

# A Mystical Tour through Magical Man-Tra-nce

Patrick Jemmer

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Recent work [1 - 6] has investigated in detail the complementary relationships between religion, myth, magic and science, and the essential link of these to language. In particular the "Presuppositions" or "Mantras" of Neuro-linguistic Programming have been described as "a different tongue" for describing and changing human thought and behaviour, albeit utilizing a language of which we might not be consciously aware [7]. Herein was put forward the idea of therapy as a "dialogue" between polarized opposites - the necessary impossibility of communication between the conscious and unconscious; the exclusion and allure of a strange language; the scientific and the artistic; knowledge and experience; knowing and wondering; assuredness and inarticulacy. And here we saw that these Mantras for personal growth fall into one of two broad categories - either that of state or of process - and that in terms of personal growth and change, requisite variety is all-embracing, in order to escape the tyranny of content and allow action to unfold. The present article aims at contextualizing psychotherapy, and particularly hypnotherapy, within this framework. This does not mean that I am attempting to say that hypnotherapy is, or should be, in any sense "religious" or include a necessary "spiritual" dimension - but rather than a proper understanding of the religious and magical traditions of other cultures which utilize trance in an insightful, transformative way, can be highly beneficial to the therapeutic "magician," and give much greater insight into novel modern approaches and applications. Further work by Stevens [8] also explores magical ideas and their relation to modern complementary medicine. The purpose of the current work is to extend these ideas and make a link between psychotherapeutic practice (and particularly hypnotherapy) and the "eternal golden braid" [9] of "mascirelgic"

(religion-magic-science) as discussed in [1].

We start then, with a discussion of belief systems which claim that we can indeed learn to "write, rewrite, reshape, appropriate, refigure" our existence [10], and which seek to unite consciousness with "the One," in different fashions. Buddhism, for example, whilst acknowledging the existence of deities, is essentially non-theistic. Buddha advocated no worship or prayer, but rather the practice of meditation and scriptural study [11]. Meditation is accomplished by means of a mantra, derived from the Sanskrit *manas* - 'mind,' and *tra* - 'deliver' [12]. We read that "In the World Book Dictionary, the meaning ascribed to Mantras is: A prayer or Invocation, sometimes held to have magical power" [13]. In fact "In mainstream Vedic practices, most Buddhist techniques and classical Hinduism, mantra is viewed as a necessity for spiritual advancement and high attainment ... Clearly, there is a reason why such widely divergent sources of religious wisdom as the Vedas, the New Testament and the Dalai Lama speak in common ideas" [12], which we investigate in detail below. So in a general philosophical, mystical, and spiritual sense, what is the power behind mantra? We find that "Mantra, literally meaning 'voice' or 'sound' in the Hindustani language of India, is the attachment of spiritual power to certain types of sounds. It is believed that certain sounds and words have power and that the use of these in prescribed ways produces inevitable results" [14]. Now "The Gayatri mantra is Hinduism's most representative prayer. Hindus recite it on a daily basis, not only contemplating its straightforward meaning, but also dwelling and imbibing its sound, regarded to be pregnant with spiritual meaning. For this reason nearly all Hindu prayers and mantras are sung" [11]. So the mantra itself is derived from sacred

words or syllables: in the context of all our previous discussion on magic and therapy we can now ask: How do mantras gain their power? And the answer is that "As symbols, sounds are seen to effect what they symbolise. Vocal sounds are frequently thought of as having magical powers, or even of representing the words, or speech of God. Aum (Om) is the basic mantra of all Sanskrit mantras. It refers to A(jagrat), U(swapna), and M(sushupti). The three regions refer to the three planes of existence, physical, astral and casual. The silence which follows each utterance of Aum suggests the state of Absolute Being, or Brahman, which is the source and end of everything" [11]. We read that "Om, the first and last letters of the Indian alphabet, is believed to be the condensation of all power. It was understood as the first sound that Brahma made when he came into the universe ... [15]" [14]. Moreover "It is believed that the vibrating sound of the 'Om' encompasses the Universe. Sages claim that if one chants it continuously with a certain technique then one can be put in tune with the Cosmos. Almost all other Sanskrit Mantras start with the word 'Om'. It is almost like the word 'Om' makes the prayer come alive" [13]. This is because words and their sounds can be thought of as harnessing the creative power of the Universe, and "... the nature of consciousness is - in it [the sound]; and eurythmy is - the art of cognition; here thought flows into the heart; and the heart speaks without words..." [16]. Thus "The slow, sustained concentration on these passages drives them deep into our minds; and whatever we drive deep into consciousness, that we become" [17]. Furthermore, "The equivalent of 'Om' in English is 'I Am'. 'I AM' is the shortest and the most powerful sentence in the English language. Since there is magic in the vibrational content of the word 'Om' and/or 'I Am' One must not to use any negative word after it ... [for example] One must not say I am sick, poor, lonely, afraid, etc. If one must, use the suffix [sic] 'I feel...'" [13]. Other mantras are derived from the names of deities, like "[aim], [aing], [hirin], [hiring], [ing], [inga], [kirin], [kiring], [shiam],

