



Ecstatic Kirtan

I know the idiot's warehouse
Is always full.

I know each of us
Could run back and forth from there
All day long.

And show everyone our vast collection.

Though tonight, Hafiz,
Retire from the madness for an hour,

Gather with some loyal friends
Or sit alone

And
Sing beautiful songs

To God.

- Hafiz



Chanting is a part of nearly every spiritual tradition. Kirtan is a form of ecstatic chanting that has been practiced in India for thousands of years. It is also a major part of the bhakti yoga path. In the last ten to fifteen years it has been enjoying increasing popularity in the West. Lately, even rock stars like Madonna and Cher are adding Sanskrit chants to their CDs and performances.

Why are more and more people interested in chanting a foreign language to deities they may not have even know existed a couple of decades ago? The simple answer is because of what kirtan does.

Repeating a simple mantra with an open heart with a group of others who are doing the same, can bring about a focus that quiets the mind and allows the natural bliss of our own being to pour in. In a kirtan, it is not unusual to be able to enter into a state of bliss and connection to the divine that would have taken years of long dedicated meditation to attain. The cohesiveness of the group's energy and focus create a powerful rhythm that is relatively easy to synchronize our attention with. This group entrainment stills the mind and opens us to a presence greater than our limited ego. What a vacation from the constant activity of the mind!

Kirtan is a sacred practice anyone can do. No experience or musical talent is necessary. You just show up and let the music and the group's energy do it's magic. It's very different from the more passive types of performances most people in the west are familiar with. In a kirtan the leader (called a kirtan wallah) and the audience jointly creates the experience. The energy of the group merges together and an upward spiral of energy is created by the soaring sound currents. That energy is from within you and support of the group helps to open it up.

JULY 17-19, 2009

Gathering

Why chant? Here's what Robert Gass says in his book *Chanting*:

- We chant to join our voices to the voices of countless seekers, worshipers, mystics, and lovers of life, in every time and in every place, who have shared in sacred song.
- We chant to fill our hearts and fill our homes with loving and peaceful vibrations of sound.
- We chant because it's fun.
- We chant to help the stress and freneticness of our busy lives melt away.
- We chant to spread our wings and let our soul take flight.
- We chant for the sheer joy of letting our God-given voices sing out.
- We chant for the heartfelt communion that we feel with others when we come together in song.
- We chant our prayers to God, so that our lives may be graced by more intimate Presence of the One known by so many names.



Chanting is about letting go of the habitual control with which we approach most of life. We are invited to let go so completely that the boundary between us and the mantra dissolves. We have a chance to enter into a world liberated from ordinary time and space. We have a chance to transcend the boundaries of fear and control that separate us from the full experience of life.



This July we will have an opportunity to "gather with some loyal friends and sing beautiful songs to God." We hope you'll be able to join us. The theme for the weekend is "Surrendering to Ecstasy". Our goal is to create a space conducive to dropping into states of deep ecstasy. We'll be chanting simple mantras that can take us deep. There will be some late-night ecstatic chanting Friday night and Saturday night. Come and let the sacred land at Harbin and the sacred space we will be creating take you into a deeper connection with yourself and other bhakti yogis.



This Ecstatic Kirtan Gathering will be held July 17-19, 2009. It will feature several prominent kirtan groups and daily yoga class options plus the opportunity to soak in the healing Harbin Hot Springs waters. The tentative schedule of artists includes: Suzanne Sterling, Kathy Zavada, Fanna Fi Allah Qawwali, Prema Mayi, Shantala (Benjy & Heather Wertheimer), and Harbin favorites, Arpita, and Peter & the Harbin Kirtan Band. The list of groups is growing and likely to include some of your favorites.

Registration and more information about the Ecstatic Kirtan Gathering are available online at: EcstaticKirtan.com or you can call 707-987-8341.

