

Physical, Mental and Spiritual Benefits of Kiirtan

Physically:

- Loosens the knees and ankles and prepares us for sitting in meditation posture.
- Reduces high blood pressure, hypertension.
- Massages the pineal gland thus improving functions of thinking.

Mentally:

- Removes complexities from the mind. Many people are becoming mad or committing suicide today due to psychic complexities of modern society. These are removed through daily Kiirtan.
- Makes the mind simple and loving.
- Removes egoism.
- Removes depression, frustration and worry from the mind.
- Makes the mind carefree, light and pure.
- Enables us to think clearly and objectively.
- Purifies the sensory organs (nose, tongue, eyes, skin, ears) and the motor organs (vocal chord, legs, hands, urinary and excretory organs).
- We will find the answer to our problems through intuitive knowledge developed from constant Kiirtan.
- Removes mental troubles.

Spiritually:

- Reminds us that we are the children of the Cosmic Creator.
- Develops the highest quality in human being: devotion and love for the Supreme.
- Renders service to Supreme Being.
- Best aid to spiritual meditation since all the organs and mind gets purified through chanting the mantra beforehand.

Collectively:

- Gives benefit to everyone who hears the mantra.
- Removes the problems created by disasters (flood, drought, etc.) if many do Kiirtan collectively; with maximum sincerity relief will come in a short time.
- Prevents occurrence of collective psychic problems, which are about to occur.

Kiirtana is Spiritual Chanting and Lalita Marmika is Spiritual Dance.

Chanting and dance are aids in achieving good concentration.

To experience the deepest, more profound states of consciousness a great deal of concentration is necessary. In order to achieve good concentration two things are very helpful:

1. Feeling a strong sentimental attraction for the object of concentration.

2. Having all aspects of ones being focused in the same direction.

Many different aspects of Yogic practice work to achieve these results in different ways. One of the most effective and enjoyable means of achieving this is by uniting Kiirtan (chanting) with Lalita Marmika, an ancient spiritual dance.

Lalita Marmika can be considered to be the mother of all dances. Together with Tandava (a warrior's dance) it is the earliest known of the classical Indian dances. Lalita Marmika is said to have been created by Parvati, a great female yogini thought to have lived 7000 years ago, as an aid to self-realization. The pleasing melodies and rhythms of Kiirtan (chanting) combined with the inner meaning of the mantra, along with the dance, awaken feelings of attraction for the spiritual idea. This feeling of sentimental attraction makes concentration natural and enjoyable.

Meanwhile, dance also plays the role of involving the entire body in spiritual practice. With the entire body involved, the rhythm of the mantra is experienced more fully; the mind joins in more readily; and distractions are much less likely to occur. When the dance is done collectively, the independent rhythms of the participants are brought into harmony and a powerful collective vibration is generated.

Influencing Consciousness through Symbol and Posture

Classical Indian dance is a well researched science. Each position of the body, hands and feet combines a symbolic meaning with a specific psycho-physical effect. Lalita Marmika is a simple and dignified dance. The back and forth sideways step involves bending the knees slightly and tapping the tip of the big toe behind the heel of the opposite foot. The symbolic significance of the step expresses the feeling:

I step lightly and gently on my beloved Mother Earth.

The psycho-physical effect is to stimulate the secretion of the pineal gland which is linked to the nerve endings in the upper part of the big toe. The hormone of the pineal gland calms all the other glands in the body and generates feelings of spiritual bliss. A further effect of the leg movements is to limber the knees and prepare them for meditation. The position of the hands in Lalita Marmika dance is above the head with the arms ideally straight up but at the very least, not less than at an angle of ninety degrees to the shoulders. The symbolic meaning of this position is:

I surrender and open myself to Divine Love.

Because the position involves overcoming the natural downward pull of gravity it also signifies:

I break free of worldly limitations.

Meanwhile, the psycho-physical effect of the position is to activate and expand the heart cakra and create feelings of joy and power. This is the posture that every victorious athlete adopts when they have just scored a goal or won a race. Happily, not only does joy produce the posture, the posture produces joy. It is very difficult to remain despondent in this position.

This is why when lowering the hands and arms in the dance, they should always remain no lower than the heart cakra area. Lowering of the hands, that is from above the head when the arms were straight up, occurs when the arms get tired. Those hands should rest in the heart area. One should not lower

the hands to below the heart area. Accordingly, the hands should not be left to dangle downwards or beside the body.

The Best Remedy for Psychic Problems

The practice of Kiirtan (chanting and dance) before meditation is one of the best remedies for psychic problems such as confusion and depression. It overcomes feelings of powerlessness because it cultivates a sense of connectedness to the Infinite - that one is not alone. Psychic problems come due to disturbances and agitation in the mental waves. In Kiirtan, the unique combination of melody, rhythm and spiritual idea brings harmony and simplicity to the mind and body, breaking up the agitated negative wavelengths. Furthermore, Kiirtan relieves the body pain which always troubles beginners. If one chants as well as meditates in the sitting position the strain on the legs is doubled. If, however, one dances Kiirtan, the stress on the legs is relieved and the body and mind are prepared for meditation in a very enjoyable way.

Performing Kiirtan at Home

Kiirtan is best performed with live musical accompaniment which you create yourself or with others. It can also be sung and danced without the help of musical instruments. However, if you neither play an instrument nor feel confident of carrying a tune on your own you may also sing and dance Kiirtan to the accompaniment of a tape or disc. If you are dancing Kiirtan the more lively melodies will be more enjoyable, whereas the slower tunes are more suitable for sitting or lying with the eyes closed.

Dealing with Difficulties

The main difficulties which get in the way of enjoying Kiirtan are self-consciousness and inertia. Though one may feel a little silly initially, the above explanations should make it clear that there is a very deep science and tradition behind Kiirtan. The personal benefits of Kiirtan can be discovered if one remains open to the possibilities and is prepared to persevere.

The path of self-realisation is not the path that most people choose. On this path, therefore, it is unwise to care too much about what others think. The Chinese spiritual classic, called the Tao Te Ching says: "When people laugh at it you can be sure it is the Tao [the Way]"

When you can get past the feeling silly barrier you find Kiirtan one of the most rewarding practices you have ever experienced. It may of course be possible that the practice of Kiirtan simply doesn't appeal to your personality. This is also fine. Yoga has many aspects and you are free to choose the ones which appeal to you most.

