

Nine Point Code of Conduct (2) : Devotional Group Singing / Prayers with members of family once a week

1 What is Devotion?

Swami has said, “Devotion is the expression of Love. The emotion which is called love emanates from the Atman. Love is synonym with Atman.” Swami elaborates, “This is the highest form of love. It means the constant loving contemplation of God, repetition of His name, worshipping Him, and doing penance for Him. Service to the Lord is the highest expression of devotion.”

Swami has further said, “Now, what is Bhakthi (devotion)? Who are Bhaktas? It is faith, steadiness, virtue, fearlessness, surrender, absence of egoism. Puja done however elaborately and pompously is sheer waste of time and energy with out cultivating the above traits. Why pluck flowers and hasten their death? Some of you go round this temple and satisfy yourselves that you have done so many pradakshinas (circum-ambulation), but, they can be called so, only when your mind circles this place along with your feet.”

2 Is my Love for family is also devotion?

No. It cannot be because it always includes **attachment**.

3 How do we increase Devotion?

Swami has pointed out, “Devotion increases only by spiritual Sadhana.” Swami has given a recipe as “Have a **time-table** for spiritual sustenance, just as you have now for physical sustenance. A breakfast of pious repetition of Lord’s name (Japa) and meditation (dhyanna), a lunch hour ritual worship of the Lord (Puja), ‘tea and snacks’ of reading scriptures or sacred books (pravachana) in the afternoon and a light dinner of devotional music (bhajans) in the early hours of the night. If you follow this discipline, you can sleep soundly and wake up refreshed.”

4 Can we measure devotion (Bhakthi)?

Bhakthi is not to be measured on the basis of the institutions one has started or helped, the temples that one has built or renovated, the donations one has given away; nor does it depend on the number of times one has written the Name of the Lord or on the time and energy one has spent in the worship of the Lord. These are not vital at all; no, not even secondary. Bhakthi is Prema (Love), unsullied by **any tinge of desire for the benefit that flows from it or the fruit of consequence of that Love.**

5 What is Devotional singing?

Singing the glory of God with Love for God is Devotional Singing. Swami has said, “Devotional singing (bhajan) is a spiritual practice (Sadhana) for all who share in it.” “Devotional singing (bhajan) is the process of singing that originates in the heart, not from the lips or the 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

Nine Point Code of Conduct (2) : Devotional Group Singing / Prayers with members of family once a week

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.”

6 What are the benefits of Devotional singing?

Benefits of devotional singing are many folds. Swami has said, “Devotional singing (bhajan) is one of the processes by which you can train the mind to expand into eternal values. Teach the mind to revel in the glory and majesty of God; wean it away from petty horizons of pleasure. Devotional singing induces in you a desire for experiencing the truth, to glimpse the beauty that is God, to taste the bliss that is the Self. It encourages man to dive into himself and be genuinely his real self.”

Swami has further said, “It encourages man to dive into himself and be genuinely his Real Self. Once that search is desired, the path is easy. One has only to be reminded that he is divine. The malady is; it is being thrust out of recognition. Man has come for a great destiny, on a sacred mission, endowed with special skills and tendencies to help him on; but, he fritters these precious gifts and crawls on earth from birth to death, worse than animal. Exercises like bhajan elevate the mind and exhort the individual to seek and find the source of eternal joy that lies within him.”

Swami emphasises - “Remember, every song sung in praise of the Lord is a sword that cuts the knots of laziness. It is a fine piece of social service to remind all of their duty to the Almighty, who watches over them.”

7 From what age one should start singing devotional singing (bhajans)?

Swami says, “The procession to the cremation ground starts immediately on birth and the beating of the heart is the drum beat or the march towards that place. Some take a longer route, some reach quickly, but all are on the way. Therefore, bhajans has to start in childhood and has to continue. It must be the constant companion of man, his solace and strength. Do not postpone it to old age for it is essential food for the mind.”

8 What is Devotional Group Singing and the reason to do that?

The group singing of devotional songs (bhajans) is called Devotional Group Singing. Swami advises, “Sing aloud the glory of God and charge the atmosphere with divine adoration. That is why I insist on group singing of the names of the Lord.”

Swami points out, “Realise that there is nothing greater than bhajan. What bliss is there in bhajans! What a demonstration of oneness is it when a myriad throats join in uttering the name of God! The vibrations emanating from them make the heart vibrant. If you sing alone in your shrine, the vibrations return to you as a reaction. But in community singing, what you have is not a reaction but a wave of vibrations. They enter into the atmosphere and purify the polluted air. The atmosphere today is polluted by bad thoughts and feelings. When you sing the glory of God, the bad germs in the air are destroyed and the air gets purified by a treatment of antibiotics, as it were.”

