



Chant to Your Heart's Content

By repeating specific sounds, we can calm our minds and manifest our desires

By Nora Isaacs

The joy of chanting unfurls the inner world," says Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, the spiritual leader of the Siddha Yoga

tradition. Indeed, chanting is a powerful tool for transformation. Yet many people don't fully understand the significance of this ancient form, which has often been called a "dialogue with the divine."

Chanting isn't just for Hindus and yogis. You'll also find this form in traditions from Judaism to Christianity to Native American. But here, we'll focus on yoga, which stems from Hinduism. In yoga, all the practices—from meditation to asana to breathing exercises—lead us closer to merging with the divine. And chanting is no different.

When we chant, we have a chance to quiet our minds. In fact, the word *mantra* actually breaks down as "mind"

(*man*) and "free from" (*tra*): to free from the mind.

Chanting is a form of bhakti yoga, otherwise known as the yoga of devotion—and another way to get closer to God or spirit or the unknown or anything else we feel comfortable calling it. What's important is that chanting

cuts through the mind's chatter with repetition and vocalizing. The repetition allows the mind to totally relax and focus on the breath and sounds. And the vocalizing helps free our voices, open our hearts, and revitalize our life force (prana) in order to lead us closer to our true nature.

Repeating ancient mantras and sounds works on an energetic level, too: Sounds produce physical vibrations, and these vibrations gather energy when paired with a certain intention. So by intoning these sounds with the goal of abundance, removing obstacles, or becoming

closer to God, we often manifest what we desire

Gayatri Mantra

OM

**Bhur Bhuvah Svah
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi
Dhiyo Yo Nah Pracodayat**

**Earth atmosphere heavens
We meditate on the divine
source's brilliant light.
May that guide
our thoughts and prayers.**

*courtesy of Sarva-Bhutesu
"In all Beings" CD by Manorama
www.sanskritstudies.org*


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Yoga 101

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because the chants are more than just words—they are energy. Imagine the kind of positive energy words that have been repeated for thousands of years can accumulate; these words vibrate at the highest level of energy. You can think of chanting as you would think of an antique painting: Instead of diminishing with age, it gets more unique and beautiful with time.

So what do we chant? Chanting can be as simple as repeating the sound OM, which is considered the sacred sound of the universe. Other common chants include repetition of sacred Hindu gods and goddesses like Krishna, Ram, Sita, Hanuman, or Kali, all of whom are different forms of the divine. You might also hear words like *jai* (which means victory) or phrases like *Om Namah Shivaya*, *Sat Nam*, *Om Mani Padme Hum* or *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu*. Or you can chant specific mantras to invoke the deities representing the qualities of your specific intentions, such as prosperity or healing. More advanced practitioners often chant the *Yoga Sutras* or the *Gayatri Mantra*, which is considered one of the oldest and most powerful mantras around.

When you chant, remember that you don't have to worry about staying in tune or getting the words exactly right. Self-consciousness has no place in chanting. Don't be afraid to sway or close your eyes. The point is to lose yourself in the words and the rhythm as you reach another level of awareness. If you've ever chanted in a roomful of others, no doubt you've felt the energy rise with the sounds. Free your voice to free your mind, and soon you'll find that chanting can be yet another pathway toward transformation. 

Your Stars

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Scorpio (Oct. 23—Nov. 21)

When you feel yourself getting more driven about work and errands, and want to push yourself with a strenuous yoga practice, ask what you could be avoiding. Often, it's wiser to slow down, simplify, and spend extra time in meditation. Quiet time uncovers the roots of restlessness. You'll see patterns of self-sabotage and free yourself from subconscious minefields. Be patient and heal your heart! **Your personal asanas:** Reflective postures such as Child's Pose, Mountain, or Alternate Nostril Breathing.

Sagittarius

(Nov. 22—Dec. 21) Go on a "mental fast." Challenge yourself to abstain from all negative thoughts and words for seven days. You'll be rewarded with a mind filled with gratitude and peace—plus more energy for fun activities. You might start a new romance. If coupled, you'll have new appreciation for your partner and children. You might also get exciting ideas about finances and prosperity. **Your personal asanas:** Energizing, joyous postures such as Crescent, Staff Pose, or Lion.

Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)

What experiences from the past affect your present relationships? Think back on challenging or humiliating situations when you were a kid or teenager that damaged your self-esteem. Use the power of forgiveness and positive affirmations to re-record the messages you tell yourself. Healing your subconscious improves your self-worth and ability to give and receive love! **Your personal asanas:** Postures that give a

change of perspective: Plow, Prayer Twist, or Neck Rolls.


Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)

Neptune is making you more vulnerable and maybe even more forgetful than usual. Don't be defensive or snappy to unconsciously protect yourself. Spend extra time meditating and practicing yoga. You won't lose your individuality as your heart opens. You'll have more power, but in a way that is gentle, receptive, and feminine. Enjoy this sacred process! **Your personal asanas:** Open postures such as Fish, Camel, or Savasana.

Pisces (Feb. 19 - Mar. 20)

Prosperity is spiritual! Meditate and visualize a new job, or ask your soul for insightful ideas to help you manage your money better. Balancing work with playtime and relaxation makes you more successful—not lazy. Give yourself a break! Also, if you're mistreated at the office, let it go and move on. You deserve respect. **Your personal asanas:** Simple, fun poses of power such as Triangle, Up Dog, or Tree.

Aries (Mar. 21 - Apr. 19)

Mars is empowering you to make your dreams a reality. Meditate on what your true dreams are. Be sure you're expending energy on people and goals that really matter. Release superficial relationships and interests. Move out of your comfort zone to reveal how emotionally and spiritually strong you are! **Your personal asanas:** Courageous postures like Prayer Twist, Half Moon, and Crescent Pose. 

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