

## Emotional Style: Difference between Japa chanters and Non chanters

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Japa means muttering in Sanskrit. In spiritual practice it is Mantra recitation. It consists of the repetition of the same mantra, which can be composed of a single syllable (e.g., *om*) or a string of mantric sounds (e.g., *om namahshivaya* or *Hare Krishna Mantra*). Mantra is said to stimulate the subliminal power centers in the subtle body (Samajdare *et al.* 2020). The present study is an attempt to test the effect of japa (Hare Krishna Mantra) on emotional style. Emotional style refers to an individual's typical or characteristic way of experiencing, expressing, and managing their emotions. It encompasses how a person responds to different emotional situations, whether they tend to experience emotions intensely or subtly, and how they cope with and regulate their feelings. A matched group design is adopted to see if there is significant difference between Japa chanters and Non-chanters. Emotional Style Questionnaire (ESQ) by Kesebir *P. et al.* (2019) is administered on two groups of participants- Japa chanters (N=70) and Non chanters (N=130) matched on age, education and domicile. The emotional style of two groups are compared by computing t test. Results reveal significant difference between the two groups where Japa Chanters have significantly higher scores in Outlook, Resilience, Social intuition, Self awareness and Attention however, no significant difference is noted in Sensitivity to context dimensions of emotional style. The significance of Mantra chanting is discussed and implications are elucidated.

**Keywords:** Emotional style, Japa chanting, Outlook, Self awareness, Social intuition

### Emotional Style:

Emotional style refers to an individual's typical or characteristic way of experiencing, expressing, and managing their emotions. It encompasses how a person responds to different emotional situations, whether they tend to experience emotions intensely or subtly, and how they cope with and regulate their feelings. We experience different states of emotions in different intensity and duration, this unique state of experiencing emotion is termed as emotional style by Kesebir *et al.* (2019). Six dimensions of emotional styles are proposed that are governed by specific brain circuit. These six dimensions are Outlook, Resilience, Social Intuition, Self-Awareness, Sensitivity to Context, and Attention. Each of these dimensions

describes a continuum with two extremes that in most cases reflect heightened or reduced activity in the brain circuits that underlie these dimensions. Who we are emotionally, or our Emotional Style, is a function of where we fall along these six dimensions.

### Japa chanting:

Mantra recitation is called Japa in Sanskrit which literally means muttering. The word Mantra is a combination of two verbs, Man and Tra which in Sanskrit "Mananat Trayate", just by chanting one can save himself in the universe that is achieved in this material world. The mantra can be composed of a single syllable (e.g., *om*) or a string of mantric sounds (e.g., *om namahshivaya*). Mantra japa produces positive mental tracks,

helping us to gradually overcome spiritual darkness. It is a powerful technique for focusing the mind and for harnessing the body/mind's subtle energies in completing the yogic path of self-transformation.

### **Generally Mantras can be classified in 2 categories**

*Tantric Mantras* - This mantras has origin in Tantras, thousands of different mantras exists and they can be practiced for specific purposes, such as achieving wealth, health, success, curing specific diseases, longevity or even for doing bad to someone. The effects are said to be fast for these mantras. These mantras are difficult to learn so it advised to learn from a guru.

*Pouranic Mantras* - This type of mantras are relatively simple and can be practiced by anyone, they are easy to learn and helps purify emotions of human mind. These mantras are safe, slowly the practice of these mantras leads to ultimate salvation. Ex- *Om namahshivay, Hare ram hare krishna, Om namonarayanay.* (Satyananda Saraswati; 2023)

### **Methods of Chanting Mantra:**

*Baikhari* (Audible) - chanting aloud which can be heard by himself and others is called "Baikhari" Chanting. Advantages of Baikhari Chanting includes Removal of negative thoughts, Easy conceptualization of thoughts and makes meditation easy.

*Upanshu* (whispering) - Chanting of mantra in low voice, or just whispering so that only practitioner can understand is called "Upanshu" Chanting. Advantages of "Upanshu" include Long duration chanting (8 to 10 hours), Purposeful Mantra repetition (example: for wealth, health, land acquisition, happiness etc.) this type of chanting is said to correct the destiny errors.

