

Selfless



Bhajan

Selfless Bhajan

A collection of 108 Sai quotations

First edition 5 September 2004

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Foreword

Not only is Bhajan or devotional singing a very important part of Swami's teachings, it is the finishing touch that He gives to every single Discourse of His, the grand finale, the great climax.

It is widely recognised that bhajan or devotional singing is the very breath of life that keeps our Sai Centres in Australia strong and healthy and united. It is the single most important activity of Sai Centres and Groups, and is the main attraction for devotees to return week after week in large numbers.

It is necessary therefore that the way we participate in bhajans reflects the Sathya Sai way of doing bhajans. Enlightened or educated participation in the bhajan programs of the Sai Organisation is highly desirable. The physical, mental and spiritual principles of bhajan are to be found in Swami's many Divine Discourses.

This publication is a handy and comprehensive guide. It is a careful collection of His sayings, almost half of which are quite recent, dated 1994 or later. It provides answers to the questions of "what, why, when and how". The quotations are arranged in chronological order with brief captions.

When we join a bhajan gathering, we should do so without demands or expectations of any kind for our selves. Not only should we practice humility and sacrifice, we should posit no distance between God and ourselves. We should worship God as our very self.

This publication is entitled SELFLESS BHAJAN because of the selfless spirit in which we should undertake bhajan. Seeking nothing in return for attendance, it becomes Selfless Seva of the highest kind because we generate and broadcast sacred vibrations that bless the whole world, not only by cleansing the atmosphere and environment, not only by sanctifying rainclouds and crops, but by purifying the very hearts and minds of mankind at large. Such is the power of Selfless Bhajan that all the fiscal and military might of the world's governments pale in comparison.

The sayings were originally compiled by our National Convenor for weekly Akhanda Bhajans for distribution to Sydney participants as 'prasadam' (a consecrated blessing or gift); subsequently our Joint National Coordinator of the Spiritual Wing has published it in this attractive format for release on 5 September 2004 at the Second Anniversary Celebrations of *Sydney's Weekly Akhanda Bhajan*.

We commend the study of this booklet to all the office bearers and to all those interested in doing bhajan the Sathya Sai way.

T Sri Ramanathan
Immediate Past Central Coordinator
Sathya Sai Organisation of Australia & Papua New Guinea
8 August 2004



God's Grace will flow to them

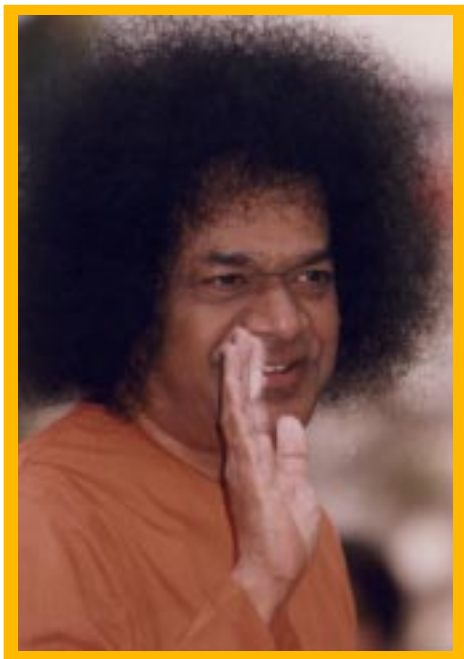
“...If Bhajan is sung in a sweet voice, people will be drawn towards the Lord. Gradually, it will develop into Love for God, and his Grace will follow in due course...”

- *Prasanthi Vahini*, page 12

Practice at least one word

“...Having received many sacred teachings, you should practise at least one of them. You perform worship and sing Bhajans with devotion. It is enough if you practise and experience at least one word of the Bhajans you sing. For example, you extol God as ‘Premaswarupa’ (embodiment of love). Accordingly, you should develop love and share it with others. Only then can you understand and experience divinity...” -

6 May 2003



The essence of all Sadhana

“...When you chant the Divine Name with love at least once, you will experience inexplicable and overwhelming bliss in your heart. Divine Name melts even a stone-hearted person. Even ice takes some time to melt, but God’s heart melts instantaneously when you chant His Name with love. Even while you are traveling, you can chant His Name silently without attracting others’ attention. There is no greater sadhana than this. The essence of all sadhanas is contained in this. In the Kali Yuga, chanting of God’s Name is the royal path to liberation...” - 14 April 2003

