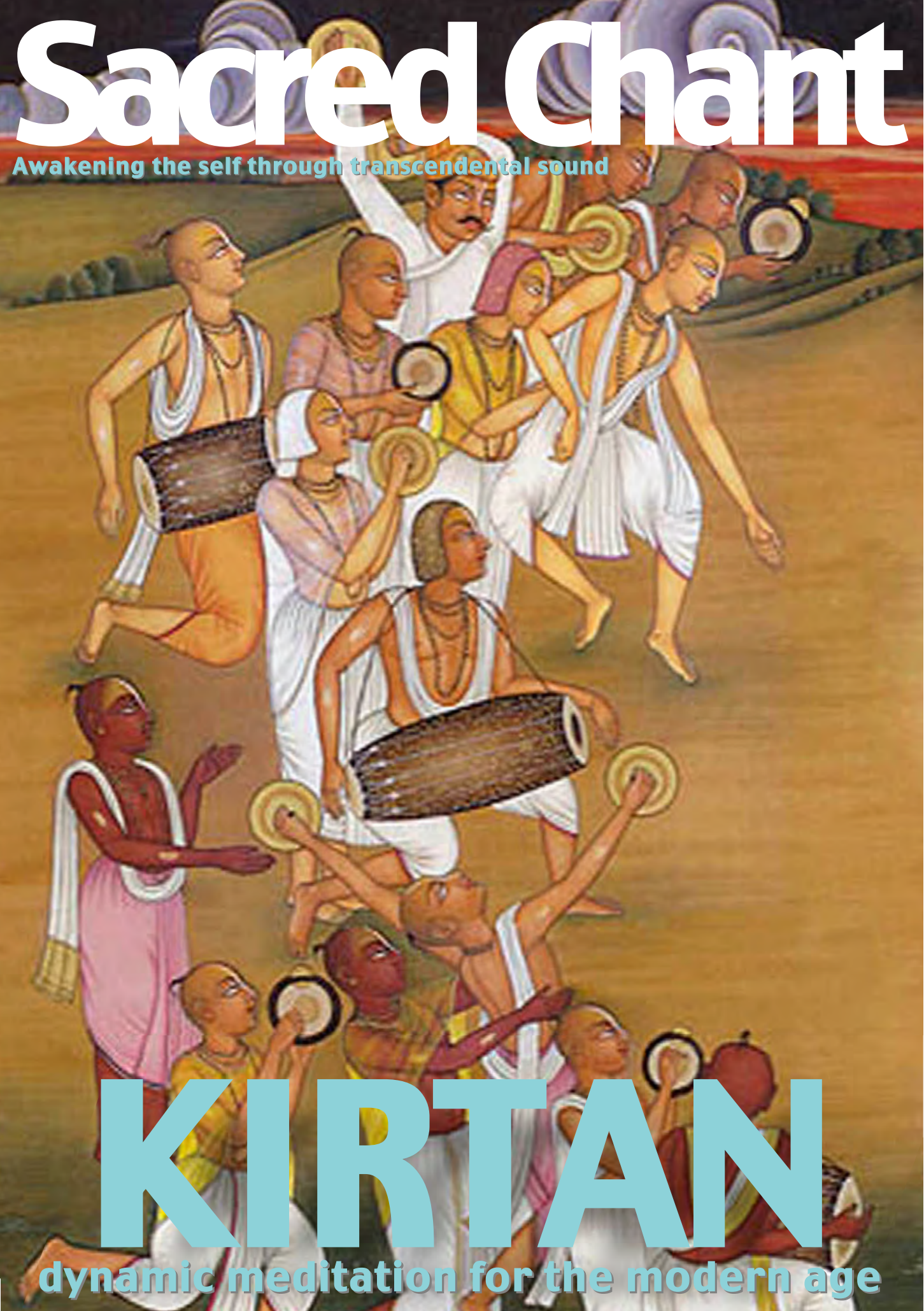


# Sacred Chant



Awakening the self through transcendental sound



# KIRTAN



dynamic meditation for the modern age





“Why is happiness eluding us? No matter how much we get, we always hanker for more. Such is the nature of every one of us in all fields and walks of life. How then could finite material objects and flickering bodily or intellectual pleasures satiate our infinite hankerings? For as long as we go on searching for happiness within the material plane, our efforts and endeavours are destined to be irrevocably frustrated. Due to their natural limitations, material objects and goals simply cannot satisfy our limitless hankerings. Only by seeking out beauty and love of the unlimited spiritual realm can we hope to be successful in our common quest of lasting happiness.”

Swami BR Sridhar




**T**hank you for taking the time to read this short pamphlet. Perhaps you were just given it by someone you saw chanting “Hare Krishna” in the street and maybe you are curious to know who they are and what they are doing?

