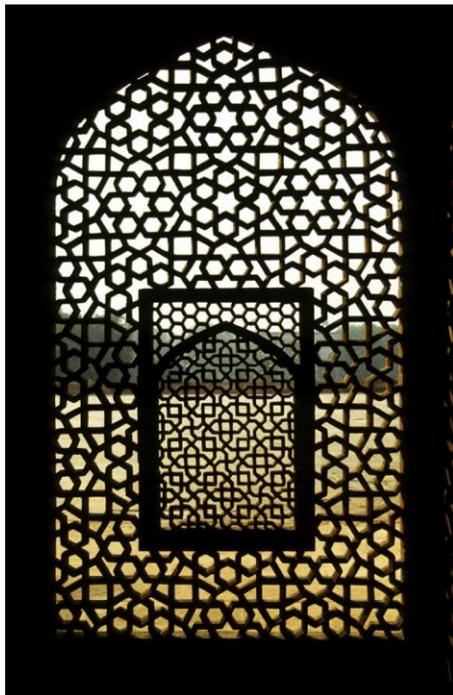


# **An Introduction to the Music of India**

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Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad Award, India 2009



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**Stage 1 – Desired Results**

**Established Goals**

**ICCSD Standards and Benchmarks for General Music Grades K-7**

**PRIMARY GOAL**

- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

**SECONDARY GOALS**

- Singing, alone and with others, varied repertoire of music (S1)
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments (S2)
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music (S3)
- Evaluating music and music performances (S4)
- Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts (S5)

**Understandings**

*Students will understand that...*

Music is an integral part of Indian culture and plays many roles in daily life

India has a variety of musical instruments with unique sounds, materials, and methods of sound production

Music and meditational practices are linked in India

**Essential Questions**

How are music and culture linked in India?

What are some of the most common instruments of India?

What is meditation and how is music part of it?

**Students will know or be able to...**

**Stage 2**

**Evidence of Attainment: Assessment**

Students will be able to....  
Describe some of the roles of music in India

*Performance Task #1:* You have just returned from a trip to India. A friend asks you if you heard any music while there, and you describe 3 places where you heard music in India, and what role it played.

Students will be able to ....  
identify common Indian instruments, their materials, sound production method, and describe how they have evolved over time

*Classroom Checklist*  
Teacher observes class during Activity #4 and checks for participation and completion of 3 tasks with partner

Students will know....  
Following terms: *ohm, mantra, meditation*

**Academic Prompt**  
Upon completion of unit, teacher will show meditating Santa picture again, divide students into cooperative groups, and groups write an explanation for the picture that includes the 3 new terms.

### Overview

This is a general music unit designed to expose Grades 3-4 students to the various roles that music plays in the Indian culture, as well as introduces them to the sounds of Indian music through an examination of some common instruments and some of its common stories and music practices (chanting, meditation). There are 5 activities designed to be completed in 8 25-minute classes. In these activities, students will

- view a *Photostory* of Indian images, and reflect on their current perceptions/knowledge of India
- view video clips of examples of roles music plays in India, and compare those roles to roles of music in their lives
- explore concepts of mantras, meditation, and *ohm*
- listen to audio excerpts of various Indian instruments, choose the correct instrument from a photo, and then find an artistic representation of the instrument from a group of photos.
- view a Bengali Scroll painting performance (via video clip), listen to a well known tale (*How Ganesh got his Elephant Head*) and practice chanting that story in the style of the Bengali Scroll Paintings

There is a kit of materials which accompany the activities, which are referred to in the instructional plan. These materials and additional teacher resources are listed in the appendix.

## Activity 1: What do we already know about India?

Learning Objective	TLW generate words that document their current view of India, view a <i>Photostory</i> of Indian images, and share their words with classmates
Teacher Notes/Background	
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DVD: Images of India <i>Photostory</i> (see World Music India Kit)</li> <li>3 x 5 note cards, one per student</li> </ul>

- Ss write 3-4 words that they associate with India on a 3 x 5 card.
- Class views India *PHOTO STORY: Images of India*.
- Teacher asks groups to re-examine their words, adding any words they would now associate with India.
- Using cooperative learning strategy of inner circle/outer circle, students share their words about India with classmates. A (Inner Circle) begins activity by talking, B listening, then they switch roles.
  - A: "One word I wrote was \_\_\_\_\_. Did you write that word?"
  - B: "One word I added after I viewed the video was \_\_\_\_\_. I added it because \_\_\_\_\_."
- Teacher establishes signal for movement of one of the two circles, and students in that circle move one person to the left, and repeat the sequence, sharing a different word.
- Class returns to chairs and discusses any words they heard frequently, what words they added, and what surprising words they heard from other students.
- Teacher collects cards after students write their names on cards. Cards will be used in a post-unit reflection activity.

