

Global Bhajan

Date: 14 Nov 1976 **Occasion:** Akhand Bhajan **Place:** Prashanti Nilayam

"Sravanam (hearing the Glory of the Lord), *Kirtanam* (singing the Glory oneself), *Vishnosmaranam* (allowing the mind to dwell on that Glory), *Padasevanam* (adoring the feet of the Lord), *Vandanam* (experiencing gratitude and joy at His Grace), *Archanam* (ritualistic worship), *Dasyam* (feeling oneself as His instrument), *Sakhyam* (awareness of His being one's constant and closest companion), and *Atmanivedanam* (dedicating one's full being to Him) -- these are the nine steps in the path of devotion."

"Listen, O people! Revel in this iron *Kaliyuga* (the age of evil rampant today), for there is none other so propitious for liberation that the mere remembrance of the name of the Lord and adoring Him thus are enough to win His grace and set you free."

"This is bad, this is good -- can such judgements ever be made about anything in God's creation when all are manifestations of His will."

Embodiments of the pure *Atman*! Last November, on the 23rd, people from all parts of the world had assembled here to celebrate the Golden Jubilee, and office-bearers of the centers were here for the Second World Conference and other functions that took place. Later they expressed their desire that they be allotted a date, before the close of the Jubilee Year, when they in their own places could celebrate the happy occasion. In order to overcome their disappointment it was decided that, in all centers all over the world, *namasamkirtan* (singing the glory of God's name) would be held for a full twenty-four hours, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday (yesterday) and ending at 6:30 p.m. today.

Therefore, in 42 countries around the globe more than 7000 centers have enthusiastically taken up this pleasant assignment.

This has been named an *akhanda-bhajan*, that is to say, devotional singing done without a break. But was it really an *akhanda-bhajan*? It is begun at 6:30 on the evening of one day and is closed at 6:30 on the evening of the next day. Can we call it 'unbroken' devotional singing? What is a period of 24 hours when we consider the vastness of the universe and the eternity of time? It is just a wink, a minute part of the life of man on earth. By engaging yourselves in the recitation of the Name of God for one single day, you claim to have done devotional singing "without a break!" *Akhanda-bhajan* must be as continuous as breathing itself if it is to deserve its name.

You must probe into the real significance of the *samkirtan* that you are engaged in. *Kirtan* is "singing aloud the Glory of God." *Samkirtan* is the process of singing, which originates in the heart, not from the lips or tongue. It is the expression of the joyous thrill that wells up from the heart when the Glory of God is remembered. It is the spontaneous manifestation of inner ecstasy. No attention is paid to the blame or praise that others may give. It does not seek the admiration or the appreciation of the

listeners. It is sung for one's own joy, one's own satisfaction, one's own delight. *Kirtan* of this supreme type alone deserves the name *samkirtan*.

Singing this intense yearning for God and enjoying the experience of adoring Him helps to purify the atmosphere. Man is today forced to breathe the air polluted by sounds that denote violence, hatred, cruelty, and wickedness. Therefore, he is fast losing the high attainments that are in store for him. The vibrations resulting from singing the glory of God can cleanse the atmosphere and render it pure, calm, and ennobling. It is with this high purpose in view that this program of global *samkirtan* was designed.

No man can escape the influence of the pollution of the air he breathes. The sounds that we produce, with good intent or bad, spread throughout the air around us. This is our daily experience. The sounds produced at radio stations pass through the atmosphere and reach our homes when we tune in. The vibrations travel vast distances and affect the nature of those who inhale them. The atmosphere also affects the food man consumes. The pollution in the atmosphere is imbibed by the plants, the plants supply the grain, the grain is the basis of the meal, and meal shapes the character and behavior of the person who consumes it. When the environment is clean and free from evil vibrations, the food too is pure, and the person develops a tendency to be loving and simple. It is to ensure such an atmosphere that this spiritual discipline was initiated the world over.

When a man falls into a well, of what use is it if he controls his voice and his emotions and whispers quietly, "I have fallen into this well, I have fallen into this well. I am in great danger. Please save me?" No one will be able to hear or save him. He must shout full-throated, with all the anguish he is experiencing and with the extreme desire to be saved, "I HAVE FALLEN INTO THE WELL! SAVE ME! SAVEME SOMEONE!" Only then can he hope to get succor.

Similarly, when you are caught in the coils of this world, when you have fallen into this deep well of worldly misery, shout with all your might, with all your heart, that you maybe saved by God. There is no use muttering faintly and half-heartedly, "Save me, save me; I am floundering in this cycle of birth and death." When the prayer comes shrieking through the heart, help is assured.

Samkirtan or devotional singing is of four types: *guna-samkirtan*, *leela-samkirtan*, *bhava-samkirtan*, and *nama-samkirtan*. *Guna* means 'attributes' (of God). So *guna-samkirtan* is the adoration in song of the manifold attributes of God - omnipresence, omniscience, compassion, majesty, etc. *Leela* means 'sport', therefore *leela-samkirtan* is the adoration in song of the various expressions of these attributes as evidenced by the accounts of sages and seers of all faiths. *Bhava* means 'attitude' (of the mind). So *bhava-samkirtan* means the adoration in song of God pictured and contacted under various relationships. Some may prefer to adore Him as the giver of equanimity, others as a friend, guide, and guardian, still others as the child one loves and tends, and yet others as the lover whom one loves with sovereign love. *Nama* means the name of God, and so *nama-samkirtan* means the adoration of God, calling upon Him by various names, each describing His glory, His achievements, His relationship with the individual.

The names are many, or even countless; it is so in all languages. We have many groups of 'thousand and eight names' which can be used; for God, as the *Vedas* declare, has a 'thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet'. Devotees can adore Him and derive bliss through that adoration, filling each name with the meaning and significance it carries.

By whatever means God is adored, the path of devotion is the easiest and the most effective, for it is a spiritual discipline of the heart and results in love and service to all as fellow pilgrims to the same divine goal.

