

## 7. Remembrance of the Lord's Name: Highest Spiritual Practice

### Embodiments of divine Atma!

From time immemorial, the *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been performing various spiritual practices like rituals and sacrifices, repetition of God's name, penance, meditation, etc. to attain God. It has been their faith that one could attain God by undertaking such spiritual practices. But nobody knows about the will (*sankalpa*) of God, who is omnipresent.

### God is the Indweller in the heart of humans

“With hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth, and ears pervading everything, God permeates the entire universe (*Sarvatah panipadam tat sarvathokshi siromukham, Sarvatah sruthimalloke sarvamavruthya tishthati*).”

God has innumerable mouths, ears, eyes, hands, and feet. Wherever you look, God is present there. Such a Cosmic Being cannot be attained merely by undertaking spiritual practices. Nobody can say that God is this or that. Then what is the nature of God? He is most subtle and universally present. Whomsoever you salute or ridicule, it reaches God.

Ordinary mortals cannot understand such a subtle divine principle because of their own weakness. They seek satisfaction in earthly and worldly pleasures and have no yearning for ethical and spiritual attainments. All of them, from the most ordinary to the highly evolved individuals, undertake all types of rituals and sacrifices merely for their satisfaction. But God can be attained only by ethical and spiritual endeavours.

Desire to amass more and more money is increasing in all fields, more particularly in politics today. But this is sheer ignorance. As long as one is in the grip of this ignorance, one cannot understand the principle of Divinity. As long as your heart is filled with the feelings of 'I' (pride) and 'mine' (attachment), you cannot realise God. Therefore, what is the first and foremost requirement to know God? Elimination of the feelings of 'I' and 'mine'.

Many people offer worship and perform rituals to have direct vision of God, but this is not possible for anyone by such means. Then how can it be possible? All objects in creation are bound to perish one day or the other. The mountains can sink in water and rivers can dry up. The human body is also perishable. Nothing in this creation is permanent. Only God is eternal, immortal, infinite, and imperceptible. How is it possible for anyone to understand such a Cosmic Being? Some people imagine that they had a vision of God in meditation or in the yajna fire. But this is merely their illusion; such a vision is not everlasting. But where does God dwell? He dwells in the heart of all in the form of the *Atmic* principle. He has to be attained only by the principle of the Self. It is not proper to attribute various names and forms to Him.

### Divine name has infinite power

When Rama reached the seashore to go to Lanka and bring Sita back after killing Ravana, many people felt that it was an impossible task because they thought Ravana was very wicked, fierce, and powerful. Moreover, there was a vast sea to be crossed, which was not possible. Rama suggested that a bridge across the sea be built.

Hanuman, Jambavan, and other monkeys asserted that the bridge could be constructed in no time. Agreeing to their suggestion, Rama commanded them to start constructing the bridge.

The monkeys then brought big boulders and parts of mountains from various quarters and started throwing them into the sea, but they all sank in sea water. How could the bridge be made in this way? It could not be made unless the rocks and boulders settled at one place. What could be done for that? Perceiving the difficult situation, Lakshmana said to Rama, “Dear elder brother, everything in this world is perishable and bound to sink. But there is one thing that does not perish or sink. And that is Your name. Your name is everlasting, ever true, and ever abiding. It is indestructible. The bridge should be constructed on the foundation of Your name.”

Rama commended Lakshmana by patting his back and said, “Lakshmana, you have suggested the correct method.” Hearing this, Hanuman said to Rama, “Swami, I can do this work.”

Now the monkeys started bringing the rocks, and Hanuman told them to write the word ‘Rama’ on each boulder. The boulders with the name ‘Rama’ written on them did not sink in water but started drifting away. Then Hanuman told them that they should write the letter ‘*Ra*’ on one boulder and ‘*ma*’ on the other. The monkeys did as commanded and threw the two boulders together in to the sea with devotion and steadfast faith. The waves of the ocean brought the two boulders together to make the word ‘Rama’. In this way, the bridge was constructed. No rock did ever sink and such a long bridge was constructed in a short time.

What was the foundation of the rocks and boulders? It was Rama’s name. Since all of them bore the two letters ‘*Ra*’ and ‘*ma*’, which constituted the name Rama, they floated on water.

As soon as the bridge was constructed, Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and the entire army crossed over and reached Lanka in no time. Vibhishana also said, “Oh Rama! Everything can be achieved by the power of Your name. Your name of just two letters has enabled the monkeys to build such a long bridge.”

The war with Ravana resulted in his death and the release of Sita from his prison. Thus, the name of Rama is most powerful and eternal. The form will sink at any time, at any place, and under any condition. But the Name will not sink and will save you wherever you are. In this way, Rama taught that the Name is ever true and eternal. None can ever damage or destroy it, nor can anyone take it away from you.