*Manasik* (Mental) – This type of chanting is repeated mentally without making any sound. It is difficult process to learn and practice, only higher seekers of yoga practice perform this type of mantra chanting. It leads to higher states of consciousness (Saraswati S 2023)

The mantra as a whole stimulates the subliminal power centers in the subtle body (Karnick C. R.;1981).Perry G.*et al.* (2016) studied the difference between types of mantra chanting –vocal and silent- among experienced and inexperienced chanters and found that inexperienced chanters showed a significant increase in positive affect for the vocal chanting condition and not the silent chanting condition. They observed that chanting was effective in enhancing emotional wellbeing and social cohesion for both experienced and inexperienced individuals. and these benefits were observed following either vocal or silent chanting.

Sang Ayu Ketut Candrawati , Meidiana Dwidiyanti and Rita Hadi Widyastuti (2018) studied the effect of mindfulness with Gayatri mantra on anxiety in elderly which showed that post test score of elderly participants on anxiety was significantly reduced after participating in mindfulness with Gayatri mantra sessions. Mere listening to Vedic chanting also have an impact on emotion as demonstrated by K. Dhanaraj and V.B. Srinivasan (2019) through their study on the effect of listening to vedic chanting on state anger and anxiety. They found that listeners of vedic chanting had considerably reduced scores in post test phase on state anger and anxiety.

The present study is an attempt to see the difference in emotional style among those who chant Japa regularly and those who do not chant to see if chanting has any effect on emotional style of individuals.

**Problem :**

Do Japa chanters differ in their emotional style than non chanters?

**Hypothesis:**

Ha1 : Japa chanters significantly differ from non chanters in their emotional style

**Material and Method****Participants:**

Adult in the age group of 22 to 58 years. Japa chanters- who have been chanting "Hare Krishna Maha Mantra" Japa regularly for more than 6 months. 70 devotees of ISKCON are recruited for the study. A comparison group of 138 individual matched on age, education level, Domicile are also recruited in the study. The participants are selected following purposive sampling method.

Hare Krishna Maha Mantra  
Hare krishna hare krishna  
krishna krishna hare hare  
Hare rama hare rama rama  
rama hare hare  
itishodashakamnam  
kali-kalmasha-nashanam

*natahparataropayahsarva-vedesudrsyate*  
(Kali Santarana Upanishad)

The first two lines are the mantra whereas the last two lines describe the significance of the mantra as- These sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables are the only means of counteracting the evil effects of the Kali-yuga.

**Tools:**

*Emotional Style Questionnaire* (ESQ) developed by Kesebir P.*et al* (2019). Consists of 24 item with 7 response categories (from 1- Strongly disagree to 7- Strongly Agree) . It yields six dimension of emotional style i. e Outlook, Resilience, Social intuition, Self awareness, Sensitivity to context and

attention. These six dimensions are based on a theoretical framework drawn from neuroscientific studies of emotion.

The reported test-retest reliability was 0.64 to 0.85 (for a period of 4 weeks). The authors computed Cronbach's alpha is 0.88.that indicates good reliability for the current sample.

**Results and Discussion**

The participants include two groups one- those who chant Hare Krishna Mahamantra regularly for more than six months. They are the devotees of ISKCON and are trained under the guidance of Prabhupada. Hare Krishna Mahamantra is a 16 syllable mantra that is the *tarak brahma mantra* of Kali Yuga. As per various Vedic Scriptures including Padma Purana, Srimad Bhagavatam and Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Hare Krishna Mahamantra is the only means to completely revive the eternal constitutional position of the soul as a part of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. The matched group consist of participants who are not trained or practicing any type of Mantra chanting. They were matched on Age , education level and domicile as emotional style vary with age and education. The ESQ was administered to both the groups and the obtained data was analysed through t test using SPSS.22. The results are discussed below.

The results of t test reveal the significant difference between chanters of Japa and non chanters in some dimensions of emotional style which is discussed below.

