

Akhanda Bhajan —Unbroken Namasmarana is the Goal

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Akhanda bhajan
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One has to understand what is meant by “*akhanda bhajan*”. There are two kinds of *bhajans*. One is *khanda bhajan* and the other is *akhanda bhajan*. *Khanda bhajan* is for a specific time, for example, the *bhajans* held for a limited period either in the morning or evening. On the other hand, *akhanda bhajan* involves constant contemplation on God in the morning, evening, and even during the night. It is constant contemplation on God during all three states: the waking, dream, and deep-sleep states. It is “*sarvada sarvakaleshu sarvathra harichintanam*”.

Suppose you are watching a clock. There are three hands in the clock: the second hand, the minute hand, and the hour hand. The second hand is the longest, the minute hand is slightly shorter, and the hour hand is the shortest of the three. When the second hand crosses sixty spaces, the minute hand moves forward one space. When the minute hand crosses sixty spaces, the hour hand moves forward one space.

Which one of these three hands is important? Undoubtedly, the hour hand is important. On the same analogy, doing *namasmarana* and *bhajan* only in the morning and evening is like the second hand. The divine Name is highly potent. Each one of the several names of God has one type of power specific to it. If you wish to make good use of this power and derive lasting benefit out of it, you have to participate in *akhanda bhajan*.

Once, sage Narada approached Lord Vishnu and prayed, “Oh Lord! People speak very

highly about the efficacy of *Ramanama* (repeating Rama’s name) Will you kindly explain?”

Lord Vishnu wished to demonstrate the efficacy of *Ramanama* by an illustration. He therefore advised Narada, “Oh Narada, go to a crow and utter the word 'Rama'. Let the crow repeat the name.”

Narada went to a crow and said, “Oh crow, Your entire body is black, without a trace of whiteness. Hence, chant the *Ramanama* just once.”

The crow uttered “Rama”, and immediately it fell down dead. Narada was sad that the crow died just by its chanting the *Ramanama* once.

He went to Lord Vishnu and informed Him of the crow's death. Lord Vishnu told him, “Don't worry. This time, go to the beautiful peacock that was just born and ask it to chant *Ramanama* once.”

As per the instructions of Lord Vishnu, Narada went to the newly born peacock and said, “Oh peacock, your beauty and grace are enchanting to the entire world. You are very lovable and attractive. Please utter the word 'Rama' just once.”

The moment the peacock uttered “Rama”, it also fell down dead.

Narada again went to Lord Vishnu and reported the death of the peacock after chanting *Ramanama* just one time. Lord Vishnu again advised Narada, “Narada, a cow in the shed nearby just gave birth to a calf. Please go to

that new-born calf and ask her to chant *Ramanama* once.”

Narada did accordingly. As soon as the new-born calf heard the word “Rama”, it also dropped down dead.

When Narada informed Lord Vishnu, Lord Vishnu again instructed him, “Narada, this time, go to the King's palace, where a baby boy was just born. Ask him to chant the *Ramanama* once.”

Narada was very much afraid to approach the newly born prince, since the crow, peacock, and calf had died just by listening to the word “Rama” once. He pleaded with Lord Vishnu to spare his life, since the King would put him to death if something happened to the new-born baby by chanting *Ramanama*. But Lord Vishnu insisted that Narada obey His command.

Narada went to the palace and asked the newly born prince to chant *Ramanama* once. The prince saluted sage Narada and informed him that by the mere chanting of *Ramanama* just once, he was transformed from a crow to peacock, from a peacock to a calf, and from a calf to a human being as a Prince. He expressed his gratitude to sage Narada for initiating him in *Ramanama*.

Thus, *Nama* confers a human birth, which is considered to be a rare gift.

The human being is an embodiment of Divinity. Look at any picture of God. All forms of God are portrayed with a human face. That is why it is said “*Daivam manusha rupena* (God assumes human form).”

It is only the divine name that confers human birth on a being. It is evident from the illustration narrated above that the birds and animals were able to get a human birth by listening to the holy name just once. Unfortunately, no transformation is taking place in humans, in spite of repeating the divine name several times.

