



“Let us investigate a song which is above all songs; one which will develop the spirit and produce harmony and exhilaration, unfolding the inner potentialities of life.”

‘Abdu’l-Baha

Singing has oozed out of me since childhood. Artists doodle; I hum. As I go through my day, little improvised tunes are always rolling around in my head. It’s a soothing and sometimes comical phenomenon, but I was well into middle age before I came to really appreciate this “gift”. At that time, I discovered that singing can be a life and death matter-- literally. Depression latched onto my soul and gradually, I stopped singing. The hum in my heart nearly ceased.

Once in a while, though, I’d sing my children to sleep at night. And those quiet little prayer-songs became an integral part of my journey back to vibrant health and harmony. I discovered a passionate interest in chanting. I visited sweat lodges, sacred music festivals and devotional gatherings where Hindus, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Sufis and Baha’is graciously taught me their sacred sounds. I soaked up every flavor of chanting, prayerful song and heart - conversation with the Beloved.

My grief gradually turned to joy, and I discovered that singing is “sound medicine”. I learned that there are 82 energy meridian points in the mouth that are stimulated when you sing and that the right music stabilizes blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing, boosts the immune system and reduces stress. Now I teach the powerful techniques that helped me heal, including the “Yoga of Sound” and sacred chants from a broad range of spiritual traditions.

The “Yoga of Sound” includes sonic formulas used by Hindus for thousands of years to enhance health and deepen the spiritual dimension of life. It synthesizes Bhava Yoga (devotional chant); Shabda Yoga (the power of words and intention--mantras); Shakti Yoga (balancing

chakra energy); and Nada Yoga (the science of sound and vibration). These practices compliment the yoga routines we’ve become familiar with in the West. I particularly like saguna mantras, which intone attributes of the Divine, such as love, mercy, justice and compassion. They remind me that we were created with those qualities too. And chanting those virtues helps us personify them more fully.

You don’t have to be a singing maniac like me in order to reap the healing rewards of sacred sound. If you can breathe, you can chant. Try this simple exercise: lie down on your back and get comfortable. Breathe slowly and deeply - in through your nose, out through your mouth. Just allow the breath to move without effort and notice how it feels in your body. After a bit, let the breath make a slight sound, like waves of the ocean, as it goes in and out. Next, let a sound ride along on the out-breath. Choose a note that is comfortable for you. Just let it float out. With practice, you will be able to hold this tone longer. Think loving thoughts while you do this. Every cell in your body will match the vibration, due the law of entrainment. Careful, now. You could get hooked on this weird, but deeply relaxing stuff.

Chanting in groups is an especially powerful way to create an energy field that sends harmonizing sound waves across long distances. Together, our

voices create additional notes - “harmonics”- that are not present when we chant alone. We experience how diversity in the human family can be the cause of love and harmony, where many different notes blend together to make a perfect chord of unity.

*Nancy Watters, M.A., is an enthusiastic educator, inspiring vocalist, and founding director of Sacred World Song™. Visit [www.sacredworldsong.com](http://www.sacredworldsong.com) or phone (250)746-3626.*

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