

## **Nama Sankirtan Is The Royal Path For Man's Redemption**

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

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Devotion is the basis to attain  
knowledge of the Supreme Being.  
Devotion is the panacea to get rid of  
the disease of birth and death.  
Devotion leads to the knowledge of  
eternal truth and confers liberation,  
which is the ultimate goal of life.  
(Sanskrit Verse)

People follow various paths of *bhakti* (devotion) to attain the grace of God. What is meant by *bhakti*? It is derived from the root '*bhaj*', which means *seva* (selfless service). It signifies the principle of love. '*Bhaj*' has many other meanings.

### **Chanting divine names gives eternal bliss**

Devotees have been singing the glories of God in four ways: *guna gana*, *geela gana*, *bhava gana*, and *nama gana* (singing about divine attributes, deeds, thoughts, and names of God).

God is *gunateeta* (attributeless) and *bhava-teeta* (beyond thoughts). By extolling the attributes of the Attributeless One, you cannot derive complete satisfaction. It is mere delusion to think that you can please God by extolling His attributes. The satisfaction that you derive out of *guna sankirtan* (singing about God's attributes) is only temporary. Truly speaking, God has no attributes.

Many devotees extol the attributes of God in this manner:

Oh the Lord of the universe!  
You are dear to Lakshmi, the goddess  
of wealth.  
You confer auspiciousness on those  
who take refuge in You.  
You recline on the serpent Adi Sesha  
and are the embodiment of wealth  
and bliss.

Please destroy my worldly bondages  
and grant me eternal happiness.  
(Telugu Song)

People extol God as *Sesha Sayana*, *Srinivasa* (in whose heart Lakshmi resides), *Chidvilasa* (abode of bliss). Who is Srinivasa? Who is Chidvilasa? Does it not amount to extolling His attributes? Devotees who extol the attributes of the Lord in this manner can derive only temporary satisfaction.

Similarly, many devotees like Jayadeva and Gauranga sang the *leelas* (plays) of the Lord. Jayadeva, Gauranga, Mira, and Sakkubai tried to derive satisfaction by singing the divine *leelas*, but ultimately they realised that the entire world is the *leela* of the Lord. Creation itself is His *Leela*. Then how can you separate only a few acts of God as His *leelas*? Having realised this truth, they started performing *nama sankirtan* and experienced bliss. *Nama sankirtan* is the highest form of devotion, which can lead man to the ultimate goal of life. Mira craved for the vision of Krishna's blissful form in this manner:

Dear One! Come and bless me with  
Thy vision.  
Without thee, oh Krishna, I cannot be.  
I have no hunger during the day and no  
sleep at night.  
What can I say when the words do not  
come out of my mouth?  
Come, oh Lord, and soothe this burn-  
ing heart.  
(Hindi Song)

Ultimately, Mira realised that day is Krishna, night is Krishna, and everything is Krishna. He is time itself. Everything is His Divine *Leela*. Having realised this truth, Mira considered Krishna as her *Hridayavasi* (indweller of her heart). She said, "Oh Krishna, my heart is Your temple."

Nany devotees are lost in the thoughts of God. They sing:

Oh Lord, Your face is as beautiful as  
the moon and Your Lotus Feet are  
worshipped by all the gods.  
You are dear to goddess Lakshmi.  
Wherever I look, I find You only.  
You are there even in lanes and by-  
lanes.  
I see You as the indweller of everyone  
and as the embodiment of bliss.  
You bestow auspiciousness on those  
who take refuge in You.  
Oh Govinda, the bestower of eternal  
bliss, come quickly and save me.  
(Telugu Song)

### **Spiritual import of Krishna's leelas**

God is immanent in every particle of the universe. What to speak of lanes and bylanes, the entire universe is His *leela* (play, sport). Therefore, it is due to your imagination that you do *guna sankirtan*, *bhava sankirtan*, and *leela sankirtan*.

Of the four types of *sankirtan*, *nama sankirtan* (singing the Names of God) is the best and the highest. It is, in fact, the royal path for

man's redemption. When many people come together and do *nama sankirtan* wholeheartedly, divine vibrations generated by it spread everywhere.