You should chant the divine name wholeheartedly, with full faith. Faith develops love toward God, and that love toward God confers human birth. No doubt, people today are repeating the holy name, but not with love and steady faith. They are more concerned with how others are singing and whether their *sruthi* and *raga* are in order, etc. They are doing *namasankirtana* with a wavering mind. There can be no transformation by such fickle minded *namasankirtana*, in spite of doing it for hours together.

Namasankirtan has to be done with absolute concentration and steady faith like a yogi. It is said “*Sathatham yoginah*.” One can achieve great transformation if the mind is steadily fixed on the divine name.

When a lead singer is singing a particular *bhajan*, other singers think of the next song that they are going to sing. Thus, their attention is distracted, with the result that they remain only as ordinary human beings. The devotional singing of *bhajans* will have no effect on them; it cannot transport them to a higher realm of Divinity.

No doubt, contemplation on God will sanctify a person to a certain extent. But in order to attain purity, it is not enough if chanting of the divine name is confined to a limited period. It has to be a continuous spiritual exercise throughout one's life. Only then will the divine name get imprinted on one's heart.

You may attend to your daily routine. But, while attending to your duties in your own house or in the outside world, constantly remind yourself that “whatever I do, think, or speak, everything belongs to God.” The proper attitude should be, *sarva karma Bhagavath preethyartham*.

Take, for example, the process of cooking. You add different ingredients to the items being cooked, in definite proportions, and you try to make them tasty. But the real taste comes only when the job of cooking is done

as an offering to God. The food becomes divine when it is offered to God. On the other hand, if the various items are cooked with the attitude, "I am doing this job as a routine; I am cooking these items for my family members to partake," it does not reach God.

Hence, whatever you undertake, do it as an offering to God chanting the name "Ram, Ram, Ram." Even while you are walking, think that it is God who is making you walk, since Divinity is present in a subtle form in every atom and cell in this universe.

Unable to recognize this truth, people think, "I came by foot, I walked many miles," etc. Such work comes under the physical realm, not the spiritual realm. Hence, whatever you think, speak, or do, consider it as God's command, God's work. With such an attitude it is enough if you chant the divine name "Rama" just two times — morning and evening. Not only the name "Rama"; take any name for chanting. Chant any divine name wholeheartedly, at least once. That would be alright.

There is no use counting seconds and minutes while doing *namasankirtan*, thinking, "I have done *namasankirtan*, for so many seconds, so many minutes." It is enough if you chant the divine name just once, wholeheartedly. That is like the hour hand in a clock, which carries certain value.

Such heartfelt singing has become rare today. Some people participating in bhajan, say, "Today I am not well. I have a sore throat due to cough and cold. I am not able to sing."

True, you may be suffering from cold and cough. But you can sing within yourself, surely. Do it. That will give you sufficient strength. The divine name is very sacred. If you repeat it just once, even the dead will come back to life. Savithri lost her husband. But, by her soulful prayers, she could bring back her husband to life.

Those who could bring back the dead to life are to be found only in the country of Bharath

and nowhere else. Though divine power is spread everywhere and is omnipresent, it manifests in a high degree only in Bharath.

Those who are pure in their heart will always succeed. Whatever work you undertake, do it conscientiously. Develop purity of mind. If you undertake the work with that purity of mind and then pray to God, surely you will achieve the result.

Meera did the same thing. She prayed to the Lord, "Swami, I delved deep into the ocean and could get the pearl of your divine name. Let not this valuable pearl slip from my hand and drop back into the ocean. Having been born in this world, let me sing the glory of the divine name constantly and make my life sanctified."

The *Gita* says, "*Mamaivamso jeevaloke jeevabhutassanatanah* (You are all part of My Divinity)." Hence, you all should follow Me. My love is divine and sacred. So shall be your love. If you follow this principle, you will automatically achieve purity. Where there is purity, there Divinity is.

Everything is reflection, reaction, and re-sound.

Since ancient times, you all are My own *amsa* (part). Do not ever forget this truth. If only you develop faith in this Truth, it amounts to reading the entire *Bhagavad Gita*.

