



Chuckling: A Meditation to Feel the Divine Within

by Erik D. Wiegardt, © 2026

Chuckling is commonly thought to be a gentle and quiet form of laughter, the opposite of a loud and boisterous belly laugh. That's why it is such a good word to describe a form of meditation that combines two ancient practices into one: chanting and shuckling. Chanting while shuckling is what I call Chuckling Meditation. We all know about the spiritual value of chanting, but for those unfamiliar shuckling the following is a brief introduction to that practice.

According to an AI overview, "Shuckling is a Jewish practice of swaying back and forth while praying or studying. The word comes from Yiddish and means 'to shake'." Unless you have seen rabbinical students studying the Torah your most common view of this practice is probably images of Orthodox Jews shuckling at the Western or "Wailing Wall" of the Temple of Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. If you are unfamiliar with that images there are many YouTube videos of this practice. Here's one:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/CYSyNsBBKuA>

Basically, it is a movement from the waist swaying from side to side or forward and back. "This practice can be traced back to at least the 8th century, and possibly as far back as Talmudic times (Wikipedia)." The forward and back movement is the one most commonly seen and the one I have always used in Chuckling Meditation (CM).

The Benefit of Chuckling

Why would anyone chant and shuckle? To answer that question involves another term, a Sanskrit word used by Paramhansa Yogananda to describe a feeling of bliss or divine joy: *ananda*. According to the Yogic Encyclopedia, "In Yoga philosophy it is said that God is sat-chit-ananda," which translates to existence-consciousness-bliss.

A Yoga master will tell you that you can *only* experience ananda while in deep meditation, and only under the tutelage of a Yoga master. This is a self-serving

half truth. It *is* experienced in deep meditation, but you can also experience ananda in CM. I have experienced ananda hundreds of times in deep meditation and in CM. Here is my personal history with that phenomenon.

The first time I experienced ananda I had no idea what it was or that it had been experienced by yogis for centuries. For those who have read *A Monastery of One* (MOO) you may recall that my first mystical insight occurred on 16 JUN 03. I called it "Empty Sky" because I didn't know what to call the feeling I had when my body emerged from the the "Great Sea," the material world, into an empty sky of pure bliss.

You may also recall that there were years of meditation when I had no mystical insights at all but was encouraged to continue meditating because I experienced this feeling of bliss repeatedly. Years after my first ananda experience I discovered what it was called when I looked for it on the Internet. I didn't have a master who could tell me what it was that I had discovered.

Then the feeling of ananda stopped. In fact, without it I had great difficulty continuing my meditation practice, so I stopped. Several months later I discovered shamanic journeying, and I didn't need to meditate because I was so busy with journeying that I completely lost interest in the whole ananda thing. Even so, I continued to chant in my morning meditations until several years ago when I discovered shuckling. I remember reading a comment by one rabbi who said she didn't meditate but thought shuckling would probably enhance the meditation experience. So I tried it—when I chanted.

And when I did, Ananda returned for the first time in years. I stood while I chanted and shuckled and after experimenting with different lengths of time I discovered that with about 15 minutes of CM I was flooded with ananda bliss as soon as I sat down. I knew it was ananda because it was the same feeling I had in my first mystical insight and the feeling had so many times in deep meditation. But now I could experience it after only 15 minutes of CM.

There may be a physiological reason for this. Yvonne Kason, a medical doctor practicing in Toronto, Canada, had a near-death experience so profound and shocking that she devoted years of her life studying what it could be.¹ With a strict scientific background she actually had no knowledge of the NDE phenomenon until it happened to her. Her research into Kundalini along with her knowledge of the physiology of the spine led her to believe that various ways of stimulation can cause mystical feeling to be physiologically based.

After reading her book it occurred to me CM may encourage the ananda experience with this movement in a Kundalini way by stimulating the spine from the base up to the brain. I don't know. If her theory is correct, it may be that I

¹ Yvonne Kason, M.D., *Farther Shores: Exploring how Near-Death, Kundalini and Mystical Experiences can Transform Ordinary Lives* (iUniverse, 2008)

am able experience Ananda because I have so many years of meditation experience with it. According to her theory even religious studies can add to that Kundalini stimulation. I don't know if CM will lead a new meditator to the ananda experience, because until this writing I have only taught this method to one other person. In his case I discovered he was doing it wrong and didn't want to correct his practice and continue. I don't know if one who is inexperienced can just jump right to feeling ananda, or if they must have already experienced it in deep meditation.

What I do

I don't know if the words mean anything at all. I chant in Latin, *Naturam Venerans*, a chant made up of four ways to say I revere Nature. Maybe one could create a chant stringing together a chain of nonsense syllables and it would work just as well. Maybe. In addition it should be pointed out that the feeling is never exactly the same. Sometimes it's strong and sometimes it's barely there. I did it just a few days ago while I was still recovering from two weeks of Covid-19 sickness, and the ananda feeling was so strong it was almost overwhelming!

What does it feel like. It's difficult to describe because the bliss of ananda, the God feeling, is not a common experience in life. It's not the same as the joy of dancing or great music or sexual ecstasy. It feels a little like being drunk without the murkiness of being drunk. I was surprised when I read that Sufis describe their ecstasy as being drunk on God. Are they experiencing ananda? Maybe, but I'm not a Sufis so it's difficult for me to know if we are feeling the same thing. I suspect that it is the same, and it could be that the Sufi Whirling Dervishes are feeling ananda while they whirl. Take a look at this video on YouTube: "Sufi Whirling Dervishes of Konya - ritual dance, Turkey".

What I do is chant and shuckle for *about* 15 minutes. I used to time it but I don't do that anymore; I just follow my intuition to know when I can stop CM and sit down and feel ananda. The words of the chant, "Naturam Venerans," are sung in a monotone at whatever pitch is comfortable at that time of day—usually between 4 and 5 AM. Here it is:

*Naturam venerare, naturam venerans/ Naturam venerari, naturam venerans/
Naturai venerator naturam venerans./Repeat.*

I repeat these words over and over, bowing forward and back in time to the sound and rhythm of the words. I only move bowing at the waist while my hands are kept motionless and in a prayer position, with palms pressed together in front of my chest, a position called *Anjali Mudra*. To the uninitiated it probably looks quite strange. Chuckling does look strange, but not as strange as whirling like a Dervish. And, at this time I only do it alone by myself. I've never done it in front of another person, not even my wife, but I may someday.