

A Joussian Oral Engagement with the *Yajna*

H. Debipersad, B. Rambilaas and R. Sookrajh

Introduction

In this article an attempt is made to present Joussian theory on the psycho-physiology of geste, and thereafter illustrate how this theory has evolved through the performance of the *yajna* as metaphorically depicted in the *Purusa Sukta* of the Vedic oral milieu. This is done by concentrating on the following oral style elements:

- * the transformation of energy;
- * humanity's replaying actions of the universe; and
- * humanity's spontaneity to revivify the past geste voluntarily.

Jousse's oral theories, specifically his anthropological laws of mimism, bilateralism and formulism are examined to determine whether the *yajna* as it is performed by Hindus today, contain elements of such oral style expression. This happens largely from an anthropological standpoint, and a case is presented that suggests that the *yajna* is grounded in humanity or 'human' as '*anthropos*' and its performance, effects through geste at every level of human being, a transformation of human consciousness and divinisation of human energy. Selected aspects of the *yajna* are used to illustrate the presence of the laws of rhythm-mimicry, bilateralism and formulism as a 'western' theory of orality which formed the framework of these practices.

1 Michael Jousse and the Theory of Orality

According to Michael Jousse, the laws that govern physiological humanity also govern psychological humanity and Jousse's theory of orality asserts that rhythm-mimicry, bilateralism and formulism are the laws that impel the human compound to replay, balance and stereotype not only physiological actions but the gestes appropriate to every state of consciousness.

1.1 Rhythmo-mimicry

Jousse asserts that every level of humanity's existence is structured on rhythmo-mimicry. Every stimulus is received, replayed and retained as an active geste acting on other gestes and ready for revivification in gestes which involve the whole human compound.

1.2 Bilateralism

The law of bilateralism, reflecting as it does humanity's physical structure, is equally important and pervasive in the oral style by producing physiological symmetry and balance in movements—right and left, up and down, back and forth (Sienart 1990:96).

1.3 Formulism

Formulism in the oral style, the accumulated knowledge of a people is stored in easy to recall formulas, not as rigid unchanging devices, but as flexible aphorisms, thus allowing for a vast number of combinations and juxta positions to enable a people to make a relevant response to an ever-changing concrete world.

In this article, it is argued that Jousse's theory of orality is relevant in describing humanity's ability to replay, balance and stereotype both in the metaphorical performance of the *yajna* during the cosmic age as well as in the ordinary human's attempt at re-enacting such a performance.

2 The Performance of the *Yajna* in South Africa

The earliest records of the performance of the *yajna* are to be found in the Vedas which flourished in North India from 2000 BCE in an oral style milieu (Sarma 1948:3). Although by the end of the Vedic age it had become a 'mechanical and soulless activity' (Sarma 1948:5), through the Hindu reformists, greater emphasis was given to the performance of the *yajna*. The *Arya Samaj*, a Hindu Reform Movement which advocated a systematic practice of a uniform set of 'Vedic' principles and rituals had great appeal especially when this reformation coincided with the emigration of indentured labourers to Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Surinam and South Africa (Rambilaas 1996). The practice of this fire sacrifice continues to be a common feature among Indians settled abroad. In South Africa, the performance of the *yajna* is an important feature of Hindu worship (Pillay 1991:113-139).

Seereeram (1994:107) and Selvanayagam (1996:19) argue that the performance of the *yajna* goes beyond the germ-destroying, health-promoting function, to a spiritual engagement where humanity experiences flashlights of powerful eternal truths. Vedalankar (1986:81-83) incorporates an environmental notion by suggesting that the *yajna* helps in the regulation of rainfall and

temperature. The possibility of the *yajna* helping in the causation of rain is also given in the *Gita* (Chapter 3.14) which states: 'From food are beings born, from rain is food produced, from sacrifice does rain arise ...' (Vedalankar 1996:81).

The Manusmriti (Chapter 3.76) endorses this notion in the following way: 'The offerings made through *yajna* break into very tiny particles and rise towards the sun and give cause to rain ...' (Vedalankar 1986:81-83).

