

The Healing Power of Chant

KIRTAN PRACTITIONER **SNATAM KAUR** FINDS
THE VIBRATIONS THAT MOVE US, BODY AND SOUL.

AN ACCLAIMED yoga teacher and leader of kirtan, or call-and-response devotional chanting, Snatam Kaur sings with the intent of uplifting, healing, and transforming her listeners. A longtime social activist, the California-born vocalist often performs in prisons, hospices, and schools in low-income communities.

Kaur's music "is just pure spirit," says fan Oprah Winfrey. "There's no part of it that doesn't feel like it comes from the space where God abides, where source energy abides. If more of the world listened to her music, we would have a more peaceful space here on Earth."

S&H spoke with Kaur about her work.

Your album *Divine Birth* is designed to support new mothers during and after pregnancy. How does that work?

My spiritual teacher, Yogi Bhanjan, said the most impactful time of teaching from the mother to her child is when the child is in her womb, because the child is learning based on vibration directly from the mother. After the child is born, then the

mother has a few things left to teach the child, but most of it is already done.

These mantras give the mother a vehicle to transfer her highest intentions, to create that space of prayer for the child's basic foundation. I really see a certain kind of balance or calm in children who have experienced these sacred chants within the womb.

practice

Repeat After Me

Try these two mantras for healing:

Chant: Ra Ma Da Sa, Sa Say So Hung

Meaning: Sun, moon, Earth, infinity; unto infinity one thousandfold, unto infinity in every cell and fiber.

Snatam Kaur sings this mantra on her album *Grace*, which also includes instructions for the postures and mudras that accompany the chant. Culled from the kundalini yoga tradition, Ra Ma Da Sa is intended to be chanted for someone in need of healing. "Through the process of chanting for that person," Kaur says, "it has a healing effect on yourself."

Chant: Guru Guru Waheguru, Guru Ram Das Guru

Meaning: Darkness to light, ecstasy and joy; here and now, God, servant.

"This mantra takes me out of any darkness, any depression, any sadness," Kaur says. Her disarmingly pretty rendition of this chant, as well as instructions for its accompanying postures and mudras, can be found on her album *Meditations for Transformation 2: Connect and Heal*.



FRAN GEALER

How important is the correct pronunciation of the mantras that you chant?

The pronunciation is key, because it's really about the tip of the tongue at the roof of the mouth, tapping a code that sends messages to your hypothalamus gland, which lies just below the thalamus in the midline of the brain. It is connected by blood vessels to the pituitary gland, which is the master gland of the body. So, through the chanting, you actually affect all of these glandular systems. And the hypothalamus itself is known to trigger things like regulation of moods, emotional behavior, and sexuality. When we chant these sacred words, we are able to reduce stress, feel more balanced, and our entire endocrine system and immune system are adjusted and rejuvenated to be in alignment with the vibration of the soul.

Do you think it's necessary to believe in the healing aspects of kirtan to get the benefits?

I think on some level, we all get affected by the mantra. These are sacred resonances and vibrations, and even if we're not necessarily believing, it's going to affect some part of us. But if you want to have the effect in this lifetime? Maybe it's going to affect you a few years or a few lifetimes on down, but to have the effects now, you have to have the intention, the mental awareness, and presence. If the intention is there, and the willingness to keep chanting a mantra until the heart opens—that's where real healing comes.

—DAMON ORION