## Activity 2: The roles of music in India

Learning Objective	TLW view video clips of examples of roles music plays in India, and compare those roles to roles of music in their lives
Secondary Goal: S3, S4	
Teacher Notes/Background	There is a brief description of each of the video clips provided to the teacher in the appendix on pages 1 & 2
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DVD of video clips of music in India (see World Music India Kit)</li> <li>Video clip background information, appendix, pages 1 and 2</li> </ul>

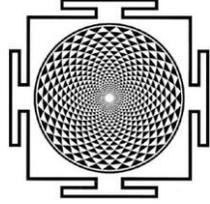
- Teacher asks class: What roles does music play in YOUR lives? (marching bands- excitement, fun, church music, reflection or calming, iPod or radio, entertainment, beauty, to accompany dance, movies) Students share, and teacher makes a class list on chart paper as students contribute.
- Class views short video clips of music in India. Teacher stops at the end of each clip, asks the students to turn to their elbow partner and decide what the role of this music might be, and see if they can find a counterpart on their class list.
- Partners discuss their answers, and also whether they felt there was a similar category on the class list.
- Teacher shares background information from video clip descriptions as time permits

## Activity 3: Om, Meditation, and Mantras

Learning Objective  
Secondary Goals:  
S1, S2, S3

TLW explore concepts of mantras, meditation, and *ohm*

Teacher  
Notes/Background



*Meditation is neither a journey in space nor a journey in time, but an instantaneous awakening.*  
- J. Krishnamurti



**Om (ohm):** Sanskrit. *Om* is considered to be the primeval sound, the sound of the universe, the sound from which all other sounds are formed. OM is split into A-U-M. The A sound comes from the back of the throat and vibrates from the toes to the stomach. The U sound comes through the mouth and vibrates from the stomach to the throat, and the M sound is felt on the closed lips and vibrates from the throat to the top of the head. It serves well as a mantra in meditation because it brings to our awareness that our inner and outer are one; we get in sync and the vibration helps to calm the mind, and makes us aware of the “force” within. It is the first stage of meditation, which aims at drawing your attention away from all other tensions that have occupied your mind. The Om mantra represents the source of all light, love, and wisdom.

**Mantra** yoga is the yoga of sound, and is a form of meditation which physically vibrates the body, rather like tuning a piano. The most important mantra of all is “OM”, which is known as the sound of the universe. Mantras are powerful phrases or sound syllables repeated and used to focus the mind. Chanting mantras can be stimulating, calming or balancing depending on how you chant and the chant itself. The benefits of chanting are numerous. In addition to helping develop patience, focus and attention, chanting improves our memory and helps us to listen.

**Yoga** means union, and yoga is a science developed in India over 5,000 years ago that teaches the importance of allowing the mind and body to unite and work in harmony for the creation of a more balanced, responsible human being. It is a system of health combining vast numbers of mental and physical exercises (called *asanas*, or poses) that keep the body and mind working together to build strength, flexibility, balance, and concentration. It teaches flexibility of the mind and the body.

**Meditation** is a clearing and calming of the mind. We listen to what our inner being is telling us. We learn to quiet our jumping “monkey” mind and are able to concentrate on whatever we do in life. It calms us down, and makes us aware of “the force” within.

Materials

- *Om-Girls’ School* video clip (see World Music India Kit)
- Definition Posters of Om, Mantra, and Meditation: appendix, pages 3-5
- Poster of Sanskrit of Om, appendix, page 6
- *Open assembly Swami School 2* video clip (see World Music India Kit)
- Audio recording of *Om Narayana Shanti Om*, Wade Morissette (see World Music India Kit)
- Lyrics of Morissette song, appendix, page 7

