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Effect of Mahamantra chanting on the anxiety level of teen sports players

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Abstract

Mahamantra or Hare Krishna Mahamantra is an old meditation technique unique to India and particularly to Gaudiya Vaishnavism tradition of the Bengal region of India, consists of 16 words "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare". Yoga is basically of many types like Gyan Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Dhyaan Yoga & Bhakti Yoga, the best of which is sought to be Bhakti yoga which signifies re-establishing one's connection with the god by effecting devotional service. It has 64 practices and besides one of major practices include Meditation or chanting of the name of Hari or God in 16 syllable word as mentioned above. In general and in the sports the chanting of the Mahamantra has proved to be immensely beneficial. Unlike the modern understanding that this is only a sectarian and a religious practice, the mahamantra goes beyond all these identities and is chanted by millions of people around the world and seeking immense benefits from mind control to tackling addictions. This essays proposes to deep dive and scientifically prove the benefits of chanting Mahamantra on performance of Sports players.

Keywords: Mahamantra, sports, athletes, Hare Krishna Mahamantra

Introduction

Problems and stresses faced by sports players ^[1]

1) Competitive Stressors

Competitive stressors are stressors related directly to the sporting situation the athlete finds themselves in. Essentially, they are the most obvious stressors and are most directly linked to what happens during training or in a game.

Common competitive stressors include;

- Injury
- Returning from injury
- Pressures leading up to game day
- Pressures to perform during a big game
- The opposition
- Competition for places
- Issues with form and/or technique

Each athlete is different, and their response to these competitive stressors will vary too. Finding the sweet spot where these stressors are contributing to an engaged, locked-in mindset can be the difference come crunch time. Knowing when a competitive stressor is overwhelming an athlete and having a detrimental affect can be an important preventative measure to avoid further issues down the road.

2) Organizational Stressors

Organizational stressors are "an ongoing transaction between an individual and the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with the organization within which the athlete is operating" (Hanton *et al.*)

Common organizational stressors include;

- Training issues (change in set up/coach, training content, training practicalities)
- Interpersonal conflict with teammates/coaches
- Perceived lack of support from organization
- Travel/accommodation issues

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Organizational stressors can be attributed to, and therefore solved by, the coaching and organizational set up surrounding a team. Things like tight travel schedules and organizational decisions out of your control mean there isn't always a solution to organizational stressors. Nevertheless, being aware of which players are struggling to deal with certain situations provides an opportunity to address this and, ideally, find a solution that works for them and the team in pursuit of victory.

3) Personal Stressors

Personal stressors are the environmental and personal demands placed on the athlete directly associated with personal life events.

Common personal stressors include;

- Lifestyle issues/changes (alcohol, sleep)
- Financial issues
- Traumatic life events
- Outside commitments (e.g. University degree for student-athletes)

By their very nature, personal stressors can be difficult to spot. Athletes can be carrying baggage or issues from their life away from the team with them into competition and training. Having a positive, trusting relationship with your athletes is important, therefore, so that players can open up to you about potential personal issues.

Meaning of Hare Krishna Chanting ^[2]

Hare Krishna chanting is a sure way to get in touch with the divine. Also known as the Mahamantra, chanting this mantra brings us closer to God. A very important part of the Hare Krishna Movement, the Hare Krishna Chant is definitely synonymous with divinity. But what is the Hare Krishna Movement, and what does chanting God's name really do? Here, we shall answer such questions for you.

Dedicated to Lord Krishna, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is also popularly known as the Hare Krishna Movement. Spreading the holy word of Lord Krishna as stated in Srimad Bhagavad Gita, the Hare Krishna Movement is based on its teachings. In other words, it is dedicated to spreading Krishna consciousness.

A part of the Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya, the Hare Krishna Movement is a monotheistic tradition within the Vedic or Hindu culture. The Hare Krishna Movement is dedicated to Lord Krishna who appeared on earth and recited the Bhagavad Gita around five thousand years back.

