

## 8. Purify The World By Sankeerthana

*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 realised 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 favourable, dust may turn to 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 fulfilment 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 Sankeerthana*; 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. Thyagaraja 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 Devaki. You protected Draupadi when she appealed to you in despair. You were the guardian of the Pandavas. You relieved Kuchela of his poverty. You saved 16,000 damsels from subjection." In this manner, Thyagaraja recounted the great qualities of God in his songs.

### ***Gita 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 *Gita Govindam* of Jayadeva.

*Bhaava Sankeerthana*: This is illustrated by Radha 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 *Santha* (Serenity), *Sakhya* (friendliness), *Vaatsalya* (eternal love), *Anuraaga* (affection) and *Madhura* (sweetness). Radha 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 Sarvanaama-dharam Shivam Satchidaananda roopam Advaitam Sathyam Shivam Sundaram*" (Swami sang this sloka). Chaithanya revelled 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 another methods of singing the glories, it is the supreme good fortune of the residents of Prashanthi 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. Jayadeva 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 Jayadeva's *Ashtapadhis* (octaves).

Hanuman, after the completion of his mission in Lanka, went to Sita to receive her blessings before returning to Rama. At that time, Mother Sita blessed Hanuman in this manner: "Hanuman! You are full of prowess, intelligence and fortitude. May you never grow old." This did not give joy to Hanuman. Noticing his sense of disappointment, Sita blessed him again: "Live as an immortal." Even this did not please Hanuman. Sita then blessed him again: "Hanuman! You are full of virtues! May the dwellers in the three worlds extol your qualities." Hanuman felt embarrassed and bent his head as if he was ashamed to hear her praise him. Observing Hanuman's reactions, Sita finally blessed him thus: "May Sri Rama always love you!"

The moment he heard these words, Hanuman was in rapture. "This was all that I wanted," he declared. "I must be worthy of Rama's love. A life without Rama's love is an utter waste. It is a living death. The only thing I desire is Rama's love."

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

### **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. Harmonising 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 Bharath 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 Thyagaraja's songs, the failure to observe the meaning of the words of the song has produced bizarre results. Thyagaraja's songs are in Telugu. Tamil musicians, who are experts in music, rendering Thyagaraja's songs have often mangled the words of the songs and made them meaningless. In one of his songs, Thyagaraja sang: "*Ne pogadakunte neekemi kodhavu Rama?*" (If I do not praise you, what do you lose Oh Rama?). A Tamil 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-realisation in the *Kali Yuga* than chanting the names of the Lord. *Dhyana* (meditation) in *Kritha Yuga*, *Yajna* (sacrifice) in *Thretha Yuga*, *Archana* (worship of idols) in *Dwapara Yuga* and *Naama Sankeerthana* (Reciting the name of the Lord) in *Kali Yuga* are the methods prescribed for realising 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 pandits 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 words 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: "*Rama! Nannu Kaapaadu*" "Rama! save me," they tug at the heart-strings. (Swami 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 can it 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 fervour.

Everyone should realise 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 to the temple and so on. These organs should not be used for frivolous and unholy purposes. Sanctifying every one 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 distances. 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 (one crore is ten million) 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.

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*You must see, hear, study, observe, experience and reflect. Only then, can you understand me. You will learn then that I am Love (Prema); that I give only one thing, Bliss (Ananda) through Love. My task is to grant solace, courage, and Peace (Shanthi). That is to say, my characteristics are the ancient, authentic ones. Only the manifested form is new.*

*Sathya Sai Baba*