[shiama], [shirin], [shiring]" [18]. There are five basic types of mantra which we can classify thus: "Those that work simply by faith (analogous to applying a Dock leaf to a nettle sting) ... Those that work by association (e.g. the National Anthem) ... Those that work by agreement or covenant (e.g. the Christian 'This Is My Body,' which evokes Angelic assistance) ... Those that work by their meaning - repetition gives power to the words impressing upon the mind and mental body. Blessings given by a Priest fall into this category ... Those that work by their sound (without meaning, e.g. Om, the powerful seed mantras)" [19]. Mantra meditation can thus be typified as a set of related processes involving the vocalization (or subvocalization) of energetic vibrations, leading to the attainment of specific physical and mental states. Here we note that "subvocalization" refers to the mental process of "thinking" the mantra, as one might imagine experiencing an internal dialogue, or "hearing" a piece of music "in one's head" - we will return below to the mode of operation of a mantra based on true external vocalization and thus emerging from, and bringing forth energetic vibrations; or alternatively as an (electrical) thought-pattern or "brainwave" which leads to such energetic vibrational states. We have considered so far the origin of these practices in Eastern religio-philosophical teachings and common mantras in Hindu are: "Om Tat Sat (Thou art the Inexpressible Absolute Reality) ... Hari Om Tat Sat (Om, the Divine Absolute Reality) ... Om Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama (Victory for the Spiritual Self) ... Yesu Christu (Jesus Christ in Hindi) ... Tat Twam Asi (that and This of One) ... Sat Nam (mantra of Sikhs and Guru Nanak) ... Eck Ong Kar Sat Nam Siri Wha Guru (The Supreme is One, His Names are Many) ... Aham Brahmasmi (I Am Brahman or I Am God)" [19]. Such practices are not restricted to Eastern religious observance, however: hymns, chants and prayers are effectively used in all religious settings. For example, the Ancient Egyptians used "Nuk-Pu-Nuk (I Am He I Am) ... Au-U Ur-Se-Ur Au-U (I Am the Great One, Son of the Great One,



I Am) ... Ra-Neter-Atef-Nefer (The Divine God, Ra is Gracious) ... Nefer-Neter-Wed-Neh (The Perfect God Grants Life) ... Erta-Na-Hekau-Apen-Ast (May I be given the words of power of Isis) ... Heru-Udjat (Eye of Horus)" [19] in their rites. In the Jewish tradition, we find mantras such as: "Eh Hay Eh, or Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh (I Am that I Am) ... Ha Sham (the name) ... Sh'Mah Yisrael Adonai Elohainu Adonai Chad (Hear, oh Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One!) ... Qadosh, Qadosh, Qadosh, Adonai Tzeba'oth (Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts) ... Eli Eli (My God, My God) ... Ribono Shel Olam (Lord of the Universe)" [19]. Islam proclaims "Allahu Akbar (God is Great) ... Bismillah Al-Rahman, Al-Rahim (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful) ... Ya-Rahman (God, the Beneficent)" [19]. Christian worship brings forth "Jesus Christ ... God, Christ, Holy Spirit ... Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name ... Hail Mary, Full of Grace! The Lord is with Thee ..." [19].