1. Teacher shows picture of meditating Santa, asks class “What’s going on in this picture?” Class discusses, teacher introduces term of *MEDITATION* and shows and posts poster for *meditation*. (see appendix, page 3)
2. Teacher plays “Ohm-Girls’ school” video clip from DVD.
3. Teacher asks students if they’ve heard anyone chanting OHM before, or any other type of chanting. Class discusses their chanting examples, and looks for similarities between examples.
4. Teacher defines OHM, shows symbol (appendix, page 6), posts definition poster (appendix page 5), discusses Om concept.
5. Teacher explains *Ohm* is considered to be the most important syllable to chant, and that chanting can be either calming, or sometimes stimulating. Teacher asks: Which type of chanting did the girls in the video show, calming or stimulating? What do you use in YOUR life to calm you when you need to be calmed?
6. Class practices chanting OHM, discusses effects.
7. Teacher shows *Open assembly Swami School 2* video clip.
8. Teacher explains: This is a Varanasi private school opening of school where they are singing ancient texts. They are starting their day by reflecting on virtuous living, through words they repeat and reflect on. The text is secular, not religious.
9. Teacher explains this repetition of powerful words for the purpose of reflection is called a mantra, and posts term poster (appendix, page 4).
10. Teacher plays Wade Morrisette song, (begins at minute 8 on CD) as example of a mantra he developed. Class identifies the form (A B A B A) then examines lyrics of B part (see appendix for copy to make transparency of.)
11. Teacher discusses why these words were important enough to be HIS mantra, the value of the repetition, points out use of Om, and reads aloud translation of Sanskrit words on transparency.
12. Class discusses core virtues, and, as a class, decides on words that would be ones they would want to reflect on at a deep level, and makes a class mantra to sing to open each class. (Ohm could be part of the mantra, or teacher could open the class with OHM and then the class mantra to open all subsequent classes for remainder of India unit, or rest of school year.)



#### Activity 4: Instruments of India

<p>Learning Objective</p> <p>Secondary Goals: S3, S4, S5</p>	<p>TLW listen to audio excerpts of various Indian instruments, choose the correct instrument from a photo, find an artistic representation of the instrument from a group of photos, and, with a partner, choose the type of material and sound production method for each instrument.</p>
<p>Teacher Notes/Background</p>	
<p>Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo Sets of Indian Instruments (see World Music India Kit)</li> <li>• Terms for sound production method, appendix, page 8</li> <li>• Terms for material for instruments, appendix, page 9</li> <li>• CD of Indian instrument segments (see World Music India Kit)</li> </ul>

1. T has photos displayed on chalk rail, etc, of instruments. On one wall or chalk rail are the modern instruments (yellow #s in corner) and on another wall, or separate row are artistic representations of instruments (pink letters in corner.) Teacher asks students to do a walk to closely examine both sets of pictures, then explains task.
2. They will listen to a segment of music on a CD, then, in pairs, decide which instrument they think is playing (looking at the yellow numbered photos).
3. After teacher reveals correct number of corresponding picture, she then names the instrument
4. Next pairs are asked to find the artistic representation of that instrument from the pink lettered photos.
5. Teacher distributes the materials and sound production method cards to pairs, then asks students is to decide what materials are used in making this instrument.
6. Finally, teacher asks pairs to choose one or more words from the sound production cards for this instrument.
7. The teacher reads the information on the back of the instrument photo to the class, and, if time allows, the information on the back of the artistic representation photo.
8. Teacher continues with this sequence until all instruments are identified and matched to an artistic representation.
9. Teacher uses checklist to document participation of pairs for all 3 tasks.

Instrument	Key to Matching Activity (#2 above)	Key to matching Activity (#4 above)
#1: Pakhawaj	#8 on CD	1 = P, I, L, or D
#2: Mridangam	#2 on CD	2 = P, I, L, or D
#3: Duff	#4 on CD	3 = G or P
#4: Tabla	#6 on CD	4 = H
#5: Flute	#3 on CD, accompanied by slide guitar and santoor (Kashmiri hammered dulcimer)	5 = A OR F
#6: Shehnai	#7 on CD	6 = D
#7: Bow Shaped Veena		7 = B
#8: Violin	#1 on CD	8 = N
#9: sitar	#9 on CD	9 = 3
#10: Jantar	#10 on CD * (very similar to veena)	10 = C
#11: Rudra Veena	#10 on CD	11 = M
#12: Nadaswaram	Similar to Shenhai (#7 on CD)	13 = K
#13: Sarod	#5 on CD	NA

## Activity 5: Music for Story Telling: Bengal Scroll Paintings

Learning Objective

TLW view a Bengali Scroll painting performance (via video clip), listen to a well known tale (*How Ganesh got his Elephant Head*) and practice chanting new story in the style of the Bengali Scroll Paintings