The *yajna* is central to the performance of each of the sixteen Vedic Sanskaras (sacraments) which allow for the improvement and refinement of Hindu life as a continuous process. The sixteen sanskaras are therefore performed from the time of intention to conceive a child, during the development of the embryo, after the birth of the baby, during adolescence, adulthood, marriage and death (Vedalanker 1979:91-94). In South Africa, the practice of the sanskaras is advocated by, but most probably largely limited to the Arya Samaj Movement's followers (Debipersad 1995:23-34).

For Hindu followers, the *yajna* is the focal point of any religious festival or ceremony. It is particularly popular at birthday celebrations, anniversaries, entry into a new home as well as the commencement of a business practice.

3 The Cosmic Yajna

The following *Rgvedic* Hymn (10,90) of the *Purusa Sukta* forms the preface to the performance of the *yajna*. In this hymn, the origin, creation and dissolution of the whole of the cosmos are depicted through the performance of the *yajna*. It also portrays the *yajna* itself. The following selection conveys the imagery of the *yajna*.

- 1 A thousand heads hath Purusa, a thousand
 eyes, a thousand feet.
 On every side pervading earth he fills a
 Space ten fingers wide
- 2 This Purusa is all that yet hath been and
 All that is to be;
- 4 With three-fourths Purusa went up: one
 Fourth of him again was here.
- 6 When Gods prepared the sacrifice with
 Purusa as their offering,
 Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn;
 Summer was the wood.
- 13 The Moon was gendered from his mind,

- 13 And from his eye the Sun had birth;
(cont) Indra and Agni from his mouth were
Born, and Vayu from his breath.
- 14 Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head;
Earth from his feet, and from his ear the
Regions. Thus they formed the worlds.
- 15 Seven fencing-sticks had be, thrice seven
layers of fuel were prepared,
When the Gods, offering sacrifice, bound,
As their victim, Purusa.
- 16 Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim:
These were the earliest holy ordinances.
- The Mighty Ones attained the height of
Heaven, there where the Sadyas, Gods of old, are dwelling.

The hymn in the Purusa Sukta describes the Cosmic Yajna performed by God as an act of creation by the cosmic sacrifice (yajna). 'Purusa' (verse 4) offers 'a quarter' of himself which results in the creation of the universe. Purusa in the above extract exists as 'hath been' and the 'is to be' from which all things 'become' (verse 2).

Pannikar (1977:354) endorses this by suggesting that:

creation is God's sacrifice, for not only does God bring it into existence, create it, but he also permits it to return to him.

By offering a quarter or a fraction of Himself, as an oblation to the sacred fire, a Cosmic Yajna is performed to allow for the subsequent creation of the solar systems, the moon and air (verse 13).

The yajna as it is performed today, is thus symbolic of the reflection of God's supreme sacrifice in the form of a Cosmic Yajna. Miller (1985:206) believes that:

of this mighty oblation, the human ritual is the microcosmic reflection. The underlying factor of the interlinkedness of all participants in the yajna, their joining forces in a common re-enactment of the universal process of creation –the sacred work par excellence–is a peculiar characteristic of the Vedic perception of the sacrifice.

3.1 Humanity Replays the Actions of the Universe

From a Joussian point of view, it can be argued that the performance of the yajna as described in the Purusa Sukta is symbolic of the cosmic universe 'im-pressing' its actions on the micro universe of humanity. It can be suggested that humanity is 'impressed upon' by actions of the cosmic universe (Sienaert 1990:94) through the performance of the yajna in the Purusa Sukta.. Jousse sees humanity actively receiving and reacting to external and internal impressions, and this phenomenon is marked by varying degrees of complexity:

It can be seen that there is a progression from the macro to the micro, from exterior to interior, from physiological to psychological (Fanning 1994:6).