Having investigated the form of expression of various mantras, it is useful now to address the philosophical basis and "meaning" of mantra meditation - and in fact this might best be done in terms of a discussion of what it is not. So we read, for example, that meditation is not concentration, but one of many forms of concentration, and that "When you concentrate, you constantly project your attention towards a particular task or activity whereas in Meditation you do not project your attention towards a particular task or activities. You just remain aware of the moment without choosing anything to concentrate upon. Concentration is important for learning meditation. It will greatly help you (particularly in the initial phase) in learning meditation. However, it is not Meditation" [20]. Moreover, meditation is not simply relaxation, since we can ask "What does relaxation do? It relaxes you, makes you calm, gives a sense of serenity and rejuvenates you. Meditation also makes you relaxed. But Meditation is not Relaxation. When you meditate ... its natural outcome is relaxation" [20]. We should also be careful to differentiate

meditation from serious religious practice, since "Meditation is not a specific ritual demanding sitting in a particular posture, chanting some specific Mantras (powerful words having phonetic significance) or burning incense. Neither it means doing a particular exercise in a particular pose. Meditation is a quality of our existence. When you are aware of your true 'self' and perform anything ... with awareness, it becomes meditation" [20]. This statement holds even though "It is true that it takes some time to learn Meditation and it requires some genuine effort on the part of seeker to learn meditation, but it does not mean that Meditation is connected with any specific religion or ritual. Anybody, irrespective of his background, religion, caste, creed or nationality can do it. Meditation is not even a serious thing. One you understand it, it will be a pure fun to meditate" [20]. In the most general sense we must take care to understand that meditation is not a state of mind, but rather a state of "no mind" and in terms of brainwaves " ... This (alpha) state is often known as the state of Meditation. Gamma and Theta are the other states of mind in further depth ... In the alpha state one become still, tranquil and calm. There is no tension, no stress. Your whole inner being becomes peaceful. But please note that alpha state itself is not meditation. Alpha is the state of mind in meditation. Meditation is the awareness of our true self in alpha. You will be in meditation if you remain awoken and aware of the present moment in the alpha state of mind i.e. in the state of absolute calm" [20]. And there's a link to our later discussion of hypnosis and therapy, since we are reminded that meditation is not self-hypnosis, since "In both Self-hypnosis and (in many techniques of) meditation at least an initial period of concentration on an object is required. However in meditation, the meditator maintains an awareness of here-and-now and stays conscious of the meditative process which is not exactly the case in hypnosis. In hypnosis the person enters into a state of semi-conscious trance and become unaware of the moment which is not the case in meditation" [20]. We can

go even further than this and state that meditation is not thinking, "Rather it is the process of transcending the thought process. Our mind is a non-stop chatterbox that continues to create all sorts of good / bad, relevant / irrelevant thoughts incessantly. In meditation we realize that we are not just our body and mind. There exists in us an awareness independent of all kinds of thoughts. Knowing this awareness is what meditation is all about" [20]. So, let's now turn to the positive questions posed by meditative practice, such as: "What is self? It is the pure awareness of 'I am', the original 'I' consciousness which has been within us ever since we come into this world. Even though that 'I' exist in the woman, it is not a woman, even though it exist in a man, it is not a man. That 'I' is without form, colour or any other attribute. We have superimposed different notions onto it - notions like 'I am a man / woman / an American / an Indian'. But when we wipe them all away that 'I' is nothing but pure consciousness," and so "In reality you are just consciousness. You are not body, you are not mind, you are not thoughts, you are just consciousness which feels and witness everything as you play your part in life. This consciousness by its very nature is peaceful, calm and rejuvenating. And Meditation is a process to know this consciousness within you" [20]. There is a link here to the classical idea of conscious-subconscious duality, however, since the meditator realizes that "In the course of any single day we are subjected to numerous sensory inputs and our mind is constantly engaged in a never ending process of thinking. We read the newspaper, study books, write reports, engage in conversation and meetings, solve problems, etc and all these activities result in a constant mental commentary inside us. Seldom or never our mind gets any chance to be still and calm" [20], and yet, "However, sometimes as if by accident most of us attain a state of thought-free mind. If you have relaxed looking at a beautiful sunset, allowing your thoughts to quiet down, this is close to meditation. If you have been reading a book for awhile, then put it down to take a break and just sat