What Does the Chant Hare Krishna Mean?

The chant Hare Krishna is also known as the Mahamantra within the Hare Krishna Movement. When you chant Hare, you are evoking the lord's Supreme energy. Krishna means the one who is all-attractive, and Rama means he who is the reservoir of all pleasure.

The complete chant is:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

How Many Times Should We Chant the Hare Krishna Mantra?

The Hare Krishna mantra should be chanted 108 times, 16 times a day. However, there are some ground rules to this, as you cannot expect to take the Lord's name, and continue in your path of a contaminated materialistic lifestyle.

Hence, the one who is chanting the mantra must not have an

illicit sex life; should not eat meat; should not gamble, and should not be intoxicated. In regards to sexual activities, it must be noted that it should only be done after marriage and for the purpose of having children.

Why Do We Chant the Hare Krishna 108 Times?

The mala with 108 beads are required to chant Hare Krishna 108 times. This is because it represents the path of the sun and the moon. It is believed that there are 108 steps that the sun and the moon take. Yet another reason is that the beads represent Krishna's confidential servants. So, chanting the supreme personality of godhead 108 times is advisable.

Importance and opportunities for players by chanting Mahamantra and benefits ^[3]

1. Control of mind

By chanting the mantra, one can get hold of their mind. We are all slaves to desires, appetites and the pool of whimsical thoughts that our mind can meander into. But as Bhagavad Gita says, "One must conquer the mind. Those who have, their mind is the best of friends. Those who haven't, their mind will be the greatest enemy." Chanting Hare Krishna can help one get that peace of mind.

2. Understanding the self

We have become so accustomed to the material universe that we have forgotten our true self- the self of the spiritual. And when we have become so material, we have developed fears of death, old-age, and diseases. We fear the loss of beauty, intelligence, strength and countless other emotions. When we chant Hare Krishna, we realize that we are the pure, changeless spiritual souls, which is different from the material body. The mantra is a pure spiritual sound vibration, and it can help us develop the consciousness to understand our 'self'.

3. Finding happiness

As Alexander Super tramp in Into the Wild (the book was written by Jon Krakauer) states, "Happiness is only real when shared." Everyone is in the hunt for happiness, and chanting Hare Krishna allows us to share our contact with God and his spirit, thus leading us to our bliss by entering his association. This is not material happiness, but instead transcendental happiness.

4. Karma

The basic law of karma is equivalent to Newton's third law of motion: "For every action, there is an opposite and equal reaction". Spiritually, it means that for every material action performed, nature forces an equivalent reaction upon the performer. The Biblical saying goes: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap". Material activities are the same as planting seeds: You will get the plant of the same seed that you sow. Our material body transforms from one karmic destiny to another. Chanting Hare Krishna can help us build our positive karma as chanting Krishna means that we are changing the name with transcendental energy.

5. Moksha

As a person goes from one karmic destiny to another, he/she is forced to reincarnate in the material world, thus moving from one life to another. The soul is an eternal being and we move from one material body to another. As long as we have the material desire, we will continue to do so. This is known as 'transmigration of a soul' or 'reincarnation'. To free

ourselves of this cycle of life, we need moksha and the liberation from the endless wheel of birth and death is also known as 'samsara'. This can only be achieved when our consciousness is completely free from material desires.

6. Addiction control

The Mahamantra has proved to be helpful in controlling bad habits by this mindfulness practice, many of the youths that are connected to the ISKCON YOUTH FORUM, the youth wing of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (Founder Acharya A.C Bhaktivednata Swami Srila Prabhupada). Initially the youths suffering from addiction of Alcoholism, Smoking, Meat eating, poor dietary habits, behavioural problem, Porn, Masturbation, Orgasm (PMO), have left them simply by chanting and are living a happy and addiction free life. There was also a big event called UMANG was organized at IGI stadium in New Delhi based on the theme *Making India Addiction Free* which also won the world record as highest attendees program on anti-addiction.

