

Music

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Music is the language of the heart and therefore can change our moods or deepen them, both negative and positive. No-one doubts the power of music over the heart whether it be pop songs, patriotic marches or symphonies. So just as it is important to know what we put into our minds by way of adverts, reading matter, visual entertainment and so on, so it is important what we put into our heart by way of sounds. The sounds of nature be it the trill of a bird or the bark of a crow; the rustle of wind through grass or the clash of thunder, all create resonances within the heart. And where there is emotion there is the body so that our emotional life also affects our physical well-being or lack of it. In all monastic forms music plays an essential role. The chant offers the heart the ability to develop devotion. Even chanting Dependent Origination, which is none other than a list of physical and mental properties that show how suffering arises and ceases, becomes something more when chanted. It is imbued with feeling. It may be peacefulness or praise or thankfulness. This swells the heart with joy, welcome relief if the heart is otherwise weighed down with the worries and cares of life. This is more so if we chant the Metta Sutta, the Discourse on Loving Kindness. And there are many other auspicious chants to lighten the heart and fill it with quiet joy. Here is a way that sound can be used to heal the heart of its negative states. Sitting with a negative mood, say anxiety, we bury our attention into the feel of it, not allowing it to escape into the mind and create stories. (Remember it is through thought and imagination that the heart develops its attitudes both unwholesome and wholesome.) Feeling an emotion or mood as simply a physical feeling, allows us to see it for what it is - just a form of energy. Indeed if we sink into it, we can describe its contents - agitation, nausea, heat, and so on. Holding our position steady there, should we now listen to some peaceful music - I suggest Allegri's Miserere Me (Oh pity me!) - see how the music creates another mood. Holding this mood in attention while not losing the feel of anxiety, sink that peaceful, loving mood into the agitation, the nausea, the heat. This can never be a complete healing, of course, until the Three Roots of Acquisitiveness, Aversion and Delusion are eradicated. Indeed, until they are, unless mindful, we will continue to develop unwholesome states of mind. But even so, music and the sounds of nature can be a balm to a burdened heart. (You may be interested in this website: www.collegeofsoundhealing.co.uk/)

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