there quietly and peacefully for a few minutes without thinking, this is also close to meditation. In these momentary incidents when our mind is not reflexively engaged in any thought, when we are just present in the moment, we come close to this self ... we get centered in our self. And this contact with self brings peace, bliss and joy. Though only for a moment, our mind becomes peaceful, calm and focused" [20]. The bounty of this "centering" for the meditator is that "To be centered in our self makes us calm, provides us an everlasting peace and gives us a never ending bliss. Moreover there comes a dramatic change in the way we perceive this world. A positive change in our perspective, a feeling of blissful calm and a unique joy comes through it. Moreover these positive outcomes do not depend upon any external circumstances since the bliss of the Self does not depend on any external factor. It is completely independent and arises, unconditionally, from within" [20]. Thus we can summarize by saying that to the modern practitioner of mantra meditation, "Meditation is the systematic way to achieve the above mentioned accidental / occasional encounters with self in order to get its benefits on a permanent basis" [20] - and that "Meditation is a systematic way of making our mind quiet so that we can contact our true identity-self, which is the source of everlasting joy, bliss and peace" [20]. In terms of the more philosophical approach to this practice, then "Meditation is a state of choiceless awareness - Meditation is a state of no mind - Meditation is a state of once being when once true self is revealed to him / her - The state of awareness when mind cease to exist is meditation - Whenever you are relaxed, when your mind is quiet and observant, when you are not reflexively engaged in any thought: you are meditating -Meditation is not thinking about anything. It is not contemplation. It is not concentration; in fact, it is actually a process of thought removal" [20]. And in terms of achieving the "bliss" of "centeredness" then "Meditation makes us aware of the fact that we are intelligent ... The foundation of self awareness that meditation provides is useful in many



areas ... It develops insight into the unconscious causal connections between thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, body states, and behaviors ... Your attitude towards life will change ... You will be able to see the larger picture of things ... Meditation helps us accept the things as they are not as we desire them to be ... You will be more understanding towards others ... You will start ignoring petty issues ... Your inner ability to solve complex problems will increase ... It is a healthy way to handle stress ... Meditation increases concentration, self-esteem, spontaneity, creativity, and depth of awareness" [20]. And despite the fact that the meditation practitioner is at pains to explain that this activity is different from hypnosis, nevertheless, successful hypnotherapy can still result in very much these same outcomes.

Having seen some examples of mantra, and discussed its philosophical underpinnings, let us now address its conceived mode of operation. First we recognize that the act of vocalization (speaking, singing, humming, and so on) produces vibrations which have a physical effect: other individuals can hear and interpret these as speech or music, for example; moreover, some vibrations are unpleasant, or noisome; and some notes can even shatter glass! Thus the "energy-basis" of the mantra imparts a further "meaning" to the words [12]. In terms of measurable physical phenomena: "It is said that that the wavelength (or maybe half-wavelength) of Om is 7.23 cm, the average length across the palm - this would put the frequency at about 4.2 GHz. Microwave ovens work at around 2.45 GHz, as this is an ideal frequency for heating water (which is how microwave ovens work), water comprising 80% of the human body. Some frequencies in the lower GigaHertz region are absorbed by atmospheric precipitation ([and this absorption] causes communication difficulties)" [19]. Let's suggest a metaphor to try and explain this concept of "vibration energy" - "If we warn a young child that it should not touch a hot stove, we try to explain that it will burn

