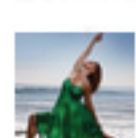




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## Dave Stringer kirtan: non-dualist philosophy meets uplifting chant to create a neuropeptide dance of divine proportions.


 Via Dearbhla Kelly  
on Nov 21, 2011


If you've had the experience of chanting with kirtan maestro Dave Stringer, you know how talented he is, not just his musical acumen and his dynamic presence, but also his gift for bringing the teachings of yoga to life in his incisive and wry musings on everything from the Bhagavad Gita, to quantum physics and the nature of time. And then there's his voice!

But most people probably aren't aware that Stringer views his practice as philosophical statement as much as artistic expression. He opens every kirtan program with '**Shivo'ham, Shivo'ham**' – a definitive statement of *Advaita Vedanta*, the non-dualist philosophical system which views *Brahman* (God, or ultimate reality) as beyond form and attribute.

### **Shivo'ham, Shivo'ham**

*Mano buddhya hankara chittani naham  
Na cha shrotra jihve na cha ghrana netre  
Na cha vyoma bhumir na tejo na vayuh  
Chid ananda rupah shivo' ham shivo' ham*

I am neither the mind, intellect, ego nor memory,  
neither the ears nor the tongue nor the senses of smell and sight,  
neither ether, air, fire, water or earth.  
I am consciousness and bliss. I am Shiva, I am Shiva.

*Na punyam na papam na saukhyam na duhkam  
Na mantra na tirtham na veda na yajnah  
Aham bhajanam naiva bhojyam na bhokta  
Chid ananda rupah shivo' ham shivo' ham*

I am neither virtue nor vice, neither pleasure nor pain,  
neither mantra nor sacred place, neither scripture nor sacrifice.  
I am neither the food nor the eater nor the act of eating.  
I am consciousness and bliss. I am Shiva, I am Shiva.

*Apurvanam param nityam  
Svayam jyotir niramayam  
Virajam param akasham dhruvam  
Ananda mavayayam*

I am beyond all things.  
I am everlasting, self-luminous,  
taintless, and completely pure.  
I am immovable, blissful, and imperishable.

*Aham nirvi kalpo nira kara rupo  
Vibhut va cha sarvatra sarvendri yanam  
Na chasan gatam naiva muktir na meyah  
Chid ananda rupah shivo' ham shivo' ham*

I am without thought, without form.  
I am neither detachment nor salvation nor anything that could be measured.  
I am consciousness and bliss. I am Shiva, I am Shiva.

(Shankaracharya)

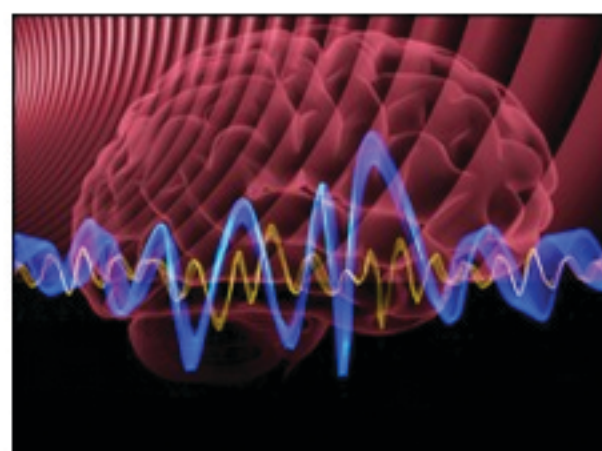


The view is the kernel of *Jnana* Yoga wherein the Divine (*Brahman*) is understood as beyond all concepts; any attempt to capture the essence of *Brahman* using language necessarily distorts since *Brahman* must be experienced to be understood: *Brahmavit*, *Brahmaiva*, *Bhavati*. So it is with our own nature. Any label that we give ourselves can at best point to some aspect of our identity. But who we are outruns any labels, even those of our own choosing. Who we are is unbounded.

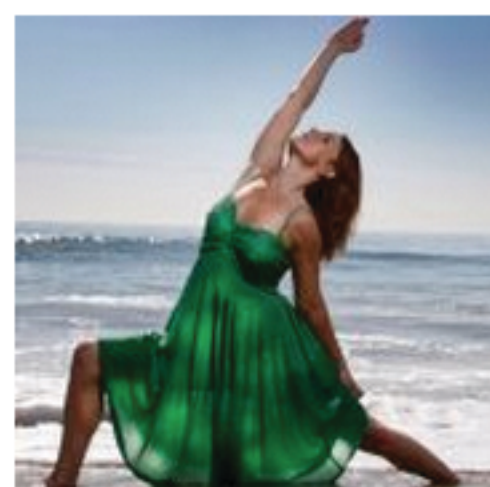
From this opening statement Stringer guides participants in the chant to an experience of ourselves as unbridled bliss and joyful expansion. The move is from transcendence to immanence, the understanding of divine nature as beyond all form to divine nature permeating all form. My friends we are now in the dynamic and throbbing terrain of Kashmir Shaivism according to which ultimate reality (*Brahman*) is consciousness and consciousness pervades everything. The world of manifest form is the expansion and contraction of Shiva's all-pervading consciousness expanding, pulsating and dancing as *Spanda* (creative vibration). We are the pulse in the music, the dance of *Maheswara* and *Matrika Shakti*, the interconnectedness of all in the field of love. But how did we get here?

We got here under Stringer's expert guidance using the technology of kirtan to change brainwave frequency and alter neurochemistry by activating different parts of the brain eliciting feelings of euphoria and contentment. Siva (left brain, linear, stillness) becomes Shakti (right, non-linear, dynamic) – radiance awakened, molecules shimmering, vibrating, resonating out beyond the periphery of spatio-temporally located body and brain into the field of Consciousness, transcending dualism.

Siva joined with Shakti, consciousness unbound becomes creativity manifest. Unity in flux, dynamic stability, the microcosmic beta brainwave morphs to the macrocosmic delta. The ripple of the universe's pulsation spreading to the field of the once-atomized individual brain. A journey to the core of Siva on the wings of Shakti, the electrical charges released when ligand binds with receptor bringing a message that can't be delayed, a secret that must be told in order to initiate a new surge of biochemical bliss. A chemical charge bringing us closer to nerve-ana, those neurological pathways, electrical charges taking us towards ecstasy – *ekstasis* – out of stillness into the blissful surge, from exile to homecoming, alienation to recognition, cacophonous multiplicity to the stillness encompassing all sound. We are home, in the blissful play of consciousness that is ultimate reality, our very own nature.



### About Dearbhla Kelly



Born and raised in Ireland, Dearbhla Kelly M.A. is a Los Angeles-based yoga teacher, writer and neurophilosopher. She began her academic training in Amsterdam and received degrees in philosophy in Dublin and Chicago. She is particularly skilled at marrying the more esoteric teachings of yoga with modern scientific insights and the practicalities of everyday life. Her writing has been published in the Huffington Post, Yoga Journal, Elephant Journal and Origin Magazine. A dedicated ashtanga practitioner, she teaches yoga and neuroscience workshops worldwide. Her lilting Irish accent and Dublin wit make her classes uniquely enjoyable.

[Read more from Dearbhla Kelly »](#)