Some people do question the propriety of calling God by means of such a multiplicity of names. But each name is indicative only of one aspect of divinity. It denotes a single part of the Supreme Personality. The eye, the nose, the mouth, the hand, or the finger may be denoted by distinct words, but they all belong to the same individual. So, too, one must remember that every name is but a facet, a part, a ray, of the Supreme. The spiritual discipline consists in recognizing and becoming aware of the One that supports and sustains the many. That is the precious gem of wisdom that one must secure and treasure.

There is, however, a thief that lurks in the inner consciousness of man, planning to rob him of this gem. He is desire. When we have gained what we desire, greed, the accomplice of the thief, steps out and prods us to desire a few more objects. When what is desired is not gained, another accomplice, anger steps out and prods us to hate and harm those whom we suspect stood in the way of the gain.

Of course you cannot instantly eliminate all desire from the mind. So you should nourish the one desire prescribed by the *vedas*. **The *vedas* lay down four goals before man: righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation. Since the first and the last are difficult to attain without detachment and deprivation of sensual pleasures, man has given them up as impracticable and is struggling, in all lands and climes, with the middle two -- wealth and desire. All the fear and misery of life can be traced to this dire mistake. What has to be done is to take the four as two inseparable pairs, righteousness-wealth and desire-liberation. That is to say, earn wealth through righteousness, and use wealth for the promotion of righteousness. And let liberation be your only desire.**

Liberation means getting rid of bondage. Many people give up hearth and home, wife and children, property and possessions, and, escaping into forest retreats, pride themselves on their 'renunciation'. But this act of fleeing cannot be honored by that name, for such an act by itself cannot confer release when the mind still remains bound. The fundamental bond, which must be eliminated, is the bond of ignorance. Death is sweeter than the bondage that ignorance can impose on man. Cast away ignorance: you are free, liberated from all bonds that very moment. All spiritual disciplines have this liberation as their goal. Singing God's name, too, helps you get rid of this basic ignorance.

Those who rely on reason alone or on the limited laws of science argue that the repetition of the Name, which is, after all, sound, cannot cleanse or correct the mind of man. But the Name is not just 'sound'. You are sitting quietly there, listening, but if someone merely says, "scorpion" you get frightened. Or when someone says, "the

juice of a lemon", your mouth starts watering. You may be sitting before a plateful of delicacies, but if some one speaks of something dirty or disgusting, you are apt to refuse the food. The mere sound creates so much reaction.

A certain official was inspecting the work of a teacher in a school. He had a hearty contempt for mere talk, so he asked the teacher, "How can you ever transform the nature of these children by the words you utter? Show them by deeds; act, don't speak." The teacher protested and argued that words have a profound effect on the mind. The argument continued for some time. At last the teacher resolved upon a plan to convince the official of his point of view. He told an urchin of his class, "Here! Catch this official by the neck and push him out of the room." Hearing those words, the official flew into a great rage and started pouring abuse on the teacher. The teacher said, "Sir, I only said a few words. No one pushed you or hit you or touched you. It was all mere sound. But see how it has enraged you. Words, sir, do help in modifying character and shaping nature. They have vast power "

When words referring to worldly situations have such a transforming effect on the mind of man, words conveying spiritual and elevated meaning will certainly help in cleansing and correcting the mind of man. When we fill the air with harshness, we become harsh in nature. When we fill the atmosphere with hatred, we, too, have perforce to breathe the air and are hated in turn. When we saturate the air with sounds full of reverence, humility, love, courage, self-confidence, and tolerance, we benefit from those qualities ourselves. **The heart is the film and the mind is the lens; turn the lens towards the world and worldly pictures will fall on the heart. Turn it towards God, and it will transit pictures of the Divine.**

Therefore always do good, see good, remember good, and be good. Do not seek to discover or discuss the evil in others, for the attempt will tarnish your own mind. When you are engaged in searching for the faults and failings of others, you are paving the way for developing those faults and failings in yourself. Dwell on the good in others, and in time it will prove an asset to you. The goodness latent in you shall then be urged to sprout and blossom.

When you pray, "Swami, appear in my dream tonight," there is a chance that you may be lucky to visualize Swami in your dream. But if you pray, turning your attention to bad things, "Swami, let not a pig or an ass appear in my dream this night," in all likelihood, the pig and the ass will present themselves to you in your dream. Why pay undue attention to things you do not need and do not benefit from? Every thought leaves an impression on the mind, so be ever alert that contact with evil is avoided. Ideas that are opposed to spiritual tendencies, that narrow the limits of love, that provoke anger or greed, that cause disgust -- these have to be shut out. For the spiritual aspirant this is a very essential discipline. He must sublimate such thoughts before they cause an impact on the mind, and he should concentrate on the very source of the thinking process. This can be achieved by the practice of equanimity, unaffectedness, or balance. This attitude is the mark of the sage who has experienced God and is called *jnana-sakthi* or the power of wisdom. Of course it is not easily acquired. The path of devotion and dedication is easiest for most. It is attainable by love, for love leads you quickly to the Goal.

Once upon a time, Namadeva (noted for his mastery of the path of devotion and dedication through constant recital of the Name) and Jnanadeva (noted for his mastery of the path of wisdom) were journeying together through a thick jungle. They were both afflicted with severe thirst but could not find water anywhere in spite of a tiresome search. At last they came upon a ruined well with a little water far down its depth, but they had no means of going down the steep sides. So Jnanadeva used his power and transformed himself into a bird. The bird flew down and drank its fill, only to change itself into Jnanadeva again! Namadeva relied upon the power of the Name. He sat on the edge of the well and called, 'Narayana' (a name for the Lord Himself), in great anguish. God responded to his prayer. The water rose up to where he sat, and he could gather it in his palms and quench his thirst. He had no need to embody himself anew and disembody himself again for the satisfaction of a physical thirst.