Every human being follows *dharma*. From where did this *dharma* come? It has come from *bhava* (feeling), which in turn emanated from *viswasa* (faith). It is only when *viswasa* is there, *dharma* is born. That faith is truth. *Dharma* is verily the embodiment of divinity.

"Truth is God; Faith is God; Love is God; Live in Love." If only you cultivate these three, you can achieve anything. You may encounter any number of losses and difficulties in life. You may undergo a lot of suffering. But never give up truth, faith and love.

Loss, suffering, and difficulties are like the waves in the ocean of life. They just come and go. But the water in the ocean remains permanently. Hence, develop the faith of "water", i.e. Divinity.

Your thoughts are like the passing clouds. Hence, keep your faith firmly fixed on God. If you develop love and faith toward God, there is nothing in the world that you cannot achieve. By faith and love, you can even change the earth into sky and the sky into earth.

The power of the divine name is unparalleled. People often take it lightly. That is a mistake. One should not mistake a shining glass piece to be a diamond. The real diamond is altogether different. What is that diamond? "Die mind."

God's name is the real diamond. Keep it safe and secure. Do not ever be bothered by pain and suffering, losses and difficulties. They just come and go. That is not your real nature. Your innate Self is strong, eternal, and real (*sat*). Do not follow the fleeting and unreal waves, forsaking your own true and eternal nature.

Unfortunately, today, people are following only the unreal and passing waves. If you hold on to such fleeting and unreal things, you will always be deceived. Once you seek refuge in the lotus feet of God, you should never give up. Wherever you go, the divine feet will protect you. If you install the divine name firmly in your heart, your life will become sanctified. That is *bhakti* (devotion). That is your *sakthi* (power). That is *mukthi* (liberation). It is only for making people realise this truth that the *sadhana* (spiritual exercises) of *akhanda bhajan* (continuous devotional singing) has been prescribed for devotees at least once in a year.

The word "*akhanda*" implies chanting the divine name non-stop for 24 hours. But people will be just coming and going while the

akhanda bhajan is going on. Such a *bhajan* can be termed only as *khanda bhajan*. It is a piecemeal *bhajan*. It is difficult to maintain continuity of the divine vibrations in such a *bhajan*.

You should ensure that there is no gap in between. During *akhanda bhajan* you may go home for any purpose, for example, to take food. But, you continue to do *namasmarana* while attending to any work in your house.

God does not wish that you should not attend to your personal and domestic chores. You may attend to all your needs, but constantly remember God while doing so. That is the essence of Lord Krishna's message in the *Gita*, "*Maamanusmara Yuddhyacha* (keep Me ever in your mind and fight till the end)." In other words, He advised Arjuna that he must engage himself in the war, constantly remembering Him. War in this context does not imply merely killing one another by shooting arrows or with missiles. That is not a sign of greatness. There you discharge your duty in the battlefield. If you do so, those who are destined to die will die.

Always attend to your duties with a pleasant and smiling face. What is required is a smiling face. There is no use putting on a "castor oil face". "Happiness is union with God." That is real Divinity.

When you are confronted with some difficult situations, do not get upset, constantly worrying, "Oh! How do I cross this situation?" For example, young people are often confronted with a "marriage worry". Such worry will only worsen the situation. Repose your faith in God. Think that it is not marriage, but "my raise", i.e. an opportunity for your betterment. If you develop such an attitude, your life will be sanctified.

Whoever does *namasmarana*, whatever be the name they take and wherever they are, their life will be sanctified. They will be free from sin. Do not be too much concerned with *raga*

and *thala* (tune and rhythm). There is only one raga, that is *hridayaraga* (the *raga* arising out of one's own heart). That is “*So-ham*”, “*So-ham*”. Let your life be tuned to this *raga* of “*Soham*”. Then, whatever activity you undertake, it will become a success.

You are most fortunate to participate in this *akhanda bhajan*. During normal days, *bhajans* are held in this hall both in the morning and in the evening. This is a great opportunity. Do not lose the opportunity of participating in the *bhajan*. If you make good use of it, your life will be sanctified. The global *akhanda bhajan* is held only for this purpose every year.

—From Bhagawan's Discourse in Bhajan Mandir, Prasanthi Nilayam, 13 November 2007.