Secondary Goals: S2, S3, S5

Teacher Notes/Background

Following is an explanation of the Bengali Scroll Artists:  
The name “Kalighat Pata” (pronounced *pot*) is applied to a class of paintings and drawings on paper produced by a group of artists called *patuas* in the neighborhood of the famous Kali Temple of Kalighat, now a part of Calcutta, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, The art activities of these *patuas* share some common technical and stylistic characteristics. The artists selected as their themes popular Hindu deities, incarnations, and saints, historical events and incidents from daily life. The painters drew figures with their faces generally to front or  $\frac{3}{4}$  s to front. These scroll paintings are made by a group of Muslim men but they depict Hindu stories, an interesting confluence of religious beliefs.

Following is a shortened version of the story of the scroll painting for this activity that can be read to students to explain the video clip and for use when viewing the actual scroll. A more detailed explanation can be found in the World Music India Kit. **NOTE:** It is important for purposes of this story to understand that in Hindu lore, goddesses such as Durga have the ability to take on many forms, and have many superpowers. When Hindus want to pay homage to a god or goddess they perform a *puja*, which can include the use of sandalwood such as this story tells of.

1. The goddess Durga, with 10 arms and on her vehicle lion, appears.
2. Due to lack of sandalwood and hair, the worship (*puja*) of the goddess is about to stop. A child is born named Srimanta, and his father is thrown into jail for 12 years on charges of robbery.
3. After some time Srimanta grows up and is told about his father in jail, whom he decides to rescue.
4. While at sea, Srimanta sees a floating lotus with Durga while on a river.
5. When he reaches shore, the guards beat the drums to warn that an outsider is entering the kingdom.
6. He is taken to the ruler of Sri Lanka and describes the lotus to the king, who offers half his kingdom if he will lead him to the lotus.
7. When they reach the spot, Srimanta’s pure heart can see the spot, but the king cannot.
8. The king orders his executioner to behead Srimanta, but an eagle appears (Durga in disguise), who then changes into a widow and asks why the boy is being executed.
9. When the executioner explains, Durga changes into her own form, but this time with 18 arms, and tells the king that Srimanta has seen her.
10. The king crowns Srimanta king and Srimanta rules wisely and

	frees his father, and institutes the worship of Durga.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bengal Scroll painting (see World Music India Kit)</li> <li>• <i>How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head</i>, H Johari V Sperling (see World Music Culture India Kit)</li> <li>• Copies of illustrations from Ganesh book, (see World Music India Kit)</li> <li>• Lyrics for Ganesh story chant singing (see World Music Culture Kit and appendix, pages 10-12)</li> <li>• Explanation of the Story of the Scroll Painting (see World Music India Kit and brief explanation above)</li> </ul>

1. Class views video clip of Bengal Scroll paintings on DVD. Teacher asks what they think the man is singing about, reach conclusion he is telling a story through song and pictures.
2. Class views scroll in India Kit. Teacher reads story, and students look for pictorial clues match the story to the pictures.
3. Teacher reads *How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head*, H Johari V Sperling
4. Class prepares to sing story of Ganesh using pictures.
  - a. Teacher asks group to reflect on chant they heard by Wade Morrisette, then asks class to think of a few phrases they want to try chanting. Teacher models a phrase, then pairs chant phrase to each other to practice chant singing for story telling purposes.
  - b. Teacher distributes pictures that tell the Ganesh story to pairs of students, without indicating order of pictures. Pairs look at their picture, decide where it goes in the story, and works with the rest of the class to make a line that matches the narrative of the story, according to their pictures.
  - c. Next teacher reads aloud the lyrics for the chant, and pairs claim their lyrics.
  - d. Pairs practice singing a chant for the words of their picture they received from the teacher. (Each student should make their own chant, as it would be very difficult to perform a duet for the chant.)
  - e. Teacher asks one half of the class to perform for the other half, with one of the students in each pair performing their lyrics, then switching so each student gets a turn.

#### Post Unit Assessment & Reflection

1. *Performance Task #1*: You have just returned from a trip to India. A friend asks you if you heard any music while there, and you describe 3 places where you heard music in India, and what role it played.
2. Teacher distributes index cards from Activity 1 and students use blank side to write new words that they would now use to describe India.
3. Teacher shows meditating Santa picture again, divides students into cooperative groups, and asks the group to write an explanation for the picture that includes the 3 new terms they learned during the unit.