When God is invoked by prayer that emanates from the heart, let it be but once, He responds immediately. But nowadays the call emanates only from the lips, it has not the ring of sincerity and faith. From the lips, it must roll back on the tongue; from the tongue, it must go deep into the throat; from the throat, it must reach down into the heart. Continuous spiritual discipline alone can grant success in this endeavor. You must become like an infant with no inhibitions or stratagems. The mother may be attending to her daily chores on the first floor of the house, leaving the infant in the cradle on the ground floor. But when the child sends up a loud wail, either through fear or hunger, she rushes down to lift the child, fondle it, feed it, and comfort it on her lap. She will not stay away because of the wail not being musical or melodious.

Similarly, the Mother of the Universe will not weigh the quantity of *yoga* that you have practiced or calculate the number of times you have repeated God's name as you rolled the rosary, or the time taken by you for various kinds of spiritual discipline. She can be moved, and Her grace can be won, by a genuine appeal emanating from the heart. Man is finding it increasingly difficult to call upon the Supreme Source of power and grace with such genuineness. His life has become pathetically artificial.

Kamadhenu, the wish-fulfilling heavenly cow, can be drawn and tied to a post by means of a rope. God too can be drawn towards you by the rope (the name) and tied to the post (the tongue). Then His name will be dancing upon the tongue forever, conferring the sweetness of His majesty. The name has to be sung for your own delight, to quench your own thirst, to appease your own hunger. No one eats to appease another's hunger, nor takes medicines to alleviate another's illness. So do not care for what others feel about your meditation or devotional singing. Do not seek the approval, appreciation, or admiration of others, or refrain from your form of worship because others dislike it or ridicule it. Be self-reliant, self-confident. See through your own eyes; hear through your own ears. Most people today believe their ears and deny their eyes; or they use the eyes, ears, and even the brains of others and thus fall into error and fear.

Consider this: Here you do devotional singing twice a day, but meals are taken four times a day! Physical exercises are resorted to in order to make the body strong and fit. Grain and cereal are grown and stored and used to strengthen the body. But meditation is equally necessary for strengthening the mind, so that, in its weak state, it may not yield to the viruses of lust, greed, anger, hatred, pride, etc. If the body is

well developed and the head is weak, it is a case fit for the lunatic asylum. Food should be for both body and head and both these should be dedicated to the realization of God, the truth behind and beyond all truths.

Seeking good company and spending all available time in that comradeship will help the aspirant a great deal. You are shaped by the company you keep: a piece of iron turns into rust if it seeks the company of the soil. It glows, it softens, and takes on useful shapes if it enjoys the company of fire. Dust can fly if it chooses the wind as its friend; it will end as slime in a pit if it prefers water. It has neither wing nor foot, yet it can either fly or walk, rise or fall, according to the friend it selects.

Knowing this truth, Kabir, the great mystic-poet, sang, "Here are my prostrations to the bad. Here are my prostrations to the good." When asked why he offered prostrations to the bad along with the good, he replied, "I prostrate before the bad so that they might leave me alone; I do the same before the good, so that they might remain near me always."

Here is a burning coal; here, at some distance, is a cold piece of coal. When they contact each other, the heat spreads to the cold piece of coal, and the part that is in contact with the burning coal is rendered hot and red. If you vigorously wave a fan over the contact area, soon the entire piece of coal becomes a burning ember.

'Near', alone, is not enough for realization; one has to make it 'dear' by the fan of spiritual discipline by which the human becomes divine. The *Vedas* say that he who knows Brahman, the formless God, becomes Brahman. The coal knew fire and became fire. Spiritual discipline is the cultivation of love. Be full of love; taste the exhilaration that love can confer. Man is love embodied; he thirsts for love, and he finds real joy in loving and receiving selfless love. You have forgotten your real nature, which is love, and so you exude misery, hate, and jealousy. Never be morose or melancholic. Let all see you exuberant with love and light and joy. Do not entertain passion or prejudice, anger or anxiety. Take the spiritual discipline of the Name, the *namasamkirtan*, and the path will be smooth.

This program of devotional singing continuously done for 24 hours all around the world in all lands has, therefore, spread the message of love through the names of the embodiment of Universal Love. It has saturated the atmosphere with thoughts of God and of the peace and joy that He showers. The devotional singing that you have done here has affected not only this particular area and its environment, but it will transmute the entire atmosphere. Continue this attitude of devotion and humility, of service and tolerance, and the atmosphere will not be polluted by hatred. Do not contaminate the air by voices of acrimony, scandal, insult, or slander. Keep silent when you feel like expressing such ideas; that itself is a service to you and to others.

Life is a song, sing it. That is what Krishna taught through His life. Arjuna heard that song on the battlefield, where tensions were at their highest and when the fate of millions was to be decided by the sword. Krishna sang the Gita for Arjuna to listen. Gita means 'song', and He sang because He was in bliss, wherever he might be -- in Gokulam, on the banks of the Yamuna, or at Kurukshetra between the warring armies.

You too must pass your days in song. Let your whole life be a spiritual song. Believe that God is everywhere at all times, and derive strength, comfort, and joy by singing His glory in His presence. Let melody and harmony surge up from your hearts, and let all take delight in the love that you express through that song.

Serve the Nation With Pure Hearts

Date: 11 Apr 1997 **Occasion:** Tamil New Year **Place:** Madras

Life in this world is impermanent;
Youth and wealth is transient;
Wife and children are not lasting;
Righteousness and renown alone are lasting.

In this mundane world, human life is like a water bubble. Youth is like a fleeting cloud that does not stay long. Wealth is impermanent. Wife and children are equally impermanent. *Dharma* and fame are the only permanent things in the world.

"Fire emerges from the rubbing of two sticks. Butter emerges from the churning of milk. By constant meditation on name and form Divinity is experienced. Listen, oh valiant son of Bharat". [Telugu poem].

God is omnipresent. Just as there can be no light rays without the sun, this cosmos cannot exist without God.

In the modern age young people consider the phenomenal world as the only reality. This is not so. "Having taken birth in this impermanent and sorry world, adore Me" says Krishna (in the Gita).