the child. However, language is insufficient to convey the experience. Only the act of touching the stove and being burned will adequately define the words 'hot' and 'burn' in the context of 'stove.' Essentially, there is no real direct translation of the experience of being burned ... It is the same with mantras. The only true definition is the experience which it ultimately creates in the sayer" [12]. Another way of thinking of this is that mantra represents "a perfectly natural language, for all the affections of the mind, whatever they are, and all the ideas of a thing, whatever they are, have their corresponding affection in the body, which cannot be described; for they affect the body and its various parts as all affections are wont to do. These affections with man, raise the breast, contract and dilate the lungs, cause freedom or difficulty of breathing; or also contract or dilate the belly, or affect the lower part, as also the face and eyes. Such corresponding affections are felt manifestly in the bodies of spirits and Angels; and when they speak, they enunciate the words articulately, according to their sensation of those affections. Thus their speech and affections make one" [21]. Thus "Over thousands of years, many sayers have had common experiences and passed them on to the next generation. Through this tradition, a context of experiential definition has been created" [12]. So "Each mantra is associated with an actual sage or historical person who once lived ... This means that the mantra was probably arrived at through some form of meditation or intuition and subsequently tested by the person who first encountered it" [12]. In utilizing a mantra one couples a specific "energy-basis" with an "intention," and this coupling influences the result of the mantra. We could describe this by saying that "The sound is the carrier wave and the intent is overlaid upon the wave form, just as a colored gel influences the appearance and effect of a white light" [12]. We can summarize this with the statement that the "only lasting definition is the result or effect of saying the mantra" [12]. Now, we can imagine human consciousness as a gestalt composed of many "parts" or

“states,” as in the Neuro-linguistic programming description of the mind [22] - [25], and thus “there are myriad vibrations riding in and through the subconscious mind at any given time” [12]. These vibrations are distributed “holographically” throughout the “physical and subtle” bodies [12], so that “Each organ has a primitive consciousness of its own ... individual organ consciousness is overlaid by system consciousness, overlaid again by subtle body counterparts and consciousness, and so ad infinitum” [12]. Freud's ego state “with its self-defined 'I'ness assumes a pre-eminent state among the subtle din of random, semi-conscious thoughts” [12] - we thus act as “antennae” for vibrations arising from external sources, and become “attuned” with them, since “there is a direct relationship between the mantra sound, either vocalized or subvocalized, and the chakras located throughout the body” [12]. And once again we are with Adam and Eve and their pronouns, the tempting Snake, and the mute but sentient creatures in the Garden [2], [4].

As discussed above, the mantra can be thought of as generating a powerful vibration on a particular “spiritual” energy frequency. This is the “seed” for a new, special, state of consciousness, which eventually harmonizes, overrides and absorbs all other vibrations leading to a profound change in state. Ashley-Ferrand sums the process up thus: “After a length of time which varies from individual to individual, the great wave of the mantra stills all other vibrations. Ultimately, the mantra produces a state where the organism vibrates at the rate completely in tune with the energy and spiritual state represented by and contained within the mantra. At this point, a change of state occurs in the organism. The organism becomes subtly different. Just as a laser is light which is coherent in a new way, the person who becomes one with the state produced by the mantra is also coherent in a way which did not exist prior to the conscious undertaking of repetition of the mantra” [12]. This process of attuning is what we mean when we read that “... the word mantra in

its most literal sense means 'to free from the mind.' Mantra is, at its core, a tool used by the mind which eventually frees one from the vagaries of the mind” [12]. And have we not recovered “themes of music” which give birth to “deeper understanding” when the whole composition “shall be played aright”? [26]. Chanting a mantra is a “purifying” process and we are told: “Kabeer man nirmal bhayo jaise Ganga neer Peechhey peechey Hari phirey kahat Kabeer Kabeer' Which means that 'My mind has become as pure as the waters of the Ganga, hence now the Lord follows me chanting my name!’” [13]. Some mantras are sounds which have no simple translation, but nevertheless invoke very potent vibrations: these are called “seed mantras” (bija(m) in Sanskrit). For example: “The mantra 'Shrim' or Shreem is the seed sound for the principle of abundance (Lakshmi, in the Hindu Pantheon.) If one says 'shrim' a hundred times, a certain increase in the potentiality of the sayer to accumulate abundance is achieved. If one says 'shrim' a thousand times or a million, the result is correspondingly greater” [12]. However “It is at this point that the intention of the sayer begins to influence the degree of the kind of capacity for accumulating wealth which may accrue” [12]. For of course “... abundance can take many forms. There is prosperity, to be sure, but there is also peace as abundance, health as wealth, friends as wealth, enough food to eat as wealth, and a host of other kinds and types of abundance which may vary from individual to individual and culture to culture” [12]. Like magic, it can be said that “I believe ... [mantras] work even if one does not understand the meaning. However understanding them, and/or chanting them correctly makes them more effective as one is then able to infuse more feeling into it” [13]. It is recommended that mantra chanting be finished by saying “Om Shanti Shanti Shantih” - “I am Peace, Peace, Peace” [13]. Moreover, mantra meditation energizes “prana” - “a Sanskrit term for a form of life energy which can be transferred from individual to individual” [12]. Mantras are intrinsically powerful





however, and must be used with caution, since, to invoke another metaphor of agni ('fire'): "You can use fire either to cook your lunch or to burn down the forest. It is the same fire. Similarly, mantra can bring a positive and beneficial result, or it can produce an energy meltdown when misused or practiced without some guidance" [12].

