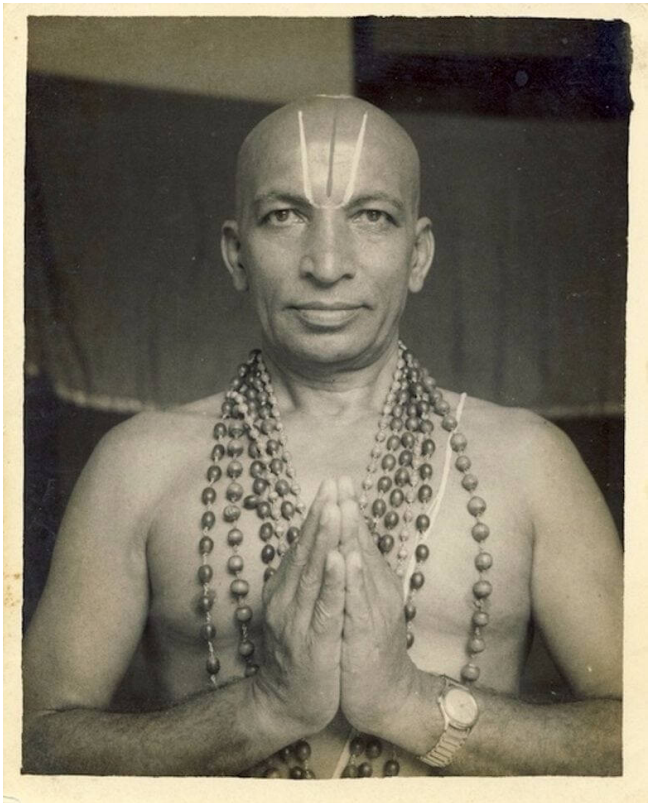
Why is chanting important?. Today, I will share with you the answer…



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Today, I will share with you the answer Yogacharya Krishnamacharya gave to the question “Why is chanting important?” Yogacharya started by speaking about common misconceptions. The gist of this long lesson is what I am sharing with you.

Chanting the Vedas

We chant many things, not only verses from the Vedas. To understand this, we must understand our relationship to Gods and rituals. Unlike later religions, Hinduism did not start with a Prophet or even a single teacher. The Vedas, for example, are a compilation of the best knowledge available at that time. It puts together the realisations of about 200 rishis, of which 40 are women. These are stated as the understandings of various Rishis who are

named. They are largely verses in praise of multiple aspects of the Divine Being. When we chant these, we celebrate the Divine and express our deep gratitude for giving us life and the means to live. However, we must also keep in mind that the Vedas also contain many different aspects that cover worship, details of how to construct a sacred altar, how to make the utensils used for rituals, how to transmit learning, and so on. The Vedas comprise verses on geometry, metallurgy, astronomy, astrology, linguistics, and mathematics — branches of learning that we separate today according to Western modes of categorisation. We must remember this when we speak about the Vedas. We chant these too, to be mindful of the whole practice ponder over their meanings in depth and keep the tradition unbroken.

Chanting the Upavedas

Verses from texts like *Ayurveda*, *Vāstu śāstra, Nāṭya śāstra*, and so on are also chanted. For example, *Ayurveda* is one of the Upavedas. Here, the focus is not only on health and illness, but the processes of identifying herbs and cultivating them are also part of this knowledge. In *Vāstu śāstra*, there is knowledge regarding the design and construction of many types of buildings, as well as details about the construction of vehicles, war implements, and so on. It is a text for an engineer. It has chapters on how to identify the right stone for sculpture, how to quarry it, and so on. It speaks about how to identify good wood and how to nurture these trees. Chanting these *śāstra-s* is a way of learning about that area of knowledge. The practical and the transcendent are not separated because we must bring an aspect of sacredness to every action.

Chanting the Upanishads

When we chant the Upanishads, we are reminded of questions that arise in a seeker's mind after a person has understood what it means to live a *dhārmic* life. Here, we must introspect on the questions deeply, not just repeat and remember the answers. The answers were obtained by the seeker after profound contemplation and inquiry. We must emulate the journey that a *dhīra* (heroic seeker) like Nachiketas or Bhrigu undertook to discover the answers deep within themselves.

Of course, the words and the sound have a deep effect also when you listen to the sound with attention. One must however keep in mind the advice given in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. The object of *dhyāna* (meditative attention) impacts the mind. The mechanical repetition has a limited impact.

1. *yad bhāvam tad bhavati* — what you meditate upon you become.
2. *yad upāsate tad bhavati* — what you worship you become.

3. *nādevo devam arcayet* — one who is not divine (who has not acknowledged his/her own essential divinity) is not fit to worship the divine.
4. *devam bhūtva devam yajet* — become first a deity yourself (sanctify and purify yourself through ethical behaviour) before worshipping the gods.