We hope this introductory magazine will provide some of the answers and get you thinking about the meaning of life and the way to find peace and fulfilment in your own life and you don’t have to shave your head or wear orange robes to do this.

If any of the contents of these pages strike a chord with you then please feel free to enquire further.

You can find us online at [www.scsmathlondon.org](http://www.scsmathlondon.org) and [www.scsmath.com](http://www.scsmath.com) or you can contact or visit us at one of our centres listed on the back.

***brahma-jijnasa, krishnanusandhana***



“Awake! Arise! Search for your fortune and you cannot but have that.  
It is your birthright.”





# Who Am I?

## Are you suffering an identity crisis?

Take a few moments to practice this simple meditation. Sit back and ask yourself this fundamental question. “Who am I?” Look at your hand. Are you your hand? No, *its* your hand. Take a look in the mirror at your face. Is that you? Are you that face? Is that the same face you had when you were a child or has it changed? But you, the owner of that face is still the same person, right? Then who are you? Are you your mind? Isn't your mind also always changing? If you are thoughtful, you can observe the workings of your mind by the process of self-examination. Suppose you see a really yummy-looking cream cake in a baker's window. Your mind may tell you to buy it and scoff it down, but if you take a few minutes to think on the situation you may decide

that on second thoughts you might be better off to leave the cake where it is and feel proud of your self-restraint. Or you might decide, “Oh what the hell!” and eat it anyway. The point is *you* made the choice, but who is that ‘you’? That question still remains. To find the answer we will have to look a little deeper inside. If we meditate on this question we will conclude that ‘I’ am something more than the mind and the body, the ‘driver’ of this vehicle—the self, the spirit, the soul, the atma.

Of course we say, “my soul,” don't we? But the ancient Sanskrit word ‘atma’ means “I soul” and this is more accurate. In fact the ancient Sanskrit literatures known as the Vedas are a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge about the soul. The Vedas are the

Kirtan is very simple, but the life-enriching benefits and the new perspective of reality that it brings are truly wonderful.

oldest know spiritual literatures in the world, originating in India about 3000 BC. The essence of the Vedas is found in the Bhagavad-gita, the epic conversation between Lord Krishna and the warrior prince Arjuna. Here Krishna explains the knowledge of the self and the transcendental science of Bhakti-yoga or the spiritual union of the soul with the Divine through the practice of devotion.

“Know that the soul who pervades the entire body is imperishable. He is unchangable and everlasting; no one can destroy him.”

“The soul is never born and he never dies, nor does he repeatedly come into being and undergo expansion, because he is unborn and eternal. He is inexhaustible, ever youthful yet ancient.”

“Weapons cannot pierce the soul, and fire cannot burn him. He can neither be moistened with water, nor dried by the air.”

“Some see the soul as astonishing, some describe him as astonishing, some hear of him as astonishing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all.”

You are the soul living in this body for the time being and when this body becomes old and worn out, you ‘the soul’ will pass on from this body and enter into another body, another dress, for another time around. And so this cycle goes on and on until we realise our ‘self’ and awaken to our real spiritual nature and break the chain of perceived birth and death. Now we are awake in the material world and unconscious of our spiritual nature. We misidentify ourselves with our body and

mind and everything related to that and try to satisfy our inner hankering for love and affection by searching for fulfilment in the external world. But no matter how hard we try we always remain incomplete, always feeling inside that there must be something more. So the ancient sages and seers of India have advised us to begin our search for fulfilment in another way. To look within and try to connect with the inner spiritual current that is the joy of the awakened soul (*atma-rama*).

But philosophy and theoretical knowledge alone will not give us what we are searching for. Just as the bee cannot taste the honey in the jar simply by licking the jar; he will have to open the jar and enter inside if he really wants to taste that sweetness. So similarly will have to enter into the state of the awakened soul if we want to find the sweetness within.

And how to awaken the self, to taste that inner joy? This is through the practice of Bhakti-yoga or linking the individual soul with the supreme Soul through the cultivation of heart’s devotion.

The great Avatar of devotion Sri Chaitanya has taught that the most easy and sublime method for awakening our devotion for the Supreme Soul, Krishna (or God) is by the congregational chanting of His Holy Names. This is called Kirtan or the Sacred Chant for deliverance.

Kirtan is very simple, but the life-enriching benefits and the new perspective of reality that it brings are truly wonderful. Gradually you will discover your real self and awaken to the joy of the eternal. Why not give it a try and see where it will take you?



A group of devotees, including men and women, are walking in a city street. They are wearing bright orange robes and some are carrying drums and cymbals. The background shows a busy street with buildings and other people.

# KIRTAN

**dynamic meditation for the modern age**

**T**oday the sight of the bright robes and the sound of drums and hand-cymbals and the chanting of Hare Krishna in the streets of London is as commonplace as the black cab or the red bus. For over 40 years devotees of Krishna have been chanting and dancing in the streets of London. Why do they do it and what is the chanting all about anyway? Are they mad, brainwashed? Or is there something deep and meaningful behind the parade?