Jousse's exposition of the anthropology of geste declares that 'in the beginning was rhythmic gesture' (Sienaert & Whitaker 1990:21), and this resonates with the rhythmic and gestural input during the performance of the Cosmic yajna as outlined in the *Rgvedic* Hymn of the *Purusa Sukta*.

3.2 Transmission of Knowledge and Transformer of Energy

In the performance of the yajna, there is a transforming effect of knowledge of humanity by microcosmic reflection of the Cosmic Yajna. Purusa could be considered, in terms of Jousse's oral style a kind of intuitive thought that seeks to extend itself through the whole mental disposition, therefore, all attempts to describe abstract ideas or states of the soul are given in language that describes the body's action that expresses that state. This makes possible the creation of analogies between the concrete reality and abstractions. Jousse states that correlations and affinities form between words '... called into life ... by some analogous thing, it will take the form of an identical semiological gesture' (Sienaert & Whitaker 1990:50). By replaying the gestes of Purusa allows for a transmission of knowledge of humanity by mimism of the Cosmic *Yajna*. Mnemotechnical devices are used to transmit knowledge during a oral style milieu like the vedic era.

In the performance of the *yajna*, it can be inferred that psycho-physiological geste is transformed by feeding on and mingling with the energy of God. The performance of the yajna is related to fire (*agni*). Vedalankar (1986: 81) explains that yajna is not a worship of visible fire. *Agni* (fire) is one of the most important epithets of God. It means all pervading, adorable and effulgent. Fire is the source of radiance and heat. The flame of the yajna is a symbolic representation of the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, prosperity over poverty.

In the words of Selvanayagan (1996:65), there is no *yajna* without fire. Fire (*Agni*) purifies and transforms the sacrificer and conveys his oblations to gods. *Agni*, the personification of fire, is the first to be invoked in every sacrifice because he is the heavenly high priest and the mediator. In particular, the *Agnihotra* (*yajna*)

glorifies *Agni* by giving Him the most prominent place in their rituals. The Rg. Veda also affirms that *Agni* is the sacrificial bond (*yajna bandhu*) with human beings.

3.3 Humanity's Spontaneity to Revivify the Past Geste Voluntarily

Jousse (1886-1961) used the word 'geste' to describe a peculiarly human phenomenon by suggesting that the human,

composite receives the actions of the universe and replays, balances and stereotypes then at every level of his being—physiological, affective, intellectual and spiritual. In the performance of the *yajna*, man (sic) as anthropos, is im-pressed by the universe, and replays and revivifies this universe through mimism of the human 'compound': corporeal, ocular, auricular, manual and laryngo-buccal.

Underlying this article is the assumption that participation in the performance of the *yajna* effects a further transformation of consciousness expresses in a greater intensity of life. Jousse believes that the psycho-physiological geste is transformed by interacting with the energy of God. As part of the great natural cycle of energy derived from the sun, God is a unique expression of the rhythm of movement. God is a transformer of energy. This means that God generates physiological and psychological movement actively, affectively or intellectually. The transformation of energy into the multiplicity of creation is the manifestation of that force. Although this synergy is not explored by Jousse, it is inferred that Joussonian thinking is in accord with it. It is also the belief of Hinduism that humanity can experience union with God in a unique way by participating in the sacrament. Furthermore, the *yajna* is a reflection of the most powerful resurrection energy, the spirit of God himself. This belief has anthropological origins as correctly perceived by Jousse.

4 The Performance of the Yajna

There are largely four processes which underpin the performance of the *yajna*:

- (i) *symbolism*: in the form of objects or human action to symbolise the divine;
- (ii) *consecration*: humanity is able, by the use of mantras, to divinise a reality that is the root of his being,
- (iii) *oblation*: humanity is able to physically share in this reality by active participation toward divinity by pondering over the sense. It also demonstrates the course of contemplation for the purpose of the act and,
- (iv) *divinisation*: humanity is able to awaken the spirit within himself to a higher transcendental state.

