

The Science of Upanishads – Part 27: What is The Significance of Chanting “ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः(OM, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti)” at The Conclusion of Vedic Mantras? (September 19-September 25, 2017)

The phrase “ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः(OM, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti)” is recited at the conclusion of any Hindu religious ritual, a Vedic prayer or a traditional Yoga class. There are many Peace Mantras found in Upanishads, such as “Asatoma Sadgamaya..”, “Sahana Vavatu..”, “Sarvesham Swastirbhavatu..”, etc, each of which ends up with the chanting of “Om, Shanti, Shanti”. Also, at the end of each chapter of Upanishads, the word Shanti (peace) is chanted 3 times. ॐ (OM), as discussed earlier, is the universal Divine Sound that is used by Hindus (as well as Budhists, Jains, and others) to invoke upon God or to establish a dialogue with God before asking Him for anything. Therefore, in this context, the devotees are asking God **three times** to provide them with peace (Shanti). But, why three times? Is it simply to emphasize the fact? The Scriptures tell us that it is more than that. There are three types of obstacles and sufferings that the mortals undergo in their life time: (1) **Adhidaivika** (of divine origin), (2) **Adhibhautika**(originated in the surrounding physical, material world), and (3) **Adhyatmika** (created by ourselves). **Adhidaivika** refers to the suffering due to divine causes, causes that we have no control over. These include natural disasters like floods, tornados, tsunamis, earthquakes, plagues, fires and the like. A recent example is the massive destruction of life and property by hurricans Harvey and Irma. **Adhibhautika** refers to suffering caused by other beings. In the Samkhya system, these are classified as – other human, domestic animals, wild animals, reptiles etc., insects, mosquitoes, bugs, cockroaches etc. For example, suffering can be caused by someone physically hitting you or hurting you through verbal abuse. Similarly, suffering can be caused by a snake or a scorpion bite. The word **Adhyatmika** means “self-inflicted”, so the Adhyatmika suffering

is the most damaging and long-lasting suffering as we inflict it on ourselves. This could be physical, mental, or emotional suffering. We cause physical suffering on ourselves by, for example, overeating, not taking care of our health etc. In summary, the phrase "Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti" refers to asking God to relieve one from the pain and sufferings from the causes of the divine, the surrounding world, as well as the self-infliction.