles from birth and death is called *mantra*. From time immemorial, *mantras* and their sonic powers have been a potent source of well-being for the entire creation. *Mantras* have their origin from the primordial sound OM which is the sound of creation. The sages or the seers who visited and revisited these *mantras* to gain in wisdom unearthed the science behind these *mantras*. This science when put to practice removes all the obstacles to growth, rids all miseries, raises a *sādhaka* or practitioner in wisdom, and catalyzes the process of realizing and achieving the goals set forth for and by every Spiritual being in a human form.

This book under review titled, “*The Ancient Science of mantras-Wisdom of the Sages*,” is penned by a practitioner who has spent many years in unearthing the science of *mantras*. The author takes us through an enchanting journey from the origin of the *mantras* to practicing and applying them for self and societal development.

The first chapter on the origin of *mantra* initially throws light on the reasons of *dukha* or sorrow. The chapter starts with an interesting story of the meeting and the conversation between *Śiva* and *Dēvi* in a picturesque setting situated two billion light years away from *Kailās* and three trillion years ago in time. The different emotions such as delight, fear, sorrow, and the amazement of *Dēvi* corresponding to the different picturesque and dynamic environment come to life. The conversation tunnels into the sound of the *damaru* of *Śiva*. The seventy million sounds manifested that covered the entire spectrum of all *mantras* that is to be created. The sages from *Śiva*'s abode such as *Kaśyapa*, *Vasiṣṭa*, *Paraśurāma*, *Dattātrēya*, *Atri*, and *Gautama* came down to earth and passed on the *mantras* to the humans and captured all of those in 14 *sūtras* with 57 letters called the *Māheśwara sūtras*, which became on the basis of the Sanskrit language. The basis of the entire creation such as the 14 *tattvas*, five elements, three modes of material nature, the four aspects of mind, intellect, fluctuation of mind, and the ego all emerged from the sound.

The author then goes along to explain *mantra sādhanā* and as to how the *mantra* is passed on from one generation to the next through *guru śiṣya parampara*.

The anecdote of African tribal women passing on a song to their offspring right from the time they conceive till the child is delivered and beyond and the way the song is used to evoke positivity by the child even after attaining adulthood makes an interesting reading and develops the faith to begin the path of *Mantra sādhanā*. For a question as to do *Mantras* work, the author explains his own experience in terms of his *sādhanā* in an isolated place where he practiced. The chapter lists *dinacharya* and the strict regimen, a *sādhaka*, has to follow. This leads to *siddhi* where the *sādhaka* starts to see in reality as to that which he has dreamt. The practitioner reaches the state of *jīvanmukta* where he is free from all bondage.

After explaining the why and how of the working of *mantra*, the author throws light on the challenges which a *sādhaka* would encounter when traversing the path of *sādhanā*. Three mandatory requisites to attain *siddhi* in *sādhanā* have been enumerated. They are devotion and faith, often referred to as *Bhakti*, initiation, also known as *dīkṣa*, and the performance of daily duties, known as *nitya karma*. The 16 conditions that need to be sincerely fulfilled to get the divine grace in the path of *mantra yōga* have been enumerated in the book. The steps starting with *bhakti* and culminating in *samādhi* or from devotion to absorption have been explained at various places in the book referring to the context.

Initiation forms an important bond between the guru and his disciple. The book gives insights into three ways of initiating the disciple, namely *Śakti*, *Śāmbhavi*, and *Māntri* by touch, stare, or imparting a *mantra*.

There are predominantly four aspects of *mantra sādhanā*. The first and foremost is approaching a *guru* who has achieved *siddhi* which is one of the 16 qualities to be imbibed by a *guru*. Four types of *gurus* are discussed in this book, namely the crusading *guru*, the cryptic *guru*, the eager *guru*, and a fake *guru*.

The second is a dedicated aspirant or a *sādhak*. Three types of students have been listed in the book. A restless *sādhak*

who jumps from one belief system to the other called the hopper. A stable disciple who is captive of someone else's belief system and is referred to as prisoner and the third one is referred to as discoverer who is a perfect combination of effort, surrender, determination, and devotion.

The third aspect of *Mantra sādhanā* is the resources or *sādhana*, necessities which are required on a daily basis for a *sādhak* to continue his *sādhana*. The fourth and final aspect is the *sādhya* or the goal. Realization of the final destination is important and an emotional intent to reach it takes one closer to the goal.

The book further speaks about the ten tenets of a disciple beginning from keeping the *mantra* a secret and not disclosing it to anyone else as the first tenet to serving the *guru* with all his abilities as the tenth tenet. The daily duties of the adept and the three types of action, namely *Nitya Karma*, *Naimittika Karma*, and *Kāmya Karma*, along with the daily routine comprising of none steps have been dealt with.