# Bibliography

Das, P. (1999) *I is for India*. New York: Publisher's Group West.

Johar, H & Sperling, V. (2003): *How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head*. Rochester, VT. Bear Cub Books.

Kirshnaswami, U. (1996): *The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha*. North Haven Ct. Shoestring Press.

Mainland, P, and Perry C. (1998): *A Yoga Parade of Animals*. Boston: Element Books, Inc.

Mann, E. (2008): *Taj Mahal*. New York: Mikaya Press, Inc.

Sarrazin, N. (2009) *Indian Music for the Classroom*. Lanham, Md, MENC.

Wallace, H. (2006) *Hinduism*. Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series., Inc.

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## Web Resources:

[www.yogayak.com](http://www.yogayak.com): Several video clips demonstration all types of pranayama breathing exercises, as well as an excellent overview of yoga in general.

[www.southasiaoutreach.wisc.edu/](http://www.southasiaoutreach.wisc.edu/) This website is the online home for the Center for South Asian Outreach at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The Center for South Asia provides access to resources for teaching about South Asia at the K-12, secondary, and post-secondary level and to the community at large. As a part of their federal mandate, all outreach services are free of charge.

iTunes: Open your iTunes application,  
Choose iStore

Type in Indian music, Open University in the search box

There are free downloadable clips on tabla music, teen taal explanations, and vocal music explanations and examples.

## India World Culture Kit Contents

- \*Das, P. (1999) *I is for India*. New York: Publisher's Group West.
- Johar, H & Sperling, V. (2003): *How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head*. Rochester, VT. Bear Cub Books.
- \*Kirshnaswami, U. (1996): *The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha*. North Haven Ct. Shoestring Press.
- \*Mann, E. (2008): *Taj Mahal*. New York: Mikaya Press, Inc.
- \*Wallace, H. (2006) *Hinduism*. Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series., Inc.

\* These materials are included in the kit as classroom teacher's resources. Before music teachers begin teaching the unit, they should offer these resources to the classroom teachers and help coordinate their reading of these texts so as to enhance the children's exploration of India. Note: teachers should be cautioned to wait until AFTER the music teacher has done the Bengal Scroll Painting activity before reading any of the Ganesh Tales (*The Broken Tusk*).

- PHOTO SETS: Musical Instruments of India I and II. Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, New Delhi, India.
- Explanation of The Patas of Kalighat
- Story of Bengali Scroll Painting
- Bengali Scroll Painting
  
- DVD: Images of India *Photostory* for Activity 1
- DVD: Video clips of music in India for Activity 2
- CD: India Instrument Examples for Activity 4

# Appendix

## Video Clip Annotations

### 1. Horn and Drum Performance

- a. Location in India: Chennai, state of Tamil Nadu
- b. Explanation: This is a performance of 2 instrumentals that served as an interlude for a dance recital. They also accompanied the dance pieces.

### 2. Kathakali Finale

- a. Location in India: Kochi, state of Kerala, India
- b. Explanation: Kathakali is a highly stylised dance form specific to the state of Kerala in the south of India, and is noted for its attractive make-up of characters, their elaborate costumes, detailed gestures and well-defined body movements presented in tune with the anchor playback music and complementary percussion.

### 3. Peacock Dance

- a. Location in India: Chennai, state of Tamil Nadu
- b. Explanation: This is a dance recital of classical Indian dance. The peacock is the national bird of India.

### 4. Chinese Fishing Net Demo

- a. Location in India: Kochi, state of Kerala, India
- b. Explanation: These nets were introduced by the Chinese explorer Zheng He, and were set up between 1350 to 1450. In Cochin, the Chinese nets are suspended in the mid air all along the coast. The nets are set up on bamboo or teak poles and are basically fixed land installations. These nets are horizontally suspended over the sea, giving an appearance of huge hammock. For balance, these nets are counter balanced by stones tied to ropes. Each net spreads over an area of about 20 meters.

### 5. Ganesha Dancers Teen Taal

- a. Location in India: Pune, state of Maharashtra, India
- b. Explanation: These dance performances are part of a cultural evening of dance and music called "Ode to Lord Ganesha".

### 6. Junior High Singing Group

- a. Location in India: Pune, state of Maharashtra, India
- b. Explanation: This is a middle school music class, and they are singing a song of peace they prepared for the American teacher visitors.