Meditation practices differ from tradition to tradition. Generally, the meditator might lay down, sit cross-legged, stand, or walk [27]. Using concentration, self-awareness, self-discipline and equanimity, she aims "softly to avoid" random thoughts and fantasies, in an effortless process that calms and focuses the mind. In Samadhi ("concentration") meditation, practised by Buddhists, Hindus, Mediaeval Christians and Kabbalistic Jews, the mind is focused on an idea, image, sound, person, or word [27]. Today, Easwaran advocates "passage meditation," using texts from the great religions [28]. In Vipassana ("insight") meditation, used in Theravada and Zen Buddhism, and the "choiceless awareness" of Krishnamurti, the practitioner acknowledges each bodily perception but does not linger on these, and passes on [27]. Thus Conze identifies this practice with the magical technology of casting a "spell" described previously, as it enables the practitioner to translate her "will" into an action on the external world, by careful practice and repetition [29]. In this way humankind can use its own free will to attain "deliverance from mental suffering" [11], gain experiential insight into the "nature of reality," and "commune with the Deity" [27]. As Bely says, the practitioner "...is free to meditate for hours ... to hear in the shuddering of the air the imprint of ancient meaning; and by wrapping oneself in the image of muttering by-gones, to resurrect that which has gone by" [16]. Today, Transcendental Meditation, developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, is sold as a set of non-religious techniques for attaining "bliss." However in this case you buy a personal, secret mantra, based on the name of a Hindu deity, which is passed on in an "initiation ceremony" by a "guru" [18].

Modern secular meditation practices are derived from Hindu Tantrism, and a "smooth-sounding," meaningless, word or syllable, with no associations, is used as a mantra to achieve easily, internal focus and "deep relaxation" [18]. Such meditation practices tend to follow a sequence of stages, paralleling those in hypnotherapy [30]. First there is the induction, where one closes the eyes, and then after a couple of minutes' relaxation, begins speaking the mantra, repeating it in a voice that gets lower and lower, until eventually it is whispered, then only thought. Even the thoughts can diminish in intensity! Meditation is self-regulating and as it progresses, breathing becomes flatter and slower, maybe with some deep breaths. The mantra may become vague or vanish, and feelings of relaxation and ease increase [30]. During this fifteen-minute meditation, disturbing awarenesses are noted and ignored, and we find: "Soon other thoughts will emerge spontaneously. One should try not to start daydreaming. Thoughts and perceptions are simply allowed to come and go like single, detached events ... The 'sound' of the mantra varies. Occasionally it 'vanishes'" [30]. If this process proves distressing in any way, then it is stopped, and deep muscle relaxation is attempted. The systematic awakening procedure uses deep breathing, stretching, and ends with opening the eyes. Mantra meditation can be used in healing, since "Some healers operate through transfer of prana. A massage therapist can transfer prana with beneficial effect. Even self-healing can be accomplished by concentrating prana in certain organs, the result of which can be a clearing of the difficulty or condition. For instance, by saying a certain mantra while visualizing an internal organ bathed in light, the specific power of the mantra can become concentrated there with great beneficial effect" [12]. And in this way we see how ancient methods can be exceedingly useful in our attempts to "Linguistitalize the Therapon" of healing interventions [31].

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For brevity, all websites are referenced with unique 7-alphanumeric "wapURL" addresses generated at <http://wapurl.co.uk/index.cfm>. These were all checked and found to be available as of 0000H 27 September 2008, and wapURL: CEHO5Z5, for example, can be accessed via <http://wapurl.co.uk/?CEHO5Z5>.