Then, taking the insights into the *sādhana* further, the author details the different facets about invoking the *mantra*. The *śhadangās* of mantras, namely *rishi*, *bija*, *chanda*, *dēvata*, and *śakti*, *kīlaka*, are explained in short. The right *mantra* that is to be chosen and the duty of a *guru* to correct the flaws in the *mantra* are discussed. Out of the many flaws the *mantra* can have, fifty flaws have been listed in the book with the most common six flaws such as *dagdha*, *ṛṣṭa*, *garvita*, *mattah*, *chinna*, and *stambhita* explained in detail and the other 44 explained in short at the end of the book. The five ways of correcting a flaw, namely acquiring a *mantra* sentiment (*mantra bhāvana*), praying to a *guru* (*guru dhyāna*), crowning the diety (*kulluka*), bridging the *mantra* (*mahāsetu*), and the protective shield (*bandhana*), are explained in detail and the procedures for carrying out the same is done. The ten *samskāras* to infuse life in a *mantra*; the four ways of chanting a *mantra*, namely *vāchika* (spoken chanting), *upāśu* (whispered chanting), *mānasika* (mental chanting), and *ajapa* (unspoken chanting); and the hurdles in the invocation of the *mantra* such as fear, impatience, and beads are dealt at length.

The second part of the book throws light on the rites of invocation. The nine steps of invoking the diety, namely *āvāhana*, *sthāpana*, *sannidhāna*, *sannirōdhana*, *sambōdhana*, *sammukhikarāṇa*, *śakalīkarāṇa*, *avagunthāṇa*, *amarāṭīkarāṇa*, and *paramīkarāṇa*, are explained in short. The most important aspects of *mantra siddhi* which is awakening the *mantra* called *nyāsa* and self-identification with the diety called *mudra* are explained in two full chapters. The essential steps contained in the rites of invocation which are 36 in number are enumerated in the next chapter.

The third part of the book deals with the actual *sādhana*. The book enumerates four *sādhana*s. The initial *sādhana*

or *ārambha sādhanā* is of Lord *Gaṇēsha*. This is for the blessings and grace. The process (the procedure for performing the rights of invocation known as *purushcharāṇa*), time taken, and the eligibility to perform the *sādhana* are explained in the chapter. The second *sādhana* explained in the book is the *guru sādhanā*. In the author's own words, "this book is written for people who do not have a *guru* or those who have not been bestowed by the *grace* of a *guru* in the human form. This book when understood and the tenets practiced, activates or awakens the *guru* who permanently resides in us. Many of the true teachers today are hard pressed for time and are preoccupied with their own *sādhana*. Hence, this book helps in inspiring us in the path of *mantra sādhanā* like a guide."

The third *sādhana* explained in this section is the *Gāyathri sādhanā*. This *sādhana* is extremely important for improving the Spiritual Quotient. The *sādhana* of *Vēdamāta Gāyathri* forms the foundation to perform any other *sādhana*. The *nyāsa* and *mudrās* to be done in the *Gāyathri Sādhanā* are explained in detail. The fourth *sādhana* is contained in the longest chapter of the book which is the *Sri Sūktam sādhanā*. This is a *sādhana* for the improvement and well-being of the society and all people living in it. This tantric *sādhana* should be done after taking permission of *Vēdamāta Gāyathri*. This is a 16-night *sādhana* with a 960-day routine to earn a right to do the *sādhana*. Even though this is a tantric *sādhana*, it could be easily done by any *grhastā*. The *dinacharya* that needs to be followed by a *sādhaka* has been given in this book. The *dinacharya* for a *grhastā* or a *sanyāsi* is clearly defined.

The next couple of chapters in the section three speak about the rites of atonement known as *prāyaschitta* and the ways of making an offering known as *yajna*. The scriptural injunctions prescribed for the atonement of undesirable acts have been enumerated in the chapter. Fasting (*upavāsa*), penance (*tapas*), charity (*dāna*), chanting (*japa*), fire offerings (*yajna*), repentance (*anutāpa*), confession (*abhīśṭa*), pilgrimage (*tīrtha*), bathing (*Snāna*), consuming concoction of cow products (*pancha gavya sēvana*), and finally word of a *guru* (*guru vākya*) have been described in the chapter. In the chapter on *yajna*, information on ingredients required for the offering, the ways of making a fire pit, and the process of performing a *yajna* have been described.

The book concludes with the fourth section where detailed notes on the types of *mantras*, flaws in the *mantra*, 16 *samskaras* of *sanātana dharma*, 16 significant aspects of *mantra sādhanā*, the different types of Vedic meters, *pātra sādhanā*, types of *upachāras*, and *mantra* compatibility.

Reading of this book reinforces the power of mantras to a *yoga sādhanā*. Mantras are one of the means to achieve *siddhi* and higher spiritual accomplishments. As told in the first sutra of the fourth chapter of the Patanjali Yoga śūtras

janmausadhi mantratapah samādhijah siddhayah, meaning, the *siddhis* or powers which converge on to *sādhaka* who follows a Yoga way of life are attained by birth, through *rasayanas* or medicines, power of repetitive chanting of words or mantras, mortification, or concentration. The *sūtra* clearly states that mantras or the repetitive chanting of the sacred words when repeated under proper conditions aid *siddhis* to converge. Taking a cue from the book and carving out quality time among the rustle and bustle of his daily chores, a student of yoga will tend toward manifesting the unlimited power residing in man.

After penning some of the best-selling reads such as, *A Million Thoughts*, *Kundalini: An Untold Story*, *A Fistful of Love* and *If Truth Be Told: A Monk's Memoir*, this book "*The Ancient Science of mantras-wisdom of the sages*" is yet another interesting read by Om Swami a business management graduate from Australia and successful entrepreneur who turned inward to contribute to the ascension of man. The book which adopts the story-telling methodology of the pen is a wise man's journey.

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