

The Power of Chanting by Swami Vasudevananda

The sages who gave us the ancient Vedic mantras and hymns were evolved beings who had either attained or come very close to a state of pure consciousness. In their meditations they heard perfect words and sounds - sublime mantras, sacred wisdom arising from within. They passed this sacred wisdom on to their disciples by singing it.

In those days all the scriptures were sung, and the rishis and sages understood that chanting the sacred word was an offering to God for the well-being of the earth and all its creatures. They knew that the human voice chanting sacred mantras has healing power and that these pure sounds actually replenish the universe, create harmony, and keep the universe healthy.

Of all the healing sounds that we can sing, the most potent are the great mantras, the names of God. Mantra means that which protects and redeems the one who holds it in his or her awareness. Mantras have transformative power. They purify us and lift us to a higher state of awareness.

The mantra we receive from an enlightened teacher or guru is charged with the power of the guru's own fully enlightened state.

Gurumayi writes: "Chanting (mantras) has a purifying force. It has the power to annihilate the effects of even the most stubborn faults. It dissolves every ounce of bitterness and malice. If you are experiencing self-hatred or doubt or envy, just chant. And instead of these limitations, you will experience glory, God's glory".

Chanting also has significant effect on our bodies and minds. Like everything in this universe, our body is made up of vibrating energy. Even though our body appears to be dense, every cell of the human body has its own frequency. There's a sound present in each tiny cell, however minute that cell might be.

Wherever there's movement, wherever there's vibration, there's sound. The body's inclination is to be in harmony with itself. All the different parts of the body, all its cells, want to move in unison, the way a shoal of fish or a flock of birds does, always moving but never bumping into each other.

When this natural rhythm and harmony is disrupted in the body, that's when disease and disorders arise. However, when the vibrations of the chant sound within our bodies, the cells themselves respond; they resonate with the pure vibration of the mantras so that harmony can be restored.

Chanting calms and clears the mind and actually rejuvenates it. You might notice that your mind is much clearer and your intention more focused, after chanting. Every word that we utter and every thought that we think leaves its subtle impression on the mind, and so do all the words and sounds that we listen to and absorb.

Everything that we listen to also leaves its residue in the mind. Chanting the pure syllables of the names of God breaks through this mass of varied thoughts and impressions and opens us to a higher awareness, a clearer perception of ourselves and the world.

Gurumayi says, "When you chant the Name (of God), it actually moves through your whole being - purifying you, bestowing grace, and making you sacred'. Chanting breaks down the barriers between you and your own heart".

Muktananda said, "Chanting is a magnet that draws God's power".

Because chanting is such a purifying practice, it leads to one spiritual practice breakthrough after another. Sometimes when you're right on the brink of a breakthrough, you might feel contracted, you might even feel stuck. But through experience, one comes to understand that what feels like a contraction is often our inner energy expanding, pushing against the boundaries that we've been accustomed to for so long.

As we chant, we're making an offering to the world.

Swami Muktananda

Swami Muktananda (1908 - 1982) began the life of a sadhu, a wandering mendicant in search of spiritual fulfillment, at an unusually early age. As a young man Muktananda gained recognition for his yogic attainments. Swami Muktananda often said that his spiritual journey didn't truly begin until he received spiritual initiation, from the holy man Bhagawan Nityananda. It was then that Muktananda's spiritual energy, kundalini, was awakened, and he was drawn into profound states of meditation. Nine years later Muktananda attained the state of God-realization.

In the 1970s, on his Guru's behalf, Swami Muktananda brought Siddha Yoga to the West. Gurumayi Chidvilasananda continued Muktananda's teaching after his death.