

Music and Meditation

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Music is very much a part of every culture on the planet. An attraction to music is a natural part of human society. Everyone loves listening to music, playing music, singing, and dancing. If you play music around small children, immediately they start to move with the music. This can even take place with animals on occasion. We cannot, in fact, separate music from our own lives as individuals or as a society. Incorporating music with meditation makes for a natural and very potent practice.

There are different types of meditation and relaxation techniques that use sound. The one that I would like to briefly discuss in this article is called kirtan. Kirtan is the call and response singing of mantras with musical accompaniment. There is one person who is leading the kirtan, and they sing a mantra first. Then everybody else responds. What makes kirtan meditation and not just a simple performance is the use of mantras which have spiritual qualities. In the ancient texts of yoga, it is described that certain sounds are spiritual in nature, and have the ability to touch us on the spiritual level. The mantras we use for kirtan possess this spiritual quality. The use of these mantras as the object of focus is what makes this a meditation. When you do kirtan meditation the focus is on the sound of the mantras as participants listen and sing.

The music carries the mantras, so to speak, and sets the mood for the kirtan. A kirtan can have different moods. Relaxing, peaceful, heartfelt, fast and energetic, ecstatic, or anything in between. Also, kirtan can be done with any style of music from any culture, setting the mood specific to the people in a given place. Any instrument can be used as well, but ones that you can sing while playing are usually best.

Kirtan is very easy and fun to do. It takes our natural tendency for music, singing, and dancing, and combines it with the potency of spiritual mantras to make for a powerful meditation that can be done anywhere and with anyone. Check out our free programs either live or virtually and experience it for yourself!