The Kirtan movement was begun 500 years ago in Bengal, India, by the great mystic saint and Avatar, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Sri Chaitanya taught that everyone, regardless of caste, creed, religion, race, gender or culture—all are the natural and eternal servants of the one God whom the saints and seers of ancient India have seen in their deepest spiritual visions (*darshan*) to be the all-attractive supreme person, Krishna. Sri Chaitanya taught that the most sublime method for awakening our dormant love for Krishna is to chant His Holy Names, to call to Krishna in song and to chant in congregation. Taking this chanting into the streets of the towns and villages of India, Lord Chaitanya began the Sankirtan movement and predicted, “This chanting will spread to every town and village all over the world.” Today the Eastern and Western followers of Lord Chaitanya take the same chanting into the streets so that all may hear the holy names of the Lord.

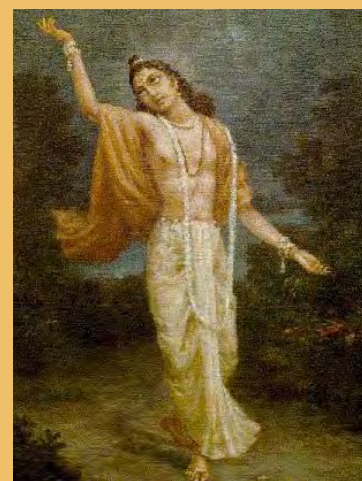
In the spirit of humility, tolerance and giving honour to all, the devotees of Krishna chant the Lord’s Holy names and invite you to try this dynamic meditation for yourself. Any name of God

is good: Jehovah, Allah, Elohim, Vishnu, or Krishna but we recommend this simple mantra as taught by Lord Sri Chaitanya.

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama  
Rama Rama Hare Hare**

This is called the Maha-mantra or the great mantra. The chanting of the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra, both as an individual meditation and in congregation forms the substance of the Kirtan movement. As the mantra in its purest form is non-different with Krishna Himself, the chanter is able to achieve direct communion with the Divinity by the practice of this chanting and experience the joy of the awakened self.

There are no hard and fast rules for chanting the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra concerning time, place or circumstance. Anyone can chant at any time, in any place and in any circumstance. The only qualification required for chanting the Holy Name is sincerity of heart. And when this mantra is chanted together, the power of that sound vibration changes the hearts of both chanters and hearers and can touch the heavens.



**S**ri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in this world in 1486, in Mayapur, West Bengal, India. Srila Rupa Goswami has glorified Lord Chaitanya as being the most munificent Lord, because He freely distributed life's most precious gift—pure love of Godhead. He is praised as being the most merciful Lord because He distributes His mercy without discrimination to all, without any consideration of whether one is qualified or not.

Although He is the Supreme Lord, Krishna, He posed as a devotee, and revealed the most sublime sentiments and the natural disposition of a devotee. He taught us by His own example how to establish a connection with the Lord through the practice of pure devotion.





***Jiva-doya***

# Compassionate living

Lord Chaitanya also taught us the principle of *jiva-doya* or compassion for all living beings. All life is sacred and so we should try to live while causing the least suffering and harm. Following a vegetarian diet is essential to the practice of spiritual life and can go a long way to making this world a fairer and kinder place. Here are some other good reasons we should be vegetarian.

## **1. Saving Animals**

In the UK alone, 850 million animals and hundreds of millions of fish are killed every year to put meat on tables – that's more than three million animals a day. Before they are slaughtered, hundreds of millions lead desolate, disease-ridden lives on factory farms. Turning vegetarian means you're no longer a part of that cycle of death and cruelty.

## **2. Saving the Planet**

Rainforests are cleared for grazing; methane from livestock causes global warming; soil is eroded by cattle; slurry poisons waterways; and the seas are laid to waste by overfishing. The global appetite for meat and the industrial techniques of the meat industry are destroying the Earth.

## **3. Saving Others**

While 750 million people go to bed hungry every night, one-third of the world's grain is fed to farmed animals. A typical Western meat-based diet can only feed 2.5 billion people: a plant-based diet will feed every one of us.

## **4. Saving Yourself**

Vegetarians live longer and suffer less from diseases such as hypertension, obesity, coronary artery disease, certain kinds of cancer and diabetes. Vegetarian diets offer disease protection because of lower saturated fat, cholesterol and animal protein and higher folates, antioxidant vitamins and plant nutrients.





## Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math — London Chapter

East London

466 Green Street  
Upton Park  
E13 9DB  
Tel: 020 8552 3551

West London

Greville House  
Hazelmere Close  
Hatton Road  
TW14 9PX  
Tel: 020 8890 9525

**Next Event**