The life span of man is melting away every moment like a block of ice. Youth is transient. The only permanent and changeless entity is the Divine. Forgetting this man is going after fleeting, trivial pleasures. What is it that is permanent in this world? What is the purpose of human life? When one puts these questions, he does not get the right answers. Men pursue studies, jobs, wife and children in the search for happiness. They find no peace in any of these. Why? Desires are the cause of peacelessness. Without purifying the heart, all desires can only lead to unrest. Moreover, impurity in the heart is the source of many diseases. When the heart is pure, man will be free from disease.

How, then, is the heart to be purified? There is no other way except cherishing Godly thoughts. All other rituals are of no avail except to provide temporary mental satisfaction. But the mind does not get satisfied easily. It is continually wavering and is uncontrollable.

What should be done is to divert the mind towards God?

THE GREATNESS OF RAMA'S NAME

Once, a lady approached Kausalya. When Kausalya enquired who she was, the lady replied: "Oh mother! Don't you know that my son leapt over the sea in one jump? I am the mother of Hanuman".

A short while later, another lady came there. She informed Kausalya that the sea over which Hanuman leapt in one hop, was drunk by her son in one gulp. "I am the mother of Agasthya, who performed this feat", she said.

Kausalya smiled on hearing their claims. She said: "For your son leaping over the seas or for your son drinking the waters in one gulp, it was the name of Ramachandra which made it possible. I am the mother of Rama". The three ladies were conversing in this manner. There is a saying that when three ladies meet even the stars will tumble down during the day! While they were discussing who among them was great, Rama joined them. "What are you discussing?" he asked. Kausalya said: "Son! By chanting your name Hanuman was able to leap over the sea. This was possible because of Your grace".

She went on: "Again, by the power of Your name, Agasthya drank the sea in one gulp. This also was by Your grace. I am supremely fortunate in giving birth to such a son".

Rama, who was utterly egoless, then told the three ladies: "These feats are not the result of my grace. This body was given the name Rama at birth. It is the power of this name that has enabled them to accomplish such heroic feats. It is because this name was given to me I was able to overcome the valiant Ravana".

Thus, the name of the Lord is all powerful. By chanting the name of God, all latent powers in man are awakened.

THE NAME HELPS DRAUPADI

You all know Draupadi. Her husbands were great heroes including the powerful Bhima and the valiant Arjuna. In their presence, Duryodhana sought to humiliate Draupadi in the open assembly. Neither the powerful Bhima, nor the valiant Arjuna, not the very embodiment of Dharma, Yudhishtira, ventured to come to her rescue. Ultimately she cried out: "Oh Krishna! the kinsman of the hapless!" Physical prowess did not come to the rescue of Draupadi. Only the name of the Divine came to her help.

People tend to treat lightly the name of the Lord. They do not realize the potency of the two syllables in the name of the Lord. All the power of the cosmos is contained in those two letters. You must understand properly the significance of the name and use it in the right way.

Chanting the Lord's name (*naamasmarana*) is the panacea. It is the easiest path to God-realization. It is the boat that will take people across the ocean of mundane existence.

How does the chanting of the Lord's name transform the devotee? Every word that we utter sets in motion waves that fill the world. The radio waves sent out from the broadcasting station in Delhi reach out to every part of the world.

POLLUTION EVERYWHERE

Today the atmosphere is filled with discordant and disturbing noises of various kinds. These radio waves get into the minds of people and pollute their thoughts. Hence, if we wish to listen to pure sounds, the atmosphere must be free from pollution. The pollution cycle starts from smoke and clouds and ends in the food we eat. Hence the state of our minds depends on the kind of food we consume. The nature of the food depends on the environment. The environment is determined by human actions. Today men's actions are not along right lines.

Most devotees are like the fruits of the fig tree: attractive to look at from the outside, but infested with worms inside. Devotees should strive to purify their hearts. For this purpose they have to chant the Lord's name.

NAAMASMARANA

The effect of *Naamasmarana* has to be properly understood. Chanting the Lord's name purifies the environment. The first step is to purify one's own heart. Transform yourself before you set out to transform others.

The role of *bhajans* in purifying the atmosphere should be recognized. In this context, the role of community singing should be understood. Singing *bhajans* in your home, you may indulge in your fancies and derive whatever joy you get therefrom. "*Sankirtan*" (community singing) calls for whole-headed, soulful singing, which moves the hearts of the listeners. *Bhajans* should not be a routine ritual. You must put your heart and soul into the singing.

In reciting the names of the Lord you have to bear in mind another fact. When you recite the names thousands of devotees are listening. You must chant names which are familiar to all of them. You should not expect people to follow whatever you sing. You should see that they can easily respond to your song. The names you chant should be short and sweet. If you use big words and complicated terms, the devotees will not be able to follow you. In that situation they may get depressed. What can they do when they do not hear you properly and cannot respond in chorus? They get disgusted.

SIMPLIFY THE BHAJANS

Therefore, in your *bhajans* use short names like Rama, Krishna, Allah, Yesu and so on. Then all would be able to follow you with ease. If you use high sounding words, few can follow you.

Eschew any aversion to any faith or nation. Have no ill will towards anyone. Do not cause hurt to anyone. Look upon all alike. This feeling of oneness should spread all over the world.

Krishna declared: "The entire cosmos is sustained by a fragment of my potency". This means that the Divine permeates the entire cosmos. What, then, is our duty? To fill our hearts with love. Then the whole universe will be filled with love.

There is no use in singing *bhajans* if the singers' hearts are filled with jealousy and hatred.

There is no greater spiritual recipe for people in the *Kali* Age than the chanting of Hari's *naama*.

SAI BHAJANS

Foolish people speak derisively about the *bhajans* conducted in the presence of Swami. They have no idea of the joy derived by the devotees from the singing of the Lord's name. "Will the bees which are fond of honey in the lotus go after any other flowers? By constant eating even the leaves of the neem tree acquire a sweetness of their own. By spiritual sadhana all objectives are achieved". [Swami sang lines from a Telugu poem].

