

Kirtan is Constant Rememberence through Chanting



AS THERE ARE DIFFERENT PEOPLE with different temperaments, there are many different techniques in Yoga that are appropriate for all. It's best to experiment with a wide variety of techniques under the guidance of one who has had some experience with them and then to commit to a regular practice of the ones that seem to work for you. According to the Bhagavad-Gita, "That which is honey on the tongue

By Sri Yogi Dharma Mittra

will be revealed as poison in the end and that which is poison on the tongue is honey in the end." This is to say that what we are attracted to is not always best for us, but one must start somewhere and it is ideal to begin with that which the mind is attracted to. Then there is some assurance that one will be true to it.

Kirtan is a fine example of deceptively simple seeming Sadhana or spiritual practice from the Bhakti Yoga tradition which can be practiced by anyone regardless of physical condition, age, or ability to concentrate. Kirtan is call-and-response singing of the names of the Lord. It is generally done in Sangha or community of like-minded individuals who come together to sing songs of a spiritual nature. One starts just by joining in and singing, as in so many traditions. Gradually one then learns to concentrate with one-pointed focus on the music being sung and lose themselves in the give-and-take of the communal endeavor. This gradually moves one into the practice of meditation, if the concentration is without interruption. The key is to sing with humility, joy and enthusiasm. Clap your hands and lose yourself in the music and mantras. This practice offers the opportunity to surrender the ego and personal self to God, and feel his divine grace. You have to lose your little self in order to gain some knowledge of your real, real Self. What if God were to visit the location where Kirtan was taking place, would He stay if there was no devotion or enthusiasm? God loves all even if they turn away from him, so imagine how great his affection is when there is devotion!

Kirtan used to be reserved for disciples in Satsang or communion with their personal Guru. Now it has become very popular and is found in

many types of venues. If where you live there are none, or none you gravitate to, you can always buy a recording of something you like, learn it, practice and sing along on your own. Some Mantras/Bhajans I have regularly chanted with my Guru, Swami Kailashananda (who began coming in 1954 to the West) are; Sita-Ram, Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram, and Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare; Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Swami Sivananda says it's good to sing a little before engaging in spiritual practice of any sort and most have experience with chanting the Pranava (the Aum) and perhaps a little Mantra at the start of Asana class. It's traditional to invoke Ganesha, the elephant-headed remover of obstacles in the Hindu tradition, before practicing Pranayama, the breathing exercises. Personally, I always like to invoke Lord Shiva when I do spiritual practice since through invoking this name and form of God; you hit all other aspects of God. The true nature of God is beyond name and form, but chanting with devotion can be wonderful for cultivating reverence and love. Become established in Yama and Niyama, do your practice and sing a little the names of God. You may just find that it works for you. Remember there is no loss in surrender, only the purification of the heart.

With my sincere wishes and devout prayers that you will become lost in constant remembrance, Om Shanti Om . Sri Yogi Dharma Mittra

Sri Yogi Dharma Mittra founded the Dharma Yoga Center in 1974. Located at 297 Third Ave. & 23 St., it is one of the oldest schools in NYC. Visit www.dharmayogacenter.com or call 212-889-8160 for more information.