The war with Ravana could be won on the strength and power of the Name. It is, therefore, enough if you chant Rama’s name. Then you will be victorious in all your endeavours. Like the name of Rama, the names Krishna, Siva, Hari, and Hara also consist of two letters.

Make any name of God the basis of your life, and you can achieve everything. Name is eternal but form is ephemeral; the form has old age and death. Therefore, it is the Name that is most important. This is what Rama taught mankind. Therefore, chant the name of God constantly. Other spiritual practices like charity, rituals, worship, etc. are of little use if you do not chant the divine Name. The *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been practising nine modes of worship of God, namely: listening, singing, contemplating on Vishnu, serving His lotus feet, salutation, worship, servitude, friendship, and self-surrender.

The last and highest step in these modes of worship is self-surrender. Surrender does not mean offering your body to God. Real surrender is the chanting of the divine Name and making it the basis of your life. It is for the same reason that Guru Nanak, the first guru of the Sikhs, started community singing. He told his followers that they should seek fulfilment in life by chanting the divine Name. Therefore, all Sikhs give highest priority to

chanting of the divine Name in their life. In the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the holy place of the Sikhs, the divine Name is chanted constantly. Therefore, consider the chanting of the Name of God as the most important spiritual practice.

You may spend any amount of money in charity and in doing acts of service, but these practices will give you only temporary mental satisfaction if not associated with chanting the divine Name.

You see how people give useless advertisements in newspapers with the desire to earn money. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows. Therefore, develop morality. This gives you purity of mind.

You recite the name of God one hundred thousand times and wait for the fruit of this spiritual practice. But this turns out to be a futile wait; you never get the expected result because you perform that as a mere ritual. What you get is temporary satisfaction.

Many rich people spend any amount of money in the performance of rituals and sacrifices, but when a beggar comes to their door for alms, they withdraw their hand. This is not correct. God cannot be attained by money. It is God who has given you all your money. Then why do you give it back to Him? Utilise your money on your worldly and spiritual pursuits. Also, use it to help poor people. However, you can attain Me only through remembrance of the name of God (*namasmarana*). Therefore, chant the divine Name and attain the Divine. It is only by chanting the divine Name that you can easily attain God.

When Droupadi was being humiliated in the Kaurava court, she prayed to Krishna to protect her and called out His many names, like *Dwarakavasi*, *Brindavana Sanchari* (dweller of Dwaraka, rambler of Brindavan), etc. Krishna did not come. Then she called out describing His attributes like *dayamaya*, *kripamaya* (embodiment of kindness, embodiment of compassion), etc. Still Krishna did not come to her rescue. But when she addressed Him as *Hridayavasi* (in dweller in her heart), He manifested before her that very moment. Where does God live? He lives in your heart. Therefore, there is no use calling Him with the feeling that He dwells somewhere outside.

### **The form is perishable but the name is eternal**

It is possible for you to acquire any number of worldly and material things, but you are not able to attain God, who is right within you. See God, who is immanent in you. Look inside, don't look outside. Close your eyes and pray to God, who dwells in you. Then only will God manifest before you and grant you everything. It is only by chanting the divine Name that you can receive God's grace and His direct vision.

*Nagar sankirtan* (walking the streets in a group, singing devotional songs) has been devised to spread chanting of the divine Name (*namasmarana*) among people more and more. While chanting the name of God in *nagar sankirtan*, do not extol the attributes of God. There is no use extolling the attributes of God any number of times. God is the embodiment of the *Atma*. The *Atma* is attributeless.

Names such as Krishna, Rama, Sai Baba, etc. are names of the bodies of *Avatars*. The *Avatars* were not born with these names. Names were given to them by others. It is the body that has birth, not the *Atma*. Death can come to the body at any time. When you ask God His name, He will reply, "I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*).” He will not say, "I am this or that form.” "I (*Aham*)” has no particular form; it connotes the *Atma*. We give many names to the *Atma* and seek satisfaction by calling out these names. Not only that, we clamour so much for this temporary satisfaction. This satisfaction is not permanent; it is ephemeral and lasts only for a short time. Only the *Atma* is ever true, everlasting, and eternal.

Rama incarnated thousands of years ago, but His Name lives even today. Even now, when we are faced with any difficulty, we say, “Oh Rama!” It is the Name that is eternal and not the form. Therefore, contemplate on the name of God, have His direct realisation, install Him in your heart, and merge with Him.