Wherein lies the greatness of chanting the Lord's name? This was the discovery made by Adi Sankaracharya, the supreme exponent of Non-dualism (*Advaita*), who declared that there was only one Absolute and no second. Even he had to seek recourse to dualism because he found that apart from chanting the Lord's name there was no easy way to experience the Divine. Out of this conviction was born the famous devotional song "*Bhaja Govindam*". [Swami sang stanzas from the song].

BHAJA GOVINDAM

The message of the song is clear. There is no meaning in dry scholarship. The only thing that will save a man in his last moments is adoration of Govinda. Sankara called upon the youth to realize that there is no room for feeling proud about one's youth and wealth, which may vanish in one moment in course of time.

Hence; when participating in *bhajans*, you should enjoy the singing and share that joy with others. Do not be indifferent to the reactions of others to your singing.

Leaders in *bhajans* should realize that many overseas devotees are deeply interested in *bhajans* and are eager to take part in them. The *bhajans* should be simple and easy for them to follow.

The goal of all religions is one. The underlying meaning of all names is the same. You must appreciate this oneness. Whatever name may be used, all are children of one God. All belong to the caste of humanity. The distinctions between religions are the result of historical and geographical factors. People may use diverse names for God, but God is one alone.

WHO ARE BHARATIYAS?

Having been born in Bharat, you may feel legitimately proud about Bharatiya culture. But mere birth alone does not make one a true Bharatiya. **All those who adhere to**

Sathya and *Dharma*(Truth and Right Conduct) are Bharatiyas. They may belong to any country, America, Japan or Germany. Truth is God. This is the cardinal principle of Bharat. Recognizing this fact, people must strive to spread the message to all.

Sai devotee should understand the essence of our culture. Sacrifice and service are the two basic elements.

TWO PATHS TO GOD

There are two ways of God realization. One is the path of devotion where the devotee considers himself as a servant of God. By repeatedly declaring, "*Daasoham*" (I am your servant) he goes on reducing his ego till the bondage of worldly attachment falls off. The other means is the path of knowledge (*Jnaanamaarga*). By constantly developing the sense of oneness with the Divine (*Sivoham* - I am the Divine) his consciousness expands to the point where it becomes one with the universal consciousness and all worldly bonds are snapped.

Give no room for the ego. If any one examines his position in this vast cosmos, he will realize his infinitesimal smallness. Egoism arises out of ignorance. Expel the ego and develop Love. With love, develop the spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice alone can confer immortality, says the *Upanishad*. Sacrifice can confer bliss and health. Experience the joy of sharing. Renunciation is the key to sound health.

Do not indulge in criticism of others. Count your own faults and rectify them. See the divine in one and all.

Elevate the quality of human life by living in amity with all. Chanting the name of God is the sure means of cultivating this universal love.

THE MUSIC THAT GOD LOVES

There is special merit in singing the Lord's name with due regard for melody and rhythm. The Lord is a lover of music. Moreover, when singing is done with fervor, it helps to drive out all bad thoughts from the mind. Melodious music can move the Lord and move all the participants. [Swami demonstrated the effect of melodious singing by rendering the song: "*Rama! Nannukaapaadumaa*" - "Oh Rama, protect me"]. Melodious music will move the Lord Himself. Hence, when you take part in *bhajans* sing with all your heart and soul. You must sing with such love for the Divine that you forget yourself. When you sing the praise of God with a pure heart, you will purify your environment, your country and the world.

People are looking forward to April 14th as the New Year Day. The name of the new year is *Easwara*. What does *Easwara* mean? As Chittibabu (who spoke earlier in Tamil) said, the Lord is "*Ammal-Appa*" - mother and father. Their coming together is represented by the concept of "*Ardhanareeswara*" - the Divine couple in one body. Every man is a symbol of "*Ardhanareeswara*". The body is inert. The *Atma* is consciousness. The body is *Prakriti* and *Paramaatma* constitutes humanness.

Therefore, you should regard yourself as a symbol of "*Ardhanareeswara*" (The Divine couple in one body).

THE PURSUIT OF POWER

As the new year approaches people are wondering what it has in store for them. It is not the year that brings good or ill. Your actions determine what you will get. What have the years that have gone brought you? Each year brings you the fruits of your past actions. Do good and reap good results.

Your conduct should be good, befitting your human condition. Revere elders. Love all. Honor your nation. Give up attachment to the body. Then you will have fulfillment in life.

You all know what troubles the country is going through on account of the political situation. The basic cause is selfishness. Leaders are fighting for their own personal ends and not for the sake of the country. No one seems to be bothered about what is happening to the society, to the people and the country. "My power and my position" is all that each one is concerned about. How long will the chair last? When the body itself impermanent, what is the meaning in chasing the chair?

Hence, all should develop a broad outlook. Banish narrow considerations.

From the new year, cherish broad ideas - truthful ideas, loving thoughts and noble ideals. Only then the nation will be peaceful and prosperous.

Bharat lacks nothing by way of natural endowments. It is a misfortune that it is in its present plight today. Realize the sacredness and great culture of Bharat.

I bless you all that from the new year you should lead pure lives chanting the Lord's name, and promote the prosperity of the country.

[Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the *bhajan*: *Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*].

Purify the world by Sankeerthana

Date: 3 Mar 1992

Occasion: Divine Discourse

Place: Prashanti Nilayam

There is no age like the Kali Age, none at all.
Where by mere meditation on the name of the Lord,
The Supreme Goal is realized. Oh Blessed One!
Even a multi-millionaire has to be content
With ordinary raiment and food.
He cannot live on a diet of gold.
When Time is unpropitious, a stick may turn into a snake
While, when it is favorable, dust may turn gold.

The wheel of Time can make a scholar a dumb animal,
And a dumb man can become a saint,
And a wealthy man may become a plaything of the
Goddess of Poverty at one time.
Whatever your prayers, you cannot get
What you are not destined to get.

Don't cherish, Oh young man, any desires.
Lead instead a noble life with intelligence.
What more can I tell you--
The good people assembled here?

Embodiments of Divine Love!

