



“I want to live inside the chant.” Those seven words, spoken out loud by me for the first time in June, 2008, became a potent intention that is now manifesting. In the moment that I first said those words, I was driving into [Ammachi's](#) ashram outside of San Ramon, California, singing along with a [Krishna Das](#) CD. As I witnessed how chanting songs to God brought me into Union with my deepest Self, I knew that I wanted to live a life filled to the brim with spiritual practices.

Of all the daily spiritual practices that I do, chanting is my absolute favorite sadhana. Singing beautiful songs to the Beloved is the central practice of Bhakti Yoga, the path of Union with the Divine through Devotion. As a bhakta, a devotee, I surrender my whole self to the Divine, and in that process of bowing down, I merge with the essence of my Heart and become one with my true Self. This is not some lofty goal that I will experience someday right before I die, but rather it is a direct experience that I realize often through chanting the Names of God.

For nearly seven years I have been chanting along with CDs, and now I am also chanting by myself while playing my harmonium. Thanks to some guidance from [Jai Uttal](#), at the weekly [Radiance Rising Circles](#) I now lead simple chants. The chants I lead are mostly Sanskrit mantras to Shiva and Krishna, but I also sing a Hallelujah chant, a chant for Peace, and a chant to Green Tara.

While I do still listen to some popular music (Michael Franti, P!nk, Michael Jackson, and others), especially with my boys who are 10 and 13, I mostly listen to chanting music. I love how [Amm](#)  
[a](#) explains the difference between the two types of music:

“When the devotee hears God’s name being sung, she forgets all else and becomes absorbed in the Divine. Ordinary songs are enjoyable because they deal with the emotions of the mind and with worldly relationships. Listeners get absorbed in those sentiments and enjoy it.... Music such as disco music awakens various emotional waves. Listening to sensual songs awakens the lover-beloved mood and leads to related thoughts and sentiments. Devotional songs, on the other hand, remind us of our relationship to God; divine qualities are awakened instead of worldly emotions. The emotions are quieted and this gives peace to both the singers and the listeners. Amma doesn’t dismiss ordinary songs. Many people enjoy them.... Amma doesn’t

reject anything.... Devotional songs and prayers engender positive vibrations within us and throughout our surroundings.... when we sing about God's glories again and again, they become rooted in our hearts.... Singing devotional songs makes the mind joyful. It is restful for the mind." (*The Eternal Truth*, Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust, Amritapuri, Kerala, India, 2006, 2007.)

Again and again I chant the Names, and again and again I am filled with Bliss and Gratitude. I am so grateful to be living inside the chant.

May all beings everywhere know Peace and Happiness.

Om Shanti (Peace),

Yogini Tejaswini

Photo of Teja's harmonium by Teja Shankara.