### 7. Martial Arts; 2 People

- a. Location in India: Kochi, state of Kerala, India
- b. Explanation: Kalaripayat, the martial arts of Kerala, is unique. It is one of the oldest traditional martial arts in the world. There are 2 different styles, one purely physical exercise, and the other, from the south, involves training with wooden weapons.

### 8. Martial Arts, warm up with music

- a. Location in India: Kochi, state of Kerala, India
- b. Explanation: Kalaripayat, the martial arts of Kerala, is unique. It is one of the oldest traditional martial arts in the world. There are 2 different styles, one purely physical exercise, and the other, from the south, involves training with wooden weapons.

### **9. Vocalist with instruments**

- a. Location in India: Pune, state of Maharashtra, India
- b. Explanation: This performance is part of a cultural evening of dance and music called “Ode to Lord Ganesh”.

### **10. Bengali scroll paintings**

- a. Location in India: Kolkata, state of West Bengal, India
- b. Explanation: See detailed explanation in World Music India Kit

### **11. Open assembly Swami School 2**

- a. Location in India: Grade 3-12 boarding school, Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India
- b. Explanation: This is a scene from the daily opening assembly of this school. The texts used for lyrics are secular, and the students are in charge of the opening assembly.

### **12. Raag Finale (tabla & Sitar)**

- a. Location in India: Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India
- b. Explanation: This is an informal evening performance of 2 instrumental artists.

### **13. Ohm girls' school**

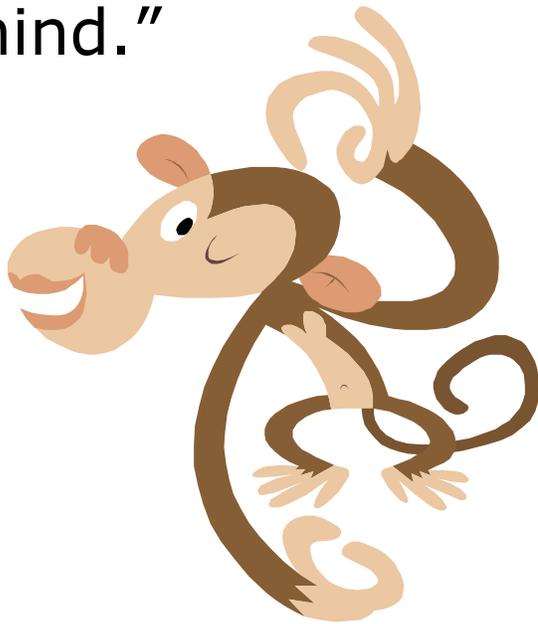
- a. Location in India: Pune, state of Maharashtra, India
- b. Explanation: This is an all school assembly in which students demonstrated their meditational morning exercises and sang a greeting to their American visitors. The OHM chanting is the opening of the assembly.

### **14. Shiva Parade**

- a. Location in India: Kolkata, state of West Bengal, India, river bank
- b. Explanation: During the month of July worshippers of the Hindu god Shiva (many times dressed in orange and with white bands painted across their foreheads) will make pilgrimages to holy places that honor Shiva, such as Shiva temples. In this scene they are parading with a Shiva statue that they are taking to the river for a ceremony.

# Meditation

To meditate is "to empty your mind of thoughts, and still the jumping monkey mind."



OHMMMMMM....



# Mantra

A powerful phrase or sound syllables repeated and used to focus the mind.