Nine Point Code of Conduct (2) : Devotional Group Singing / Prayers with members of family once a week

Swami has further said, “*Group singing is very good. If only individual sings, it is no good. You get joy when you sing and clap together with similar devotional feelings in your hearts. Singing in harmony gives pleasure to the ears. All students should attain divinity by chanting the glories of God and singing bhajans. Whatever you think you become that. Put your heart and soul into chanting the name with love.*”

9 In what language we should sing?

In fact, that really does not matter in which language you sing, as long you sing from heart and your mind is on god. That's it. Swami says, “*When asked if singing bhajans in English would spoil the sound vibrations: 'No, the vibrations come from the heart'*”

10 Why do Devotional group singing/prayer with members of the family?

A human being is born into a family and assimilates the elements of the family environment as he or she grows up. Because one's early environment has such an enormous impact on every child's development. The family must lay the foundation for social reformation and for spiritual enlightenment. Without a solid family institution, the means and resources to grow wither in the external or spiritual worlds cannot come together. When all members of the family have one objective and work together with full cooperation, they reach their goal with fewer distractions and impediments. Such an ideal family is a perfect training centre where every member learns the art of living happy life. However, there cannot be such an ideal family unless people devote part of their time to spiritual practices.”

There is a saying, “If you pray together you stay together.” Just for a moment think, what does this concludes to? May be when the family members sit together and have a prayer and a meal they might also talk to each other and get to know each other better, solve each others problems. Probably understand each others problems at that point of time. Perhaps, in today's life style, which is very fast, everybody is so busy, that even they do not have time to talk to each other. May be this is the way to be together at least once a day for a while.

Devotional group singing and/or praying with the members of the family has some different effect. Let us analyse them by an example. Tune two radio sets to different frequencies, i.e., listen to two different radio programs at the same time. What you will hear? There will be overlapping of voice, and probably, you will not enjoy either of them. Now tune both radio sets to the same frequency, i.e., listen to the same program at the same time. Do you hear two separate voices coming out of two different radio sets? No, even you will not hear an iota of difference. Even you will not know that two different radio sets are switched on at the same time, as you will only hear one voice. Similarly when two people are singing together initially both will be singing in different frequency, so two different voices will be heard. But to make the song more melodious, they will attempt to sing at the same frequency or as close as possible and apparently the song will be melodious. So what does this mean?

Two people are trying to be tuned to the same frequency of devotion. Because when one sings the glory of Rama then at the same time one must try to bring Rama's qualities onto oneself. The singing together will bring two people in harmony with

Nine Point Code of Conduct (2) : Devotional Group Singing / Prayers with members of family once a week

each other. That's why the musical instrument is called Harmonium, as it is supposed to be played in Harmony with the voice. By singing devotional song together, the group will be attempting to be in harmony with each other in the long run the family harmony will gradually build up and be there permanently. As a result gradually the entire family will start having harmony in thoughts too; when the family has harmony in thoughts so the harmony in action will follow later.

Swami has said, *“When all the participants in a bhajan sing in unison, what sacred vibrations are produced and what Divine energies are released! When these vibrations are produced and what Divine energies are released! When these vibrations fill the world, what changes cannot they bring about! When one sings alone, the heart is merged in the song. But when many sing together, it acquires a Divine power.”*

11 How this harmonises thoughts?

There are three aspects of harmony.

- a) Individual
- b) Universal
- c) Eternal

Firstly one should harmonize himself, that is, establish harmony in thoughts, words and deeds. Even before that, he must purify his thoughts by contemplating on God by means of Japa, meditation, prayer and singing Bhajans. If the thoughts are purified then words and deeds would follow. The whole individual would be purified. Swami says, *“Where there is dharma and righteousness in the heart, there will be promoted good qualities. Where there are good qualities, you will find harmony and where there is harmony, there will be order. If you find order and discipline, you will peace in the world. Therefore peace depends on the quality of the individual.”*

When the individual is purified then the same purification exercise can be taken for the group or community, say by additional group/community singing, known as Sankeertanam. Swami has said, *“Samyak-keerthanam Sankeerthanam” (Congregational singing of bhajans) is the best way of singing 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. Sankeerthanam aims at demonstrating unity in diversity. When all the participants combine to sing in unison with one voice, it is described as Sankeerthana.”*

Once the entire group/community gets purified and starts going towards God as the ultimate goal of life, then they start living in God not for a day or two but always. They recognise the indweller and start becoming one with Him and ultimately become one with HIM. Then there are no two individuals, there is only one and that is GOD. They will not feel themselves different from GOD at any time.

Nine Point Code of Conduct (2) : Devotional Group Singing / Prayers with members of family once a week

Swami has said, *“You are not the body, a bundle of flesh, blood and bones. Neither are you the unmanifested desire, nor the manifested mind. You are also not the infatuating delusion that thwarts your liberation. But you are the Eternal Paramatman, if only you recognise your innate power. The body, the senses, the mind and the intellect are only the vestures put on by man. Only when we understand the nature and significance of these adjuncts, can we make proper use of them.”*

12 Why once a week?

It is the least - Just to have a regular and disciplined way to enhance the family togetherness. But you can – if all are willing - do this more than once a week.

13 Why does it start from home?

Where there is harmony in the home,
There will be order in the nation,
When there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world.

So home is the starting point for bringing the family together and keeping them together. Prayer and devotional singing is the best way to achieve this unity which will overflow into the community and when communities achieves this, will overflow into the nation to create a united nation.

- 14 Family is the starting point for love, peace, harmony and joy.
“Wherever my devotee sings my name, I am present there” – Baba.
Hence devotional singing is a good way of bringing Swami in to one’s life