When God assumes a form, He takes upon Himself a name also. One should contemplate on the form while reciting the name. This is *japa sahita dhyana* or *dhyana sahita japa* (chanting with meditation or meditation with chanting). The *gopikas* (cowhered maids) not only chanted the name of Krishna, they were also deeply attached to His form.

Everything in this world has a name and a form. It is the attachment to name and form that gives rise to *abhimana* and *mamakara* (attachment and feelings of mine and thine).

Some people ridicule the divine *leelas* of Krishna without understanding their import. Similarly, even today, many people criticise God without understanding the import of His divine *leelas*. When Krishna played and danced with *gopikas*, he was only a child of six years. Where is the scope for criticising the acts of a six-year-old child? This criticism is only born out of people's imagination.

Once Krishna went to the house of a *gopika* and knocked at her door when her husband was taking rest inside. The *gopika* took some time to respond. Krishna was not one to keep quiet. When He kept on knocking at the door, she spoke to Him through the crevice of the door and said,

Krishna! I am going to open the door.  
Why are You in a hurry?  
Have patience, because my husband is  
taking rest.  
Therefore, wait for some time.  
(Telugu Song)

In spite of the pleadings of the *gopika*, Krishna continued to knock at the door. Then her husband got up and opened the door. He was happy to see child Krishna at the door; he was not at all angry. He took Him in his arms and brought Him inside. Seeing this, the *gopika*

was ecstatic, thinking, “Aha! My husband is also transformed. He is showering his love and affection on Krishna.” Fully immersed in the thoughts of Krishna, she lost her body consciousness.

On the face of it, the *leelas* of Krishna appear to be of the nature of *pravritti* (worldliness) but their true import is *nivritti* (spirituality). In fact, all the divine *leelas* of God lead man from *pravritti* to *nivritti*.

One can derive bliss by singing the *leelas* of God. It is everybody’s experience how sweet and blissful it is to sing the divine glories of God. When devotees do *nagar sankirtan* (walking the streets, singing) early in the morning, even those who do not know singing join them blissfully. There is so much sweetness in singing. Be he a theist, an atheist, a theistic-atheist, or an atheistic-theist, everyone forgets themselves listening to divine *sankirtan*. *Sankirtan* of God’s Name captivates the heart of all those who participate in it; it makes them forget themselves.

Not only that, all the divine *leelas*, attributes, and powers of God can be described beautifully in singing. Singing pleases one and all. It is the royal road to redemption for all. Those devotees who sing God’s glory, wholeheartedly forgetting themselves, develop total love for God. God becomes verily the servant of such ardent devotees. Many devotees have been propagating the divine powers of God in the world through their songs.

You are beyond all description and human comprehension.  
Is it possible to estimate Your glory and splendour?  
I have been waiting for Your grace.  
Oh Lord!  
Listen to my prayer and redeem me.  
You are the one who brought back to life the dead son of Your preceptor.  
You are the one who vanquished the serpent Kaliya, freed Vasudeva and

Devaki and saved Draupadi from humiliation.

You fulfilled Kuchela’s desires.  
You made ugly-looking Kubja beautiful.  
You protected the Pandavas and saved the 16,000 *gopikas*.  
You are beyond all description and human comprehension.  
Krishna, it is not possible for even Brahma to describe Your glory.  
I have been praying for Your grace.  
(Telugu Song)

God is beyond all description and the reach of the mind. That is why the *Vedas* declare, *Yatho Vacho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manasa Saha* (whence the words along with the mind rebound in futility without comprehending Divinity).

### **Supreme importance of community singing**

*Samashti sankirtan* (community singing) has the power to make the heart blossom. It broadens the mind and spreads divine vibrations all over the world. That is why community singing is the noblest among all spiritual practices.

Guru Nanak initiated this practice. He started this type of singing in which everybody could join together and sing in unison. It is only such type of singing through which one can attain liberation. Great saints like Kabir Das, Tulsi Das, and Ramdas attained liberation through *nama sankirtan* (singing the names of God). There is immense power in *nama sankirtan*.

People may say God has no form, but He certainly has a name. However, the name of God does not mean only Rama, Krishna, Govinda, etc. God itself is His name. People say that God has no name and no form, but there is nothing in this universe that has no name and form. Even an atom has a name and a form. How can microcosm become macrocosm if it does not have a name and a form? Each and

every form is associated with a name, and every name is endowed with divine power.