7. The most important benefit – the love of God

The most important benefit of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra is to find God-realization and pure love of God. When our consciousness becomes one with God, our spiritual movement is depicted in our characters and behavior, just as how the sun approaches the horizon, it is preceded by warmth and illumination.

Aim of Mahamantra Chanting On Sports Players

The aim of this study was to check and proof that chanting of the Mahamantra can have a positive impact on the performance of youth sport players.

Objectives

1. Assessment of the Effect of Mahamantra chanting on anxiety and stress levels of teen sports players by measurement on the HAM-A scale averaging it to conclude the overall performance improvement.
2. Usage of the Mahamantra to increase the performance levels of teen sports players by enhancing their mental balance and reducing stress levels.

Mahamantra and process of chanting ^[4]

There are two types of mantra meditation, Japa and Kirtan. Japa is a quiet and personal meditation where one chants on beads. Kirtan, on the other hand, is the singing of mantras with others, often with musical instruments.

Japa beads used for Mantra meditation-

Japa is counted on a Japa mala, the Sanskrit word for prayer beads. These beads are used to count the number of mantras chanted. One chants the Hare Krishna mantra on each of the 108 beads of the mala to complete 'a round'. The focus while

chanting is to hear the sound of the mantra. If the mind wanders to other thoughts (which it will!) gently bring it back to the mantra. Though one can chant japa at any time of the day, the morning hours around dawn are recommended. The stillness and peace compliment focused and contemplative chanting.

Kirtan is another way to practice mantra meditation. There are lots of types of kirtan. Some can be quiet and soothing, some more energetic. Here is a sample of kirtan.

The Hare Krishna mantra is made up of three words – Hare, Krishna, and Rama:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna

Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare

Hare Rama, Hare Rama

Rama Rama, Hare Hare

Hare = the beautiful energy of the Lord

Krishna = the all attractive one

Rama = the one who gives happiness to all

The process of Chanting can be described in the following manner ^[5]

1. Eliminate all unnecessary sensory input or stimuli.
2. Establish an environment and time for practicing mahamantra yoga.
 - Environment
 - Time
3. Free the environment from external distractions.
4. Wear clothing that does not produce distractions or emphasize the configurations of the body.
5. In a mood of utmost seriousness and intensity, regulate the unlimited variables of bodily movement and posture through the authorized techniques of dancing, sitting, and moving the beads.
6. See to cleanliness, order, and symmetry of the external environment and physical body to foster a favorable mental environment for Sri Nama's appearance.

Observations on study of athletes

A group 100 sports athletes of age 18 to 23 was chosen comprising of 50 males and 50 females, from Lucknow city of Uttar Pradesh and they were tested by HAM-A scale (one of the first rating scales developed to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms) before and after the chanting of mahamantra and the observations were recorded and the conclusions were drawn as follows.

The responses recorded from the table were analysed by taking the average of all the 100 participants and were not segregated separately. The questions were filled by the teen sports players during a tournament of sports in which each of the sports players performed.

Hamilton anxiety rating scale (HAM-A) ^[6]