"*Samyak-keerthanam Sankeerthanam*" (Congregational singing of *bhajans* is the best of *bhajans*). There is a big difference between *Keerthanam* and *Sankeerthanam*. *Keerthanam* is an individual affair. It is singing by an individual for the fulfillment of his prayers. *Sankeerthanam* aims at the well being of the whole universe. This is also described as *Saamaajika bhajans* (community singing). This method of singing *bhajans* was first initiated by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

Sankeerthana aims at demonstrating unity in diversity. When all the participants combine to sing in unison with one voice, it is described as *Sankeerthana*.

Four kinds of Sankeerthana

Sankeerthana is of four kinds: One is *Guna sankeethana*; two, *Leela sankeerthana*; three, *Bhaava sankeerthana*; four, *Naama sankeerthana*.

Guna sankeerthana applies to the kind of *bhajan* in which the devotee recites the auspicious qualities of the Divine, experiences oneness with the Divine, and acquires the Godly qualities. Thyaagaraaja had recourse to this type of singing. In one of his *keerthanas*, he exclaimed: "Oh Lord! You are beyond all words. Is it possible for even Brahma or other Gods to extol your glorious exploits? I am waiting for your grace. Harken to my entreaties. You restored to the preceptor the son whom the Lord of Death had taken away. You conquered the God of Love. You liberated from prison Vasudheva and Dhevaki. You protected Draupadhi when she appealed to you in despair. You were the guardian of the Paandavas. You relieved Kuchela of his poverty. You saved 16,000 damsels from subjection." In this manner, Thyaagaraaja recounted the great qualities of God in his songs.

Geetha Govindam is a form of Leela Sankeerthana

Leela sankeerthana refers to the enjoyment by the devotee of the sacred sport of the Divine in ecstatic dancing and singing and being totally absorbed in it. This is exemplified by the *Geetha Govindam* of Jayadheva.

Bhaava Sankeerthana: This is illustrated by Raadha alone, who expresses her different feelings towards God and identifies herself with the Divine in every mood of devotion. She expressed her devotion in the five forms of *Shantha* (Serenity),

Saakhya (friendliness), *Vaathsalya* (eternal love), *Anuraaga* (affection) and *Madhura* (sweetness). Raadha and Meera were the exponents of *Bhaava sankeerthana*.

Naama sankeerthana: Chaithanya was the exponent of this form of *keerthana*. "All names are yours. There is nothing in this cosmos which does not bear the imprint of your name or form "Sarvaroopam Dharam Shaantham Sarvanaamadharam Shivam Satchidaananda Roopam Advaitham Sathyam Shivam Sundararn" (Svaami sang this *sloka*). Chaithanya reveled in singing the name of the Lord as signifying all that was beautiful and glorious in the universe.

While in each of the previous aeons the devotees adopted one or other methods of singing the glories, it is the supreme good fortune of the residents of Prashaanthi Nilayam to enjoy all the four forms of *sankeerthana*. The *bhajans* sung here are a combination of all the four forms of *sankeerthana*.

The significance of Naamalikhitam

There is yet another special form of glorifying the name of the Lord. This is *Naamalikhitam* (writing the Name of the Lord). Contemplating on the name of the Lord mentally, uttering the name by mouth and writing the name by hand serve to perform *Trikarana Suddhi* (purify the mind, the speech and the action).

The name of the Lord has been glorified in different ways all over the world. Jayadheva was one who enjoyed always the *leelas* (sport) of the Divine, experienced the presence of the Divine within him, devoted every one of his daily activities to enjoying the sport of the Divine, felt that he had no use for anything other than God's love, merged his love in Divine Love and thereby became the very embodiment of Divine Love. As people did not comprehend the spiritual significance of his *keerthanas*, they misunderstood and misinterpreted the meaning of Jayadheva's *Ashtapadhis* (octaves).

Hanumaan, after the completion of his mission in Lanka, went to Seetha to receive her blessings before returning to Raama. At that time, Mother Seetha blessed Hanumaan in this manner: "Hanumaan! You are full of prowess, intelligence and fortitude. May you never grow old." This did not give joy to Hanumaan. Noticing his sense of disappointment, Seetha blessed him again: "Live as an immortal." Even this did not please Hanumaan. Seetha then blessed him again: "Hanumaan! You are full of virtues! May the dwellers in the three worlds extol your qualities." Hanumaan felt embarrassed and bent his head as if he was ashamed to hear her praise him. Observing Hanumaan's reactions, Seetha finally blessed him thus: "May Shri Raama always love you!" The moment he heard these words, Hanumaan was in rapture. "This was all that I wanted," he declared. "I must be worthy of Raama's love. A life without Raama's love is an utter waste. It is a living death. The only thing I desire is Raama's love."

Hanumaan was proficient in music. There was none that could excel him in singing. Even Naaradha and Tumbura could not prevail against him. Such a great singer continued always to chant the name of Raama.

Devotional singing is outpouring of love to God

What then is the essence of *Sankeerthana*? Its essential purpose is to earn the love of God. Combining one's voice, tune, feeling and rhythm to the appropriate beat of the song, the devotee should immerse himself in the singing. Harmonizing the feeling with devotion and Love, the sacred words of the song should be an outpouring of love towards God. That alone is devotional singing.

When the song is rendered without understanding the meaning of the words and without any inner feeling or genuine love for God, it is a mechanical performance. *Bhaava* (feeling), *Raaga* (melody) and *Thaala* (rhythm) are the essentials for proper singing.

Even the name *Bhaarath* signifies the combination of these three elements. (*Bha-Ra-Tha*). In every action in daily life, the combination of these three elements should be observed. This rule can be applied even to one's studies. *Bhaava*, in relation to study of a subject, means understanding the subject thoroughly. *Raaga* implies cultivating a love for the subject and *Thaala* means expressing one's knowledge coherently and clearly.

