

**Devotional Chanting and Mantra:
Singing from your heart and maintaining single pointed focus
by Emily Lewis**

“Your mind is malleable, adjusting to the “shape” of whatever dominates your consciousness. While fixation on unworthy objects degrades your mind, worthy ones elevate your awareness”. – Kurt Bruder, Ph.D

What is it about chanting that draws in so many people? What is really going on in the brain and in the heart when we give ourselves over to chanting? Through this paper I will describe the different affects that devotional chanting and mantra have on the brain and the heart and how it can be used as a tool for creating higher states of consciousness and promoting overall wellness.

What we think reflects how we will feel. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, our thoughts are not necessarily useful or beneficial to our well-being. Our mind is a creature of habit and the thought cycles can be hard to adjust after they have been there for so long. However, the upside to this is that once we do change the “program” to be a healthy one, than it is more likely to stay in place as well. Chanting and using mantras to focus one’s attention can help quiet the mind. In the book *Following Sound into Silence*, Kailash states “Paradoxically, selective attention to sound is the vehicle for realizing silence”. Through giving the mind one thing to focus it’s attention on you can effectively turn the volume down on all the myriad of thoughts going on simultaneously and have a more focused sense of awareness. Since our thoughts and words are electromagnetic we are then picking up on the energy in the sounds we are making. This gives us a great ability to change old thought patterns and create new realities through mantra.

Through mantra, one’s sense of self can sometimes seem to disappear. When the awareness of the self disappears, it is usually due to being so engrossed with the activity at hand that your actual self slips your minds awareness. In this way, devotional chanting can be a way to investigate dualism of “ordinary consciousness”. Kailash explains that you can actually distinguish three different aspects of yourself:

- 1) The subject, (which includes you the chanter and you the observer of the chant)
- 2) The object, you as the one who is being observed by the witness.

- 3) The something that seems to incorporate each of these of aspects of our self as it transcends them- "the perfection addressed and made present by the mantra being chanted". This is the perfection that you are becoming by performance of devotional chanting.

As one becomes more comfortable with the act of devotional chanting, it becomes easier to let the "dualistic orientation" relax. One can let go of the self-consciousness of how they sound compared to others, and worries about correct pitch, volume, etc. The effects of devotional chanting are cumulative and can help with "reprogramming our mind-stream with the very sound form from the Divine" – (Kailash- "Following Sounds into Silence")

"You become what you love". – Kailash. Devotional chanting helps one prioritize their objects of affection. It is important to actually identify what your ideals are and can then use mantra to become these very ideals. It is not just your voice that is being sung and embodied during the chanting process. It is every part of your being. This includes your body, your mind, your thoughts, your field, your auric levels. You can use mantra as a means to rejuvenating and becoming your divine archetype. Through repetition and heart centered intentional chanting one can start to really embody the qualities he/she desires to attain. Of course, these are attributes that we already do attain. In my opinion, chanting is a way of remembering our true nature. Remembering that we have always had the qualities we are looking for now. Chanting can help us get to the place of stillness that allows us to see and remember our true nature that is already awakened!

The love and caring devotion we put into a chant can help with emotional absorption, also known as bhava samadhi, a state of one pointed passion. The amount of love and devotion you put into your chanting will affect the overall value of your experience. Surrounding yourself in sounds that are beautiful to you can be healing in and of itself. When you are the one making the sounds they become an offering to yourself. They are in essence love songs to your self.

Through your breath, you breathe life into the chants. Because sounds can affect matter, it is important to remember how much power can be found in the form of chanting a mantra. This doesn't mean you have to chant to any certain deity. There are all sorts of mantra and chants that just use simple sounds that can put the mind in a state of peace and that bring the heart into a state of grace and ease. There are also the languages that we can make up that are unique to each person. These can be equally powerful if there is

single-pointed attention and devotion behind them. Using the ancient chants that have been around for thousands of years can also be powerful because of the fields of love and energy that have already been well established around them. It is ultimately up to the individual to learn or make up whatever chants work for you. Thoughts and sound affect matter so chants have the power to alter and change your reality!

Resources used:

"Following Sounds into Silence", Kailash (Kurt A. Bruder, Ph.D)

Janis Arch's chanting classes

Randy Masters lectures

Erik Larsens lectures