When there is an earthquake, thousands of houses are destroyed. Many rivers like Cauveri, Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswathi flow in India, and when the rivers are in flood, several villages are washed away and many lives are lost. Hence, forms are not permanent; forms are ephemeral and perishable. But the formless Ganga and Yamuna are flowing within you in the form of *Soham* (I am God). ‘*So*’ in the right nerve channel and ‘*Hum*’ in the left, both joining the central nerve channel (*sushumna*). By activating this subtle channel *sushumna*, you should reach your spiritual heart.

Many of you know that when people go to a temple, they close their eyes and offer their salutations to the idol of the deity installed there. Don’t you go there to have the *darshan* (sight of a holy person) of the deity? Then why do you close your eyes on reaching there? You do not look at the idol of the deity in the temple while you chant ‘Rama, Rama, Rama’ within you. Similarly, when you go to Tirupati, you stand before the idol and chant ‘Venkateswara, Venkateswara, Venkateswara’. You pay a fee to enter the temple and have *darshan* of the deity. In spite of that, you close your eyes when you are in front of the idol. Develop this inner vision if you want to have the grace of God.

### **Perform all actions to please God**

Do you know why has God given you eyes? Not to see anything and everything but to see the Lord of Kailasa (Siva’s mountain abode). Why has God given you hands? Has God given you hands only to take food into your mouth? No, no. God has given you hands to serve mankind. Similarly, God has given you tongue to chant the name of God. Do you know why has God given you feet? Not to roam about in all the countries of the world, but to go round the temple of God. That is how you should sanctify the organs of the body given to you by God.

You say, you do selfless service (*seva*). But do you know the meaning of the term? Is it to massage the feet of somebody with your hands? No, no. When you serve anyone, develop the feeling “I am serving Rama,” “I am serving Krishna,” “I am serving my deity.” Develop such feelings in your heart more and more. Whatever you eat, whatever you do, everything should be done with the feeling of offering it to God. Perform all tasks to please God. Whatever work you do, consider it the work of God. When you develop this feeling with total dedication, then God will manifest before you.

Fill your mind with the name of God. If you fill your mind with the name of God, you will experience immense bliss. Devotional songs have been devised to fill your mind with divine Name. “*Hari bhajan bina sukha santi nahin ...*” (There can be no happiness and peace without chanting the name of God). It is enough if you adhere to the divine Name. Then you do not need to offer any other material like flowers, food, etc. to God. God does not need your flowers, which if you offer in the morning will dry up in the evening. You offer food to God.

You place it before the deity and then eat it yourself! Why do you do this drama of offering food to God? Instead, offer your love to God. That is the food of God. It is love that is most important. Love has no form. Truth, right conduct, peace, love, and nonviolence are the gifts of God to man. Truth has no form. The name *Sathy*a (Truth) has been given to this body, but Truth is formless. Truth is eternal. It does not undergo any change in the three periods of time — past, present, and future. “There is no right conduct (*dharma*) greater than adherence to

truth (*Sathyannasti paro dharma*).” Right conduct originates from truth only. Where there is truth, there is right conduct.

Where there is no truth, right conduct (*dharma*) also does not abide there. When there is truth in your heart, you would be endowed with right conduct. When you have truth and right conduct, peace will descend on you and you will experience supreme peace. You say, you try to attain peace and pray for it. Where is peace available? Is it available in a shop or in a marketplace? No, no. It has to come to you from you only. It is, in fact, present in you. When you have peace, love will shine in you. The evil qualities of anger, hatred, jealousy, hypocrisy, and ostentation cannot even come near a person who is endowed with love.

### **Speak truth under all circumstances**

Love has no form of its own. Whatever you desire, you start loving it. Have love and give love to all. Do not hate anyone. Where jealousy and hatred are not there, conflicts cannot exist.

The students sing the song: “Perform the journey of your life with truth, righteousness, peace, and love as your companions (*Sathya dharmamu, santhi, premalato nee nitya jivana yatra saginchu*).” Therefore, first and foremost, develop truth. Speak truth under all circumstances. Do not tell a lie to escape from blame. You can escape from blame temporarily by telling a lie, but your heart will be devoid of peace forever. When you do not have truth, how can you get righteousness? Therefore, first of all protect truth. Truth is God. There are no two truths; truth is only one. God is truth. Therefore, always protect truth. Whatever you do, tell it truthfully.

If you give room to evil qualities like anger, hypocrisy, jealousy, etc., you are bound to ruin yourself. When your heart is bereft of truth, you cannot do anything good. When you truthfully tell someone, “I bought this article for three rupees and will give you for five rupees,” you earn a profit of two rupees. But if you demand ten rupees for the same article by telling a lie just to earn more profit, you will be inviting many more untruths. This is the main reason that people today have become victims of so many miseries. Do not tell lies. Do not burden yourself with the load of sins by telling lies. Do not tell lies to earn more profit. You will have to undergo so much suffering due to this. Lead your life with love. Whomsoever you address, speak to them with love. When you thus lead your life with love, you will attain everything.