Understand the meaning of songs while rendering

In the rendering of *Thyaagaraaja's* songs, the failure to observe the meaning of the words of the song has produced bizarre results. *Thyaagaraaja's* songs are in *Thelugu*. *Thamil* musicians, who are experts in music, rendering *Thyaagaraaja's* songs have often mangled the words of the songs and made them meaningless. In one of his songs, *Thyaagaraaja* sang: "*Ne pogadakunte neekemi kodhavu Raama?*" (If I do not praise you, what do you lose Oh Raama?). A *Thamil* musician sang the song in such a manner that it meant: "If I eat *pakodas*, what do you lose?" It is essential to ensure that the meaning of the words, the emotional feeling of the composer and the melody of the song are all brought out in rendering the songs during *Nagarsankeerthan* and in *bhajans*. Where one does not understand the meanings of the words, he should get the meaning from those who know.

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Regard community singing as sacred devotional exercise. Even if you have no musical ability, utter the names of the Lord with feeling and love.

There is no greater means of God-realization in the *Kali Yuga* than chanting the names of the Lord. *Dhyaana* (meditation) in *Krita Yuga*, *Yajna* (sacrifice) in *Tretha Yuga*, *Archana* (worship of idols) in *Dhvaapara Yuga* and *Naama sankeerthana* (Reciting the name of the Lord) in *Kali Yuga* are the methods prescribed for realizing the Divine.

Remembering the Name is the panacea. When the name is chanted as a song set to music, it delights the heart immensely. Many *pandiths* recite the names as *slokas* (verse). They do not experience the intense yearning expressed in the stanzas. Some actors are able to pronounce the words loud and clear, but without any depth of feeling. But when the names are sung melodiously they appeal to the hearts of the singers and the listeners. Even non-believers and agnostics nod their heads in appreciation when they listen to devotional music.

A song sung melodiously tugs at the heart-strings.

The word of a song can be expressed in prosaic manner which has no appeal to the listener. But when they are sung melodiously as in the song: "*Raama! Nannu Kaapaadu*"--"Raama! save me," they tug at the heart-strings. (Svaami sang the song to demonstrate its appeal). Such sweetness is contained in the song when it is rendered melodiously.

Everyone, whether he is well versed in music or not, should listen attentively to the singer and try to repeat the words of the song with feeling.

Some persons attending *bhajans* do not move their lips at all. They may say that they are singing the songs mentally within themselves. This is not proper. If you have devotional feeling, it should be expressed by the tongue joining in the *bhajan*. Only then it can be called *Sankeerthana*--singing in unison with others. You must sing the names aloud, full-throated, as far as the voice can reach. Only then the Divine will respond in full measure and shower His grace. No one will go to the rescue of a drowning man if his cries are feeble. Only when he cries aloud at the top of his voice will the cries be heard and people will rush to save him. *Sankeerthana* means singing with abandon and fervor.

Everyone should realize that every limb and organ in the body has been given to man to be used for a sacred purpose: The tongue to utter the Lord's name, the hands to offer worship, the feet to go the temple and so on. These organs should not be used for frivolous and unholy purposes. Sanctifying everyone of the sense organs, man should purify the mind and contemplate on God.

The only means to purify the polluted world

Embodiments of Divine Love!

It is impossible to describe the sweetness and sacredness of the name of the Lord. The intensity of the devotion with which you chant the name of the Lord will yield commensurate benefits and confer joy on you. All should strive to chant the names in unison. Today, all the five elements in the world--space, air, fire, water and the earth--are polluted. You cannot get pure water or pure air. The sounds you hear are impure. The earth is polluted. The *Kali Yuga* has become *Kalmasha Yuga* (the age of impurity). To purify all this the only means is chanting the names of the Lord.

Today people spend most of their time watching the TV and Video screens. Is it any surprise if children born in these circumstances are TV products? They behave as actors from childhood. They indulge in stunts. Only the parents are to blame. In olden times, when a woman was enceinte, she used to hear stories about Prahlada, Sathyavaan and other noble characters. The child in the womb was influenced by such stories.

Atmosphere is purified by chanting Divine Name

Experiments in Russia and other countries have demonstrated the relationship between the food one consumes and one's mental attitudes. It was found, for

instance, that a child which had been fed on apple juice while it was growing in the womb, exhibited a love for apples after birth.

The recitation of the names of the Lord will help to purify the atmosphere as a result of the sacred sound waves getting absorbed in the atmosphere. The power of sound waves is evident from the way radio waves are transmitted and received over long distance. The atmosphere that has been polluted by impure sound waves can be purified by the chanting of the Divine Name.

Likewise, sacred thoughts, pure speech and pure actions will purify other polluted elements. There is no better purifying agent than this. Crores are being spent to purify the Ganges water. Of what use is this exercise if the Ganges continues to be polluted by the discharge of drainage water into the river? First prevent the flow of filthy effluents into the Ganges.

In the same manner, the evil thoughts arising in the mind should be diverted and it should be filled with pure Godly thoughts by reciting the Divine name.

Everyone participating in *bhajans* should sing the name of the Lord and thereby serve to purify the atmosphere and promote the well being of the nation.

Glorify the Lord's Name

Date: 8 Nov 1986 **Occasion:** Akhand Bhajan **Place:** Prashanti Nilayam

Embodiments of Love! Only when we realize the preciousness of the diamond will we take care to safeguard it. Likewise only when we are aware of the value of chanting the Lord's name will we make the effort to practice it and benefit from it.

Devotees recite or sing the names of the Lord in two ways. One is *Keerthanam* and the other is *Sankeerthanam*. *Keerthanam* is done individually and benefits only the devotee concerned. *Sankeerthanam* is done collectively for the good of the world as a whole.

Keerthanam is of various kinds. First is *Guna Keerthana* - praising the qualities and attributes of God through song. Second is *Bhava Keerthana* - expressing the inner feelings and emotions of the devotee. Reflecting the feelings of peace, companionship, yearning, filial love or sweetness experienced by the devotee, these songs give vent to the emotional outpouring of the devotee. The third is *Leela Sankeerthanam* - praising in song the sports and divine play of the Lord. This is done through singing the *Ashtapadi* (of Jayadeva) or describing the sports and miraculous deeds of the Lord. The *rasa krida* is also in this category. The fourth is *Nama Sankeerthanam* - singing the names of the Lord. This is the most efficacious of all forms of devotional singing. But in actual practice the devotees derive joy from singing all types of devotional songs.