That is why the *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been worshipping stones, trees, birds, and even poisonous snakes. They believe that there is nothing in this universe that is not pervaded by Divinity. That is why many people do *pradakshina* (circumambulation) wherever they are and offer their salutations to mother earth. Where is the place where there is no earth? It is everywhere. Here is a small story.

Once a fox took five rupees as a loan from the earth. When it got up next morning, the earth asked, "Will you return my five rupees to me or not?"

In order to escape from the earth, the fox started running. It ran day and night and reached a distant forest. Then it peacefully slept, thinking, "Now I can rest happily without being bothered by the earth."

However, when it got up from sleep next morning, the earth asked, "What, when are you going to give back my five rupees?"

The earth is also a form of God, and it is present everywhere like God. That is why the *Vedas* propound, *Sarvatah Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvatah Srutimalloke Sarvamavruuthya Tishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth, and ears pervading everything, God permeates the entire universe).

### **Chanting of any name of God confers bliss**

Once mother earth prayed to Lord Narayana, "Swami, I can bear the burden of any number of sinners, but not of those who do not chant Your Name. Therefore, kindly show the path of liberation to one and all through chanting of the divine Name."

Valmiki wrote the *Ramayana* consisting of one crore *slokas* (verses). He wanted to distribute the *slokas* to the three *lokas* (worlds)

equally, so he distributed 3,333,333 to each of the three worlds. At the end of the distribution, one *sloka* was left out.

The question arose how to distribute one *sloka* into three parts. The *sloka* consisted of 32 letters. Valmiki distributed 10 letters each to the three *lokas*. Still two letters remained. How to distribute these two letters to three worlds?

Vishnu told mother earth, "When Valmiki distributed one crore *sloka* of his *Ramayana* to all the three worlds, two letters remained. These letters were Rama, Krishna, Hari, Hara, Siva, Sai, etc.," which are the common property of all the three worlds (loud applause). These two letters signify unity in this world, which is otherwise marked by duality.

Duality is the nature of this world. Human beings are unable to have vision of reality because of their duality. One with dual mind is half blind. That person is so deluded that they sometimes say 'yes' and sometimes say 'no' as an answer to the same question. Those who chant the divine Names can overcome this duality and redeem themselves. This is true with respect to the divine Names of Jesus and Allah also. Man should therefore chant the divine Name of God constantly.

Thyagaraja sang thus:

Oh Lord!  
How can I decide who You really are,  
Whether You are Siva or Madhava?  
The letter 'Ra' is the life force of  
*Madhava Mantra* and  
The letter 'Ma' is the life force of *Siva Mantra*.  
I offer my salutations to the One  
whose name is the life force of these two Mantras.  
(Telugu Song)

The *Madhava Mantra* is "Om Namō Narayana" and the letter 'Ra' is its life force. When we remove the letter 'Ra' from the word *Narayana*, it becomes *Nayana*, which is

meaningless.

Similarly, the *Siva Mantra* is “*Om Namah Sivaya*.” If we remove the letter ‘*Ma*’ from this, it becomes *nasivaya*, which means inauspicious. However, when you join these letters ‘*Ra*’ and ‘*Ma*’, they give the Divine Name *Rama*, to whom Thyagaraja offered his salutations.

There is no one in this world who does not chant the Divine Name in one way or the other in their life. Many people have children or friends who bear the divine names Rama, Krishna, etc. They do chant the divine name when they call them, saying, “Come, oh Rama, come, oh Krishna.”

God has innumerable names and infinite forms. You may chant any of His names and redeem your life by *nama sankirtan* (singing the names of God). You may describe God in any number of ways. But this will give you only temporary satisfaction. Chanting His Divine Name alone confers eternal bliss.

What greater penance can there be other than making the Divine Name dance on your tongue constantly? Only chanting of the Divine Name is the real *tapas* (penance), real *tirtha* (place of pilgrimage), and *kshetra* (holy place). Therefore, *nama sankirtan* has supreme importance in the life of man. Chant the Divine Name constantly and redeem your life.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, “*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin ...*”)

– From Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 19 July 1996.