### **Embodiments of Love!**

There is love in everyone of you, but you do not make proper use of it. Rather, you put your love to misuse. How far can a people go if they walk on their head instead of their feet? God has given you feet for walking. Similarly, God has given you tongue to speak truth. Speaking untruth is like walking on your head. How long can you go like that? God has given you head to make proper use of it and think: “What is good and what is bad? What is truth and what is untruth?” While saying or doing anything, first think whether what you are saying is true or untrue and what you are doing is right or wrong. After due consideration, take only to the path of truth. Conduct yourself in accordance with God’s command. Speak only that which is truthful.

Truth is another name of God. Constantly chant the name of God.

There is no use spending money aimlessly on rituals and worship. Instead, give food to the hungry and clothes to the needy. Do as much as you can, but never do anything by forsaking the name of God. If you give alms to a beggar, chant the name of Rama while giving alms. Chant silently in your mind; there is no need to

chant loudly. Mind is the foundation of your life. “Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation (*Manah eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayo*).” Whatever your mind may forget, it should not forget the name of God.

### **Give up all demonic qualities**

It is by the power of His name that Rama crossed the ocean and reached Lanka. Hence, we should cross the ocean of our difficulties and troubles by using the power of the divine name. Only the Name is enough to root out all our anxieties, troubles, sorrows, miseries, worries, and maladies.

Lust, anger, jealousy, envy, and hypocrisy were the qualities of the demons who lived in Lanka. Do not give room to these demonic qualities in your heart. If you allow the demon of anger to abide in you, that itself is enough to turn everything bad in your life. No work of an angry person becomes fruitful. Anger distances even your relatives and friends from you. Therefore, do not allow anger to come near you. Lead your life constantly chanting within you the name of God, who is the embodiment of peace and love.

When all individuals develop peace in them, the entire country will become good and peaceful. Those who aspire for the welfare of the country should live always in love. Lead your life without causing any harm to anybody. We sing this prayer after the conclusion of *bhajans*: “*Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu* (may all the people of the world be happy)!” Remember God with love. The entire world will be good by the power of love. Devotees should never do away with love. Even if others criticise, abuse, or beat you, lead your life with love. Live in love. Love lives by giving and forgiving, self lives by getting and forgetting (loud applause). Fill your life with love. Even if someone beats you, do not abuse him. Think that it is God only who has punished you like this.

Everything happens according to what God wills. It is God who gives you troubles and joys; it is He who protects you and punishes you in many ways. Everything is God. Therefore, offer everything to Him. Whatever you get in your life, consider it the gift of God. Do all actions to please God. When you think like this, you will attain great blessedness. If He could make boulders float on water, can He not make your mind float in the ocean that is this world (*samsara*)? Cross this ocean by converting the mind into a bridge. Use it to cross this vast ocean and kill the demons of lust and anger.

To cross this ocean, you must do *bhajan* and sing the glories of God. *Bhajan* is very necessary to realise the glory of the divine name. When so many people do *bhajan* together, the prayer from the heart of at least one or two will reach God. Won't even one person among so many have a sacred heart? Hence, there is a great possibility of your melting the heart of God by community singing. *Bhajan* is very necessary to melt the heart of God. When you do *nagar sankirtan* (walking the streets in a group, singing *bhajans*) early in the morning, everybody will get up and listen to the divine Name. Hearing the name of God as soon as they wake up will fill them with great bliss and enthusiasm. Therefore, constantly remember the name of God; never forget it. This is the most noble path. This is true spiritual practice. When you do this, you will be immensely blessed.

Brindavan, 2008-05-24

**P**eople talk about Swami's *vibhuthi* (sacred ash) and Swami's miracles, but the real miracle is Swami's boundless love. It is this love that is inspiring countless devotees to engage themselves in selfless service.

**Sathya Sai Baba**

**S**tudents must have a challenging attitude toward things; they must honour physical labour. They should be eager to be of service to those who need it on account of their disabilities. Honour also your elders and do not miss any chance of serving, honouring, or pleasing them.

**W**hatever gives you health and joy, welcome it, but do not lower yourself by indulging in vulgar pastimes. Do not wander aimlessly in the streets or frequent cinema halls, mix with undesirable company, or cultivate bad habits just for sake of fun.

**T**his country has to be raised to great heights through you, not through its present leaders, remember ... You boys must say to yourselves, "... We shall not belie our words in our actions. We will act together in harmony and love." If you develop such virtues, the nation will prosper; if not, it will be ruined. Have this warning always ringing in your ears.

**Sathya Sai Baba**