

## WITH **CHANTING**



Suddenly, I felt a rushing sense like a campfire ignited at the base of my spine, instantaneously filling my pelvis and beginning to move upwards. I had never experienced that kind of thing before, but had read and studied enough to recognize what was happening. I knew it had something to do with the kundalini energy at the base of the spine. However, I had no clue what would happen next. I was panicked about being

in a public place.

I was taking a swing dance class with my husband a few years ago. He was very enthusiastic about having me there as he was an avid ballroom dancer at the time. I was less keen on attending, but I had agreed to go in the spirit of a shared activity. There were twenty or thirty people in the class. The men were lined up in a circle around the edge of the room and the women were on an inner circle, facing the men.

We would dance with the man directly in front of us for just a moment or two, practicing a variety of spinning moves, and then move on to the next man and repeat the same steps and spins. We were nearing the end of the hour. Since we were repeating the same spins over and over, all of the women were actually whirling around much more than we normally would have in an actual dance scenario.

Maybe I was going to have some kind of seizure. Maybe I fall to the floor twitching and writhing and humiliate myself. Maybe I would lose consciousness. Maybe they would have to call an ambulance for me. “No!” I thought instantaneously, “Not here! Not now!” Suddenly, the experience was over. I walked to the foyer, changed my shoes and headed for the car. To my husband’s great disappointment, I never went back to the dance classes.

Afterward I did some research into the whirling dervish dances of the Sufis, which seemed the closest thing to what I had experienced. The whirling dervishes and even Tibetan prayer wheels are based on the principle that rotational force can result in energy rising upward. It’s also interesting that children often play a game of spinning



***The movement of the kundalini as depicted in ancient relief.***

around until they are too dizzy to stand up. As adults, we are generally moving only forwards or backwards!

What I experienced seems to have been a form of spontaneous kundalini movement. The Sanskrit word *kundalini* means “coiled like a snake.” The snake is a common symbol of the kundalini, curled at the base of the spine, often related to sexual energy, since it begins in the lowest chakras or energy centers and moves upward.

Many mystics and yogis have written and taught about the rising of the kundalini. Bringing the ener-



**Sri Yantra (OM) Mandala**



**OM sound on a Tonoscope**

gy to the crown of the head is the physical counterpart to achieving enlightenment. There are many approaches to awakening and raising the kundalini. A French physician and scientist, Dr. Francis Lefebure, even designed a device called a Gyroscope that would “awaken” the kundalini when used for about an hour a day.

As it moves upward, the energy flows through seven major energy centers called chakras. Some systems include eight chakras (adding the secret chamber of the heart), and other systems include twelve (adding five secret-ray chakras in the hands and feet). Other systems break this down further into 144 chakras or more!

There are a number of ways to understand and work with the chakras. My favorite practice is chanting. I practice a mantra for each one and use the associated seed syllables—*lam, vam, ram, yam, ham, om* and *ah*. I also chant mantras dedicated to the deities associated with each chakra. For example, Nataraja is a form of Shiva as the cosmic dancer and is associated with the crown chakra.

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More recently I have begun to explore, using yantras for focus and visualization during chanting. Yantras are mandalas (circular, symbolic illustrations) that reflect the core characteristics of each chakra. There are traditional yantras associated with each chakra that have been used for thousands of years.

Experiments have shown that the frequencies of certain sounds will produce patterns in sand or water on metal plates. Those patterns are remarkably like the forms depicted in yantras. Here is the traditional yantra (see above) for the sound *OM* and the corresponding pattern it creates.

Not only does chanting and visualization focus the mind in an active meditation, but it also creates a physical vibration that helps to clear and accelerate the spinning of the chakras.

Personally, I feel chants as a vibration in my heart that grows to a “full-body buzz.” It’s like being plugged into an electrical outlet!

Chanting creates a connection to a much greater source and energy—a connection to God. Sometimes, that only happens for a moment or two in the course of an hour or more of chanting. At other

times, I feel the inner vibration so strongly and for such an extended period that I think that I must be shaking visibly, but actually, I’m not.

When chanting in a group (*kirtan*), there is an additional sense of unity and community that I haven’t experienced with other practices. The combined sense of being filled with incredible energy and the connection to others is a powerful, magical sensation. Chanting can be understood as chakras and science, but that’s only one level. If you pour your heart and soul, and your passion into the practice, it becomes an experience that I can only describe as falling deeply in love with all of life. ■

*Kathleen Karlsen loves to share how to use music and symbolic art to create a happy heart, a clear mind and a rejuvenated body. To accelerate your path through the science of mantras and sacred art, visit her website: [KathleenKarlsen.com](http://KathleenKarlsen.com).*

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