	Not Present	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very Severe
1. Anxious Mood Worries, anticipation of the worst, fearful anticipation, irritability.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Tension Feelings of tension, fatigability, startle response, moved to tears easily, trembling, feelings of restlessness, inability to relax.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Fears Of dark, of strangers, of being left alone, of animals, of traffic, of crowds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Insomnia Difficulty in falling asleep, broken sleep, unsatisfying sleep and fatigue on waking, dreams, nightmares, night terrors.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Intellectual Difficulty in concentration, poor memory.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Depressed Mood Loss of interest, lack of pleasure in hobbies, depression, early waking, diurnal swing.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Somatic (muscular) Pains and aches, twitching, stiffness, myoclonic jerks, grinding of teeth, unsteady voice, increased muscular tone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Somatic (sensory) Tinnitus, blurring of vision, hot and cold flushes, feelings of weakness, pricking sensation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Cardiovascular Symptoms Tachycardia, palpitations, pain in chest, throbbing of vessels, fainting feelings, missing beat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Respiratory Symptoms Pressure or constriction in chest, choking feelings, sighing, dyspnea.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Gastrointestinal Symptoms Difficulty in swallowing, wind abdominal pain, burning sensations, abdominal fullness, nausea, vomiting, borborygmi, looseness of bowels, loss of weight, constipation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Genitourinary Symptoms Frequency of micturition, urgency of micturition, amenorrhea, menorrhagia, development of rigidity, premature ejaculation, loss of libido, impotence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Autonomic Symptoms Dry mouth, flushing, pallor, tendency to sweat, giddiness, tension headache, raising of hair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Behavior at Interview Fidgeting, restlessness or pacing, tremor of hands, furrowed brow, strained face, sighing or rapid respiration, facial pallor, swallowing, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig 1: Before the chanting of Mahamantra the average responses of the responses was as follows

Below is a list of phrases that describe certain feeling that people have. Rate the patients by finding the answer which best describes the extent to which he/she has these conditions. Select one of the five responses for each of the fourteen

questions.

The average score was 27 out of a possible 56.

Scores in the 25-30 range are indicative of moderate to severe anxiety levels.

	Not Present	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very Severe
1. Anxious Mood Worries, anticipation of the worst, fearful anticipation, irritability.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Tension Feelings of tension, fatigability, startle response, moved to tears easily, trembling, feelings of restlessness, inability to relax.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Fears Of dark, of strangers, of being left alone, of animals, of traffic, of crowds.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Insomnia Difficulty in falling asleep, broken sleep, unsatisfying sleep and fatigue on waking, dreams, nightmares, night terrors.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Intellectual Difficulty in concentration, poor memory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Depressed Mood Loss of interest, lack of pleasure in hobbies, depression, early waking, diurnal swing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Somatic (muscular) Pains and aches, twitching, stiffness, myoclonic jerks, grinding of teeth, unsteady voice, increased muscular tone.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Somatic (sensory) Tinnitus, blurring of vision, hot and cold flushes, feelings of weakness, pricking sensation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Cardiovascular Symptoms Tachycardia, palpitations, pain in chest, throbbing of vessels, fainting feelings, missing beat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Respiratory Symptoms Pressure or constriction in chest, choking feelings, sighing, dyspnea.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Gastrointestinal Symptoms Difficulty in swallowing, wind abdominal pain, burning sensations, abdominal fullness, nausea, vomiting, borborygmi, looseness of bowels, loss of weight, constipation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Genitourinary Symptoms Frequency of micturition, urgency of micturition, amenorrhea, menorrhagia, development of rigidity, premature ejaculation, loss of libido, impotence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Autonomic Symptoms Dry mouth, flushing, pallor, tendency to sweat, giddiness, tension headache, raising of hair.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Behavior at Interview Fidgeting, restlessness or pacing, tremor of hands, furrowed brow, strained face, sighing or rapid respiration, facial pallor, swallowing, etc.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig 2: After the chanting of the Mahamantra the average responses of the teen sports players from age .17-19 was as follows

Your score was 11 out of a possible 56.

Scores in the 0-17 range may be indicative of low to mild anxiety levels.

Conclusion and findings

There was a recognizable change in the levels of stress and anxiety of the sports players as indicated by the above scales and observations. Thus we can conclude that if the Hare Krishna Mahamantra is chanted before any game in the sports tournaments or athletic competitions or on regular workout and practice routines by the teen sports players, there will be a significant increase in the performance levels as compared to that of normal (non-chanting of the Mahamantra). Besides this the psychological balance and motivation levels was also found to improve among the sports players in general.

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The definitions and illustrations taken have been put in the superscript from the following sources respectively.

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