In the performance of the *yajna*, humanity discovers the anthropological origins of memory, the mystery of its closed self somehow opening (Ong 1977:337-338) to the movement of life, towards God himself. As Ward (1993:3) suggests of prayer, things need to be seen as pointing beyond themselves, as sacramental of a supreme reality and value, as 'visible images of eternity', which he calls 'iconic' vision.

The performance of the *yajna* is thus a revivification of the,

infinitude of past gestures lying under the threshold of consciousness ... that makes possible [revivification] of past states and the totality of their multiple connections (Sienart & Whitaker 1990:27).

In part, the complex reality of consciousness in gestuel terms, was played out in the performance of the Cosmic *Yajna* as illustrated in the *Purusa Sukta* hymn and re-enacted in humanity's reflection of the ultimate sacrifice.

Table reflecting presence of oral style elements in the performance of the *yajna*

Stages during the Performance	Process	Oral Elements
Invocation	Recitation of <i>Om</i> Recitation of <i>Gayathri</i> Mantra Recitation of <i>Ishwar</i> <i>Upasana</i>	Propositional Gesture Rhythm Repetition
Purification	Sipping of water Touching of different parts of the body	Bilateralism Balancing Repetition Mimism
Oblation	Igniting of fire Kindling of fire Offering of Oblations (<i>ghi</i>) Offering of dried grass, sticks, herbs and roots (<i>samagri</i>)	Mimism Gesture
Conclusion	Final offering of both <i>ghi</i> and <i>samagri</i>	Gesture Mimism

4.1 Oral Style Elements Evidenced in the Performance of *Yajna*

In the following discussion, mantras have been selected from the various stages of the performance to demonstrate the presence of oral style elements as proposed by Jousse, viz. mimism, bilateralism and formulism.

4.1.1 Invocation

This notion of creation of the universe as discussed in the *Purusa Sukta* hymn discussed earlier, is further explored in the invocation phase of the *yajna* called the *Ishwar Upasana*. Hymn CXXI from the *Rgveda* once again reflects and salutes the creation of the universe.

The focal point of the ritual is the *havan kund*. The *kund* is a rectangular, hollowed receptacle into which pieces of wood are arranged before the commencement of the *yajna* ('seven fencing-sticks had he', 'summer was the wood', oil was the spring', 'the holy gift was autumn', 'the grass Purusa'). The priest and the participants sit along the four sides of the *kund* to make their offerings into the fire.

For the *yajna* proper, small goblets containing water with spoons in them, a bowl containing *ghi* (clarified butter - 'the dripping fat was gathered' 'thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared') with three pieces of wood and a ladle, a block of camphor and trays containing *samagri* should be neatly arranged around the *kund*, within easy reach of the participants.

Before the commencement of the *yajna*, the participants compose themselves and focus their attention and thoughts on God. The priest and participants close their eyes, clasp their hands and repeat the word AUM three times. Thereafter the following mantra is chanted:

Om bhur bhuvah swah.
Tat/sa/vi/tur va/re/ny/am
Bha/rgo de/va/sya dhi/ma/hi
Dhi/yo yo/ na/h pra/co/da/yat.
(3 X 8 constitutes the *gayatri* metre.)

In the first mantra, the devotees glorify creation with the three expressions '*Bhur*, *bhuvah* and *swah*'. These represent the three worlds, namely the earth, intermediate space and the heaven respectively. Rambilaas (1996:1) describes the division of the universe into three worlds: *bhuh*, *bhuvah* and *svah* in the sense that each of these worlds become associated with the elements *agni*, *vayu* and *aditya* (Vedalankar & Chotai, 1980:36) and the vital airs *prana*, *apana* and *vyana* respectively. In the oblation phase, the structure of these three expressions are further discussed to illustrate a precise stratification of the attributes of each sphere that comprise the Vedic cosmos.