**OM, SHANTI, SHANTI, OM**

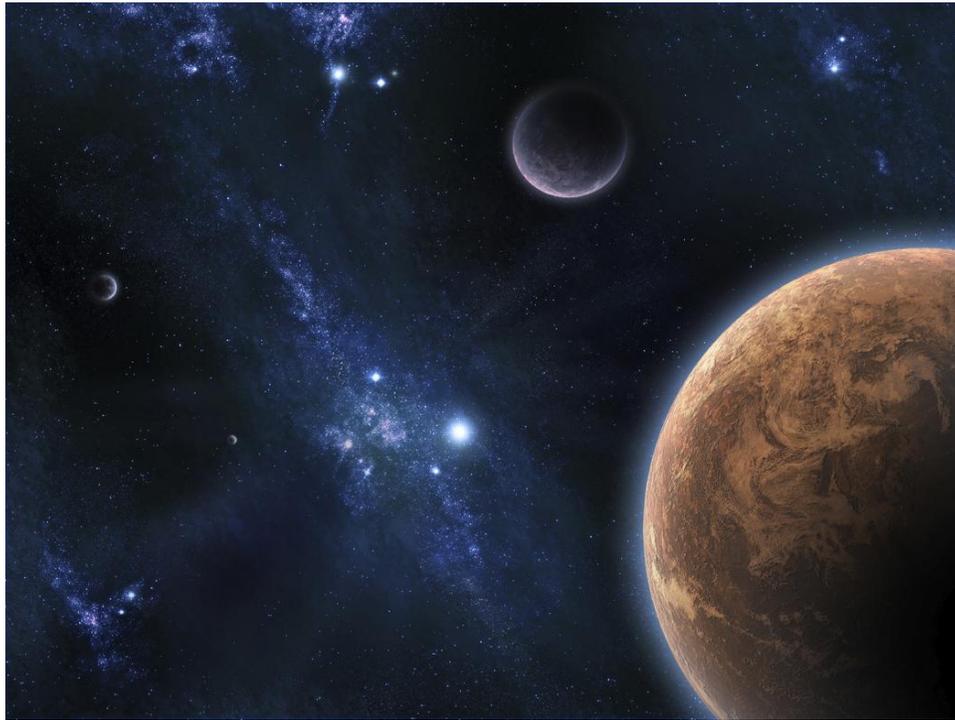
**OM, SHANTI, SHANTI, OM**

**OM, SHANTI, SHANTI, OM**

**OM, SHANTI, SHANTI, OM**

# OM

The sound of the universe





**Ohm, or Om, or Aum**

# Om Narayana

## ***Om Narayana Shanti Om***

Joy on the inside and peace on the outside  
Loving on the inside and laughing on the outside  
Kissing on the inside and healing on the outside  
Flowing on the inside and thriving on the outside  
Clearing all the inside and accepting the outside  
Shining on the inside and shining on the outside

By: Wade Imre Morissette



### **TRANSLATION**

Om = primal sound

Narayana = generally **Narayana** is spoken of as the great Being in the Sun. The Sun in that sense is the manifestation, the body,

Shanti = peace

### Om Narayana Shanti Om: SANSKRIT

**Sanskrit** (संस्कृत वाक् *saṃskṛtā vāk*, is a historical Indo-Aryan language, one of the liturgical languages of Hinduism and Buddhism, and one of the 22 official languages of India. It is under consideration, to be declared as a classical language by the government of India.

The corpus of Sanskrit literature encompasses a rich tradition of poetry and drama as well as scientific, technical, philosophical and Hindu religious texts. Sanskrit continues to be widely used as a ceremonial language in Hindu religious rituals in the forms of hymns and mantras.

**plucked**

**strummed**

**blown into**

**shaken**

**struck**

**other**

**combination  
of....**

**bowed**

**wood**

**bamboo**

**leather**

**grass reed**

**gourd**

**other**

**combination  
of....**

**plastic**

**metal**

**brass**

## How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head

1. This is the story of how Ganesh got his elephant head. Parvati, the great mother goddess, was married to Lord Shiva, the lord of destruction.

2. Shiva was often traveling around the countryside, and Parvati got lonely. Parvati decided to make a little figure of a boy. She created it out of sandalwood paste, and blew life into him.

3. Parvati asked the boy to guard her door while she finished her bath. The boy took up guard at the door. Shiva returned home and tried to walk through the entrance, but the boy stopped him.

4. Shiva got his bull, Nandi, and his horned followers to try to move the boy, but they couldn't.

5. Next Lord Brahma tried to talk reasonably with the boy, but the boy jumped on him and pulled his hair.

6. Then came Indra, Lord of the Skies, and his elephant. Along with an army of soldiers with weapons they were ready for battle.

7. Parvati was outraged at the unfairness, so she changed herself into the fierce Durga, a goddess who could multiple herself. With her help, the boy won the battle.

8. While the boy was attacking Lord Vishnu, who was on his eagle, Garuda, Lord Shiva approached and cut off the boy's head.

9. Parvati was horrified. She explained to Shiva that this was her son, and she demanded that he find a head for him.

10. Shiva found an elephant who would give up his head to honor Shiva. He placed the head on the child, and with it came wisdom and resourcefulness.

11. The boy was named Ganesh, Now you know the story of how Lord Ganesh, the wise and generous god of new beginnings, got his elephant head.