Only through love

“...The Name and principle of Rama will give you tremendous strength and power. The divine principle underlying the Avatars of Rama and Krishna can neither be explained in words nor understood with the help of worldly education. It is only through love one can understand them. Fill your heart with love and chant the Name of Rama forgetting yourself in bliss. Then Rama will certainly give you His divine Darshan...” - 14 April 2003

Clap to maintain rhythm

“...When you sing Bhajans, maintain the proper rhythm by clapping your hands, according to the Bhajan. Bhajan should be sung with proper tune and wholeheartedly. Today there are many singers who, while singing Thyagaraja Kritis, play Tala on their lap. They should join both hands and clap. The five fingers of one hand symbolise Karmendriyas (senses of action) and that of other hand stand for Jnanendriyas (senses of perception). When you sing the glory of God, there should be harmony between these two. All should sing the divine glory in unison...” - 2 April 2003

Your heart gets purified

“...You do bhajans and think that you are doing it in order to please God. But God does not need anything. You do bhajans for your own happiness. Share your happiness with others. God is the embodiment of bliss. Hence, He does not require anything from you. When He is the embodiment of eternal happiness, what else is required for Him? He is not interested in worldly and ephemeral happiness. When you do bhajans, your heart becomes purified. The worship and the bhajans that you sing are meant for your own happiness and not for the happiness of God...” - 16 March 2003

What is the use?

“... You may participate in a number of bhajans, worship God in several forms and observe ever so many religious vows - yet, if you do not cultivate sacred feelings in your heart, what is the use? Man should cultivate the noble quality of a tender heart. Love and compassion should reflect in his heart...” - 1 March 2003

Avoid such people

“... Sivarathri is celebrated to recognise the oneness of Divinity. When you do bhajans tonight, you will have only one thought. You will experience the bliss of bhajan. It is non-dual bliss. Why is it prescribed that you should do bhajans all through the night? Bhajan is done to control the mind and focus it on Divinity. Some people keep discussing about worldly matters even while they are doing bhajan. Do not go anywhere near such people...” - 1 March 2003

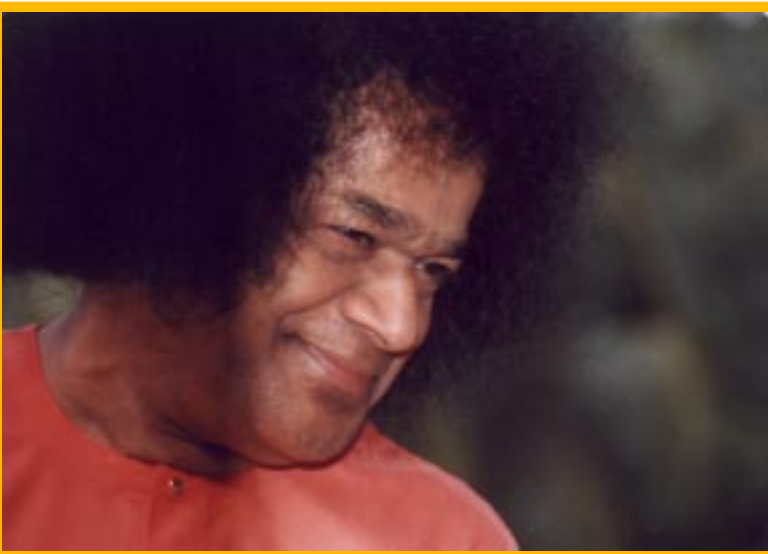


You are a Cosmic Being

“...Man is unable to understand his true nature. He identifies himself with the body which is transient. He is not merely a Vyashti Jeevi or individual, he is a Samashti Jeevi or cosmic being.... Man should understand the truth that God is present in all beings and conduct himself accordingly. That is his primary duty. He should not only contemplate on Divinity but also sing His glory...” - 4 November 2002

Experience your unity with God

“...You are God. Understand this truth in the first instance. Every one is divine. Then, you may wonder, where is the need to worship God? You have to worship Him till you understand and experience this unity. You are leading a very ordinary and worldly life... (You) should firmly believe, ‘*I am God*’...” - 13 October 2002