Special significance of Nama Sankeerthana

What is the special significance of *Nama Sankeethana* - singing the names of the Lord? "*Nama*" is made up of three letters: "*Na* *aa*", "*ma*". All music is based on the seven *swaras* -the seven notes. According to the science of numerology the letters "*Na*", "*aa*" and "*Ma*" have the numerical values: 0, 2 and 5 making up seven in all. The seven notes are *Sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, ni*. The Gopikas made use of these seven notes to combine music, rhythm and devotion in the *Rasa Krida* dance with Krishna. In this group dance, the Gopikas were so completely lost in devotion and song that they experienced oneness with the Divine.

In this way, *Sankeerthan* (community singing) in praise of Krishna became popular and helped to develop devotion and promote collective prayers for the welfare of the world.

Similarly community singing in the name of Rama also came into vogue. Numerologically, the letters in the name of Rama (*Ra+aa+ma*) add up to seven.

Besides the seven notes, the mystic number seven is associated with many sacred things like the seven islands, the seven oceans, the seven sages and so

on. In accordance with this concept, seven-day festivals and *yajnas* are held.

Threefold purity essential

Not all realize the potency and efficacy of reciting the Lord's name. The first requisite is purity of thought, word and deed. The name that is uttered by the tongue should be meditated upon by the mind. What is uttered and dwelt upon should be hailed by clapping the hands. This threefold concentration on the Divine name--unity of mind, speech and action--purifies the heart and nourishes the feeling of devotion.

Better than recounting the qualities of the Lord, singing His glories or relating His exploits and teachings, the chanting of the name is supremely edifying. If merely the Lord is described as *Dayamaya* (the embodiment of kindness) there may be many who qualify for that description. If the term "*Leelaamaanusha vigrahudu*" (One who has assumed the human form as a sport) is used, it may apply to any number of persons.

Guru Nanak was the initiator of the practice of community singing of devotional songs. He believed that through such community singing the common man can ennoble his life and experience the presence of the Divine in everyone. Through that experience, one can become a knower of the *Brahman (jnani)*. Ratnakara, who led the life of a highway man, became the sage Valmiki after prolonged meditation on the name of Rama. He got the illumination out of which the Ramayana was born. Moses was another great figure of old times who achieved God-realization by continuously dwelling on the name of God.

Community singing of *bhajans*

When the chanting of the Name is done in community singing, it should be in a form in which the entire group can participate easily. The tune, the rhythm, etc. should be such that all can follow the *bhajan*. If the lead singer takes up a song that is not familiar to others, the response from the group will be poor. There will be no enthusiasm or genuine participation. Their minds will be distracted. When all the devotees participate in the *bhajan*, the vibrations that are produced will generate joy and harmony.

Many who organize mass singing on special occasions are not aware what kind of *bhajans* should be sung then. A person who has an individual style of his own may sing as he likes in private, but he is not suitable for community singing.

There are some rules to be observed in conducting community *bhajans*. *Alapana* (elaboration of a *raga*) may be done in *keerthana* (individual singing), but it is wholly out of place in community *bhajans*. Hence, in such *bhajans* the accent should be entirely on the Name.

Today we are having the *Akhanda Bhajan* (nonstop twenty-four-hour global *bhajan* by Sai devotees all over the world). This is being done not for the sake of one individual, one nation or one community. It is for the welfare of humanity as a whole.

The *bhajans* that are sung permeate the ether in the form of sound waves and fill the entire atmosphere. Thereby the whole environment gets purified. Breathing in this purified atmosphere, our hearts get purified. Reciting the Lord's name is a process of give and take. Singing the Lord's name should become an exercise in mutual sharing of joy and holiness. It should be remembered that the sounds we produce reverberate in the atmosphere. They remain permanently in the ether as waves and outlast the individual uttering the sounds.

Today the atmosphere is polluted by unholy and vicious sounds. This results in the growth of evil thoughts and feelings, which lead to evil deeds. If the atmosphere has to be purified, it has to be filled with pure and sacred sounds. Hence the need to cultivate purity in thought, word and deed.

Singing should be vibrant and soulful

Community *bhajans* should not be treated as a pastime. When thousands of persons join in singing *bhajans*, they should be fully absorbed in the devotional process and the ecstasy of that experience. The singing should be vibrant and soulful and not mechanical or drawling and uninspiring. It should combine *bhava* (feeling), *raga* (melody) and *tala* (rhythm). What delight can be experienced when all sing in chorus, with the same feeling, in the same tune and to the same timing! When there is such unity the Divine can be experienced.

The songs should glorify the Name rather than describe the attributes of the Lord. When attributes are praised some may develop doubts. If, for instance, the Lord is described as *Karunaamaya* (the embodiment of compassion), some ailing devotee may ask why the Lord is showing no compassion towards him and offer relief. Similar doubts may arise when the sports or exploits of the Lord are glorified. But when the song is confined to the name alone, these doubts don't arise. Hence, the

devotee should install the name firmly in his heart and sing with fervor. *Samyag keerthanam* = *Sankeerthanam*. *Sankeerthanam* means singing extremely well. This means that in community singing, the participant should sing with full-throated joy and deep feeling. He should not bother about his voice or his musical ability. Purity of feeling will make up for everything. Picture the Lord in your heart and utter the Name - then you will feel the joy of singing the Name. You will also evoke joy in others.

The name Rama is made up of three *bijaaksharas* (root letters) associated with Fire, Sun and Moon. Symbolically, this means that by uttering the name of Rama, the fire principle will burn away one's sins, the sun principle will dispel the darkness of ignorance, and the moon principle will cool the fevers arising out of desires.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the singing of the *bhajan*, "*Harey Rama! Harey Rama! Rama Rama! Harey Harey!*")