Outlook dimension of emotional style is the ability to sustain positive emotions over time. Chanters obtained higher mean score than non chanters in this dimension. The obtained t value ( $t=5.29$ ;  $P<0.00$ ) is highly significant. It reveals that Chanters maintain positive outlook towards life even in adverse situations. The explanation for this can be found in a fMRI study conducted by Gao, J.

*et al* (2020) on religious chanters and non chanters, the results showed higher brain activity in regions - the fusiform gyrus, bilateral occipital lobes, prefrontal lobes, as well as the thalamus, amygdala,

parahippocampus, and cerebellum. Asymmetric amygdala activity was observed during Chanting, with significantly higher activity in the left than the right amygdala. It implies that chanting Japa increases brain activities related to positive emotions.

Table 1. Results of t- test on dimensions of Emotional style of Japa chanters and non-chanters

Variable	JAPA	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	Significance
Outlook	Non chanters	138	17.94	3.501	-5.295	.000
	Chanters	70	21.46	6.064		
Resilience	Non chanters	138	17.46	2.818	-2.338	.020
	Chanters	70	19.07	7.055		
Social intuition	Non chanters	138	17.70	3.636	-4.504	.000
	Chanters	70	20.66	5.806		
Self-awareness	Non chanters	138	18.96	3.928	-2.729	.007
	Chanters	70	20.93	6.464		
Sensitivity to context	Non chanters	138	19.14	4.058	.737	.462
	Chanters	70	18.63	5.784		
Attention	Non chanters	138	17.01	3.184	-4.297	.000
	Chanters	70	19.81	6.249		

Resilience means ability to recover from negative emotions like fear, loss, sadness etc. Chanters of japa have significantly better in resilience compared to their counterparts ( $t= 2.34$  ;  $P<0.01$ ). Since Japa chanters believe in the principle of Karma that doing ones duty at his best without bothering about success or failure which is determined by lord Krishna keeps them motivating to try again with greater efforts.

Social intuition is ability to read nonverbal cues facial expressions, body language or vocal intonations and be able to understand others' emotional states. Japa chanters have significantly better social intuition than non chanters ( $t=4.50$ ;  $P<0.01$ ). This finding is supported by research of Perry G.*et al.* (2016) where social cohesion was increased among the participants after exposing to chanting condition.

Self-awareness is ability to perceive their bodily signals that reflect emotions and attend to emotional cues that arise within them and recognize and interpret them. It is significantly higher ( $t= 2.729$ ;  $P<0.01$ ) in Japa chanters than their counterparts.

Sensitivity to context refers to the degree with which our emotional and behavioral responses take into account our social context, such as showing appropriate response in interpersonal relations, dressing in socially appropriate way etc. No significant difference ( $t=0.74$ ;  $P>0.05$ ) is seen between the two groups. Sensitivity to Context reflects attunement to the social environment. Sensitivity to the rules of social engagement and the capacity to regulate oneself in accordance with these rules constitutes the essence of Sensitivity to Context (Kesebir *et al.*;2019). Since Japa is a process of

inward focus it may not have significant influence on external perception of environment.

Attention is ability to screen out distraction and stay focused. Japa chanters significantly better ( $t=-4.297$ ;  $P<0.01$ ) than non chanters in attention. They select appropriate emotional stimuli to attend and are not easily perturbed by distracting situations. Chanting Japa for longer time enhances the ability to sustain attention hence japa chanters have better attention than their counterparts.

### Implications

The present study implies the significance of spiritual practice japa in managing emotions and social life of individuals. Including Hare Krishna Maha Mantra japa in life style helps preventing many mental illness (Wolf, D. B.;1999) and enhances not only wellbeing but takes ahead in spiritual abode.

### Conclusion

Japa chanters have significantly better positive outlook. Resilience, social intuition, self awareness and attention than non chanters. Chanting japa helps in emotion regulation, improves patience and attention to appropriate stimuli in the environment. No significant difference is found between chanters and non chanters in sensitivity to context. Both the group have similar score on this indicating poor effect of Japa as this variable is outward expression of emotions opposite to self awareness.

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