Siva has no form

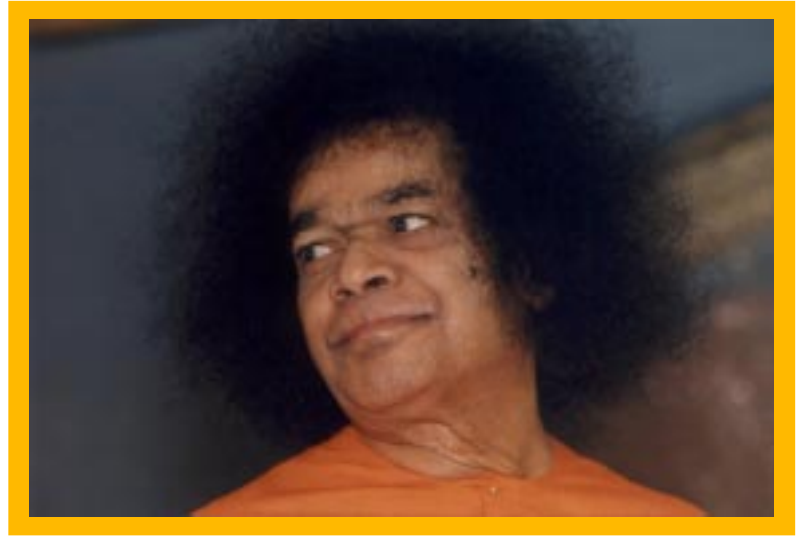
“...Human beings contemplate on God as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. But these are not Gods with a human form. They have neither a form nor a place. If one enquires into the nature of their form, it will become clear that they have only some attributes, with no specific upadhi or vesture. Siva is the breath or Soham Thathwa, Vishnu is the Mind, and Brahma is the Vak Swarupa or the very form of words. Thus, Divinity is permeating the entire human body...” - 12 October 2002

The very sound makes you happy

“...During the past three days, in the morning you must have observed the Pundits chanting the Vedic manthras with several intonations, in the Poornachandra Auditorium. When you hear the sound of the manthras, you feel very happy, even though you are not able to understand their meanings. There may be several meanings for the words in these manthras. But the very sound emerging from the chanting of these manthras will make you very happy...” - 12 October 2002

Absolute concentration

“...The proper swara or sound in chanting the various manthras is very important. It is only when a mantra is chanted in the proper manner that you get good feelings... You must have observed several people while singing bhajans. When they sing loudly there will be a change in their tone or swara. This should not happen. This must be controlled... It is important that one’s posture is also good while singing a keerthan or a bhajan song. One should not make others unhappy by the contortions of one’s face. Absolute concentration is necessary...” - 12 October 2002



What is self-surrender?

“...When do you get into the ultimate step of atma-nivedanam or self-surrender? It is only after you establish sneham or friendship with God. Several people do not know what real friendship is. Friendship presupposes an inseparable relationship between two individuals. Their bodies may be different. But their life principle is one and the same. When the two individuals have different thoughts and feelings, it is not friendship...”
- 12 October 2002



Don't pray for happiness

“...In My view, difficulties are better than pleasure and comforts. It is not prudent to pray for happiness and comfort. The wisdom you gain in times of difficulty is not available in happy times. Ask any realised soul or saintly person how he acquired his great wisdom. He will tell you that he underwent several sorrows and difficulties and only then could he get that wisdom. Today, people desire kaivalya or liberation without undergoing any difficulty...” - 12 October 2002

It helps the whole world

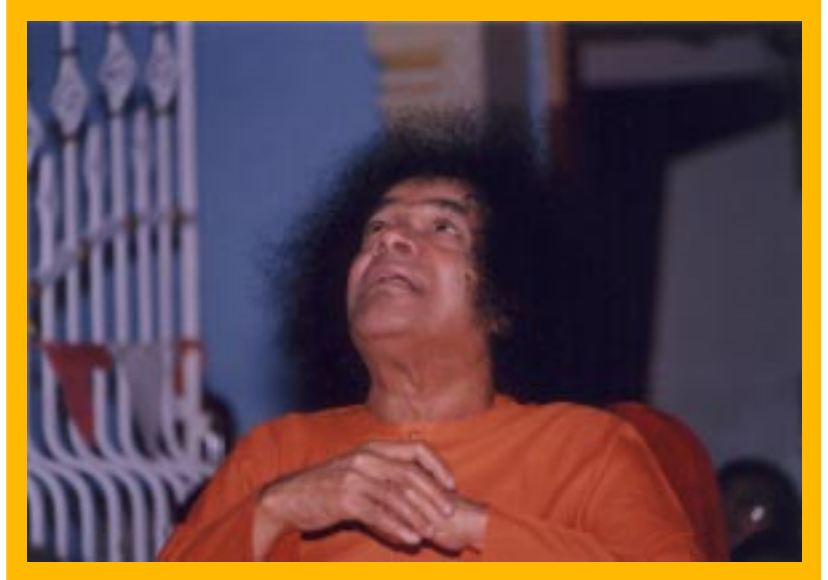
“...The divine vibrations that result from the bhajan you have just sung are spreading to all parts of the world. The Divine Name that you chant purifies the hearts of many. Sing the glory of God. By doing so, you will render a great help to the whole world...” - 9 October 2002

First and foremost

“...You should not begin your sadhana with the feeling that God is somewhere in a distant place and that you wish to install Him in the temple of your heart. First and foremost, develop a firm conviction that Divinity lies in you. You must realise your own divine nature. Not only that, you must make others also realise that they are divine...” - 23 July 2002

Burn all worldly desires

“...Devotion does not merely consist of singing bhajans, performing rituals, and chanting the Divine Name. You should firmly install divinity in your heart. You should take care that worldly desires find no place in your mind. Burn to ashes all desires completely in the fire of wisdom. Even if a trace of worldliness is left in you, it will multiply manifold and lead you astray...” - 22 July 2002



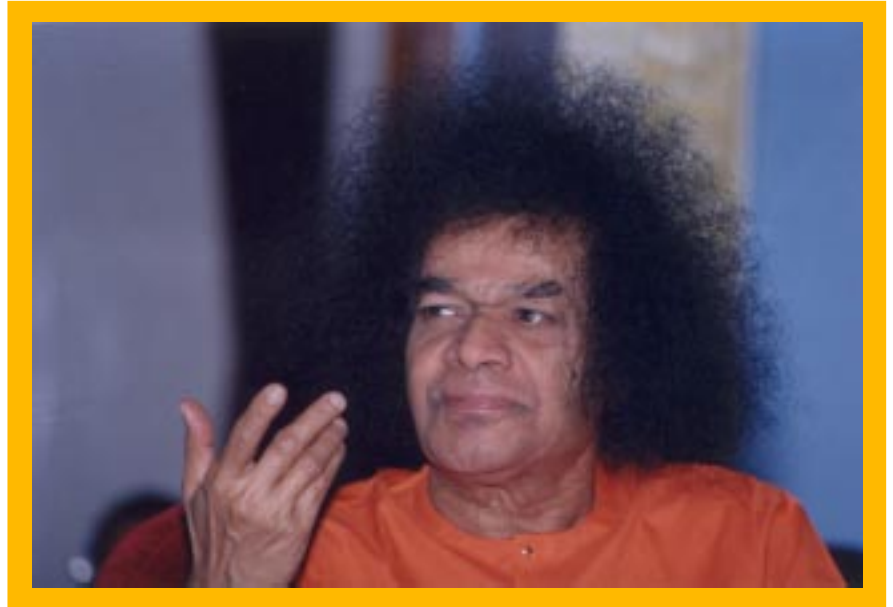
Hardly anyone these days sings bhajans

“...Earlier, when I visited Mumbai, I used to find people doing bhajans and Nagar Sankeerthan all over, unmindful of place or time, even including the airport. Today, you can hardly see anyone even chanting the Name in public anywhere. Of course, there are quite a few devotees. But they are shy of engaging in nama-smarana. Earlier on, I have been travelling around various cities like Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, etc. But these days, I have no inclination to go anywhere...”

- 22 July 2002

Quality, not quantity

“...I shall tell you more about the do’s and don’ts that you have to adopt in your activities. I am not interested in seeing this Hall packed to its capacity. I want only quality, not quantity. One teaspoonful of cow’s milk is better than barrels of donkey’s milk. It is enough if we have a handful of people with noble hearts...” - 22 July 2002