The fire, kindled by the devotees symbolises the natural energy that exists in all three worlds. *Bhur* which means 'God, the Giver of life' is the fire that generates the energy which sustains the earth and is likened to the vital energy that gives life to the body. The fire kindled in the *kund* (receptacle) is symbolic of the energy of the sun and its electric forces. The *kund* on the other hand, is symbolic of the vast sacrificial ground, Mother Earth. *Bhuvah* which means 'God, the remover of pains' is the electricity that is in the atmosphere and is likened to the energy that removes impurities from the body. *Swah* means 'God the Giver of happiness' and is the source of energy. The sun in heaven is likened to the energy that pumps and circulates the blood in the body (Pal 1993). Rambilaas (1996:5) cites the *Chandogya Brahmana* 1.6.31 in which Vedic Cosmology divides the universe into three spheres, *bhu-prithivi*, the earth, *bhuvah-antariksa*, the atmosphere and *svah-dyauh*, heaven.

The use of propositional gestures, which is a strong characteristic of oral tradition, is prevalent in the above mantra. The propositional gestures are in the form of short sentences such as:

- i *Om* O God.
- ii *Bhur* (earth) The Giver of life.
- iii *Bhuvah* (atmosphere) Remover of pains and sorrows.
- iv *Swah* (heaven) Bestower of happiness.

The distribution of short and long vowel sounds enhances the steady rhythm during recitation and thus memorisation is facilitated. In the mantra, the vowel [u] in '*Bhur*' and '*Bhuvah*' is repeated. The [a] in '*Bhuvah*' and '*Swah*' is short. This technique is prevalent in most of the mantras which is a characteristic of the Sanskrit language and could be considered formulaic. The formula for the metre in which the verse is written is called the '*gayatri*' (Apte 1982:648-658), and in scanning the verse, the long/ short syllables are written within a 24 metre formula (3 X 8).

The recitation of the *Ishwar Upasana* is central to the invocation phase:

- 1 In the beginning rose *Hiranyagarbaha*,
Born Only Lord of all created beings.
He fixed and holdeth up this earth and
Heaven. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
Giver of vital breath, of power and
Vigour, he whose commandments all the
Gods acknowledge:
The Lord of death, whose shade is life immortal. What God shall we adore
With our oblation?

The line 'What God shall we adore with our oblation?' is repeated after each recitation in nine out of the ten recitations.

i *Om hiranyagarbhah samavartatagre bhutasya jatah patireka asit. Sa dadhara prthivim dyamutemam kasmai devaya havisa vidhema.*

ii *Om ya atmada balada yasya viswa upasate prasisam yasya devah. Yasyac chaya'mrtam yasya mrtyuh kasmai devaya havisa vidhema.*

iii *Om yah pranato nimisato mahitwaika idraja jagato babhuva. Ya ise asya dwipadascatuspadah kasmai devaya havisa vidhema.*

iv *Om yena dyaurugra prthivi ca drdha yena swah stabhitam yena nakah. Yo antarikse rajaso vimanah kasmai devaya havisa vidhema.*

The presence of a number of automatic rhythmic repetitions creates a schema: i.e. the repetitive use of *kasmai devaya havisa vidhema* creates. This creates parallelism which ensures unity in the rendition of this invocation. The interrogative nature of the repeated question 'What God shall we adore with our oblation?' induces speculation on the nature of the divine and leads the aspirant through a series of questions to a definite conclusion.

Finnegan (1977:128) states that repetition, whether as parallelism or in phrases called 'formulae', has great literary and aesthetic effect. The recurrent familiar ring of the formulae is more than a useful device aiding the Rabbi to compose or the audience to translate a message: 'it is a beautiful and evocative element ... the more so, for its repeated recurrence'.

The words *kas/mai/ de/va/ya ha/vi/sa vi/dhe/ma* (l, l, l, l, s, s, s, l, s, l, s) which mean, 'to which blissful God we pray with faith and devotion?' in mantras ii, iii, iv and v of the Communion Prayer, are repeated. The mantras are structured in such a way that certain words and phrases are repeated to facilitate memorisation in a rhythmic way. The extensive use of repetition of words and phrases typifies the oral tradition established in the Sanskrit language and the situation of the long (l) and short (s) vowels are in keeping with a rhythm that is interrogative (Apte 1982:648).

In describing rhythmic elements in the law of Rhythmo-Mimicry, Jousse makes reference to

a set of two, sometimes three parallel Balancings, each Balancing being given rhythm in accordance with the characteristic rhythm of the propositional gestures of the languages being spoken (Sienart & Whitaker 1990:100).

An analysis of the complex variations in respect of pitch, tone, intensity and duration illustrates the limitations of writing and reaffirms the pre-eminence of the living voice —balancing of propositional geste occurs in the form of short, parallel, stereotyped recitatives.

4.1.2 Purification

i *Om vanma asye'stu.*

With the recital of the mantra devotees touch the right and left ends of the mouth.

ii *Om nasorme prano'stu.*

Devotees touch the right and left nostril.

iii *Om aksnorme caksurastu.*

Devotees touch the ends of the right and left eye.

iv *Om karnayorme srotramastu.*

Devotees touch the right and left ears.

v *Om bahvorme balamastu.*

Devotees touch the right and left arm.

vi *Om urvorma ojo'stu.*

Devotees touch the right and left thigh.

vii *Om aristani me'ngani tanustanva me saha santu.*

Here devotees sprinkle water over the whole body.

Jousse's universal laws of mimism and bilateralism are highlighted during this purification phase. The devotees imitate the priest's manual (hand) gestures by touching their lips, -nostrils, eyes, ears, arms and thighs. By performing these gestures, the devotees request God to ensure the healthy functioning of those organs and for the entire body to enjoy sound health throughout their lives.

Marcel Jousse's law of bilateralism is evident when the devotee touches, e.g. right and left nostrils; right and left eyes; right and left ears etc.; thus maintaining a physical balance. A sense of harmony is achieved by the use of bilateralism.

Extensive use of the repetition of words among the mantras is also evident. Each mantra begins with 'OM' and ends with 'astu', thus assisting the devotees in their pronunciation and memorisation. The above six mantras end in a common rhyme, i.e. 'astu'. Rhyme has been used in these mantras to make them phonological-

ly cohesive, created by the interaction of sounds and meanings. The efficient and effective use of the end rhymes complements the meaning during recitation.

In order to facilitate the retention of the mantras in memory, 'key words' such as 'om' and 'astu' are used to trigger the sound-symbolism association.

4.1.3 Oblations

The following mantra is recited five times:

Om ayanta idhma atma jatavedastenedhyaswa vardhaswa ceddavarddhaya casman prajaya pasubhir brahma varcasenannadyena samedhaya swaha. Idamagnaye jatavedase idanna mama.

The five requests made in this mantra mark the five human needs the devotees seek. These being good children, useful animals, spiritual knowledge, nourishing food and other necessities of life. This accounts for the five times repetition of the mantra and the five gestures of offering the *ghi*. The *ghi* offered to the fire is symbolically a source of nourishment for the fire.

A common characteristic that is prevalent in this mantra is alliteration. The repetitive use of certain words and syllables emphasises the value of alliteration as a mnemotechnical device. In the above mantra, the labial syllables (pr, pa, br), are used to create an alliterative effect. The use of alliteration as presented in the Sanskrit alphabet is present in this mantra, the 'ta, da, dh, na' consonants are repeatedly used, bringing about a rhythmic flow when this mantra is recited five times.

This phase of the ritual is followed by the igniting of the fire by once again uttering the mantra 'Om bhurbhuvah swah' (Vedalankar 1991:47) as is the case during the invocation phase. *Om bhurbhuvah swardyaauriva bhumna prthiviva varimna. Tasyaste prthivi devayajani prsthe'gnimannadamannady ayadadhe* (Vedalankar 1991:47).

The following illustrates the use of mnemonical device used to facilitate the memorisation of the mantras.

- i *Om bhuragnaye pranaya swaha. Idamagnaye pranaya idanna mama.*
 - ii *Om bhuvar vayave'panaya swaha. Idam vayave'panaya idanna mama.*
 - iii *Om swaradityaya vyanaya swaha. Idamadityaya vyanaya idanna mama.*
 - iv *Om bhurbhuvah swaragni vayvadityebhyah panavyanebhyah swaha. Idamagni vayvadiyebhyah pranapanavyanebhyah idan na mama.*
- (Pal 1993:60-62).

Rambilaas (1996:5-9) argues that the structure of the above verses give a very precise stratification of the universe by offering definitions of the attributes of each of

the spheres that comprise the Vedic cosmos. In Vedic cosmology the use of the triads represent specific formulae to facilitate the recitation and memorisation of the verses. In mantras i, ii, and iii, the triads are listed vertically. However, in mantra iv, the triads are listed horizontally. The diagram below illustrates the formula reflecting the triads.

<u>Sphere</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Airs</u>
<i>bhu</i>	<i>agni</i>	<i>prana</i>
<i>bhuvah</i>	<i>vayu</i>	<i>apanaya</i>
<i>svah</i>	<i>aditi</i>	<i>vyana</i>

The *padas* of the first three verse are three sets of triads. In the fourth verse, a vertical grouping of the triads emerge. The table lists the triads horizontally in the first three mantras. Vertically, it represents the triads as grouped in the fourth verse.

In the above verses, there is an interweaving of alliteration where the meaning or sounds automatically dovetails the words into each other by stressing the same heavily stressed consonant elements. Assonance is another device which forms the links in balancing. The energetic explosions which occur on the vowel sounds are described by Jousse as 'qualitative alliteration'.

During the offering of the oblations, the priest requests the devotees to recite the word 'swaha'. As they make their offerings into the fire, the devotees imitate the priest's gestures, thus illustrating Jousse's universal law of Mimism.

In the following mantras, which are recited during these offerings, a specific distribution of short and long vowel sounds is evident. This distribution enhances the steady rhythm during recitation and in this manner memorisation is facilitated.

- v *Om apo jyotiraso'mrtam brahma bhurbhuvah swarom swaha.*
(Pal 1993:62).
- vi *Om yam medham devaganah pitarascopasate, taya mamadya medhyaya'gne medhavinam kuru swaha.*
(Pal:1993:63).
- vii *Om viswani deva savitar duritani parasuva, yad bhadrantanna asuva swaha.*
- viii *Om agne naya supatha raye asman viswani deva vayunani vidwan.*
Yuyo dhyasmajjuhuranameno bhuyisthante nama uktim vidhema swaha.

Once again, during the oblation phase, mnemonical styles facilitate memorisation of the mantra. Although the laryngo-buccal phenomenon of parallelism is universally manifest in all oral style languages, it does sometimes give way to the device of alliteration—the tendency of the organism to repeat its geste 'automatically and rhythmically' is revealed in alliteration.

- i *Om agnaye swaha. Idamagnaye idanna mama.*
- ii *Om somaya swaha. Idam somaya idanna mama.*
- iii *Om prajapataye swaha. Idam prajapataye idanna mama.*
- iv *Om indraya swaha. Idamindraya idanna mama.*

The declaration '*idanna mama*' is the act of giving completely. This act of giving without reserve is facilitated by a change of rhythmic heightened pitch and pace which is accelerated, working itself into a climactic tempo. There is psychic energy, automatic play, predominant spontaneity and periods of inertia to link chains of reasoning and judgement in the oral style. Mnemonic faculties come into play of themselves, when the individual has consciously or unconsciously instilled into his organism the collective stereotyped, manual, laryngo-buccal, etc. propositional gestures (in a state of greater or lesser rapidity, abundance, accuracy, stability—Sienaert & Whitaker, 1990:164-165).

In these mantras, the laryngo-buccal geste repeats themselves automatically, not only within the rhythmic schema of the parallelism but from one recitation to the next. By doing this, the rhythmic schemas can demonstrate a variety of linking systems.

4.1.4 Conclusion

Om Dyauh santirantariksam santhi prthivi santirapah santirosadhayah santhi. Vanaspatayah santir viswedevah santirbrahma santhi sarvam santhi santireva santhi sa ma santiredhi.

Om Santih Santih Santih (Vedalankar 1991:44).

In the Hymn of Peace, it must be noted that the '*sa*' sound is repeated fifteen times and a rhythmic flow is evident when this mantra is recited. The '*sa*' syllable emphasises the value of alliteration as a mnemotechnical device and this key sound '*sa*' facilitates the memorisation of this mantra.

The repetition of '*Santi, Santi*' at the end of the *yajna*, enforces the notion of peace. The repetition of peace, firmly and emphatically stresses on the reciter that s/he is to carry on the various deliberations of his/ her life with full equanimity, evenmindedness and peace inside as well as outside him- or herself. S/he is not to be carried away by momentary reactions, but is invariably guided and led by basic human and moral considerations so that s/he may be a wise person in the real sense.

When reciting the '*Santi Patha*', mimism is reflected when the devotees clasp their hands. In Hinduism, the clasping of hands, signify the devotees' salutations to and reverence for God during the prayer. This act of clasping the hands has been handed down from generation to generation and typifies the oral tradition. It

is interesting to note that this gesture is also used as a traditional form of greeting by Hindus.

5 Synthesis

The analysis of the *yajna* in this article is based on the Jousian theory of the *anthropos* or propositional geste and the assumption that, as long as we use simple sentence or its mutation (co-ordinate and sub-ordinate clauses), humanity's tendency to replay, balance and stereotype his gestuel expression will manifest itself.

The mnemonical devices give evidence of a conscious subtly observant exercise of the oral composer's will: in order to make the memorisation and re-memorisation of his/ her improvised compositions easier for him- and herself as well as their repeaters. S/he makes use of certain devices, the function of which is to assist in the initial triggering, or the propositional gestures of a recitative and to keep the recitatives of a recitation in the correct order.

By using the anthropological laws that govern human expression, it has been possible to show that mimism, bilateralism and formulism are present in the performance of the *yajna*.

The mantras become formulaic through parallelism between action, emotion and thought together with the acoustic enchantment of balance, and of the repetition of the propositional geste—either identical or slightly different. This has been shown by Jousse and are evidenced in the *yajna*.

Faculty of Education
University of Durban-Westville

References

- Apte, VS 1982. *The Student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Debipersad, C 1995. *Orality and the Sixteen Vedic Sanskaras*. Masters dissertation in Orality-Literacy Studies submitted in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Natal.
- Debipersad, H 1999. *An Investigation into the Presence of Gestural and Oral Style Expressions in the Performance of the Yajna (Sacred Fire): A Vedic Viewpoint*. Masters Thesis at the Centre for Oral Studies, University of Natal.
- Jousse, M 1990. *The Oral Style*. Sienaert, E & R Whitaker (trans). New York: Garland.
- Finnegan, R 1979. *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Panikkar R 1977. *The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari: An Anthology of the Vedas for the Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Miller, J 1985. *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Lee Mee, J 1975. *Hymns from the Rig-Veda*. New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc.
- Pillay, C M 1991. *A Consideration of the Telationship between Religious Ritual and Theatre with Special Reference to Hindu Forms of Worship*. Masters Thesis in the Department of Speech and Drama, University of Natal.
- Sarma, PS 1948. *The Tales and Teachings of Hinduism*. Bombay: Hind Kitabs Ltd.
- Sienaert, E 1990. Marcel Jousse: The Oral Style and the Anthropology of Gesture. *Oral Tradition* 5,1:91-99.
- Fanning, RP 1994. *The Anthropology of Geste and the Eucharistic Rite of the Roman Mass*. Masters Thesis in Orality-Literacy Studies, University of Natal.
- Rambilaas, B 1996. *The Vyahrtis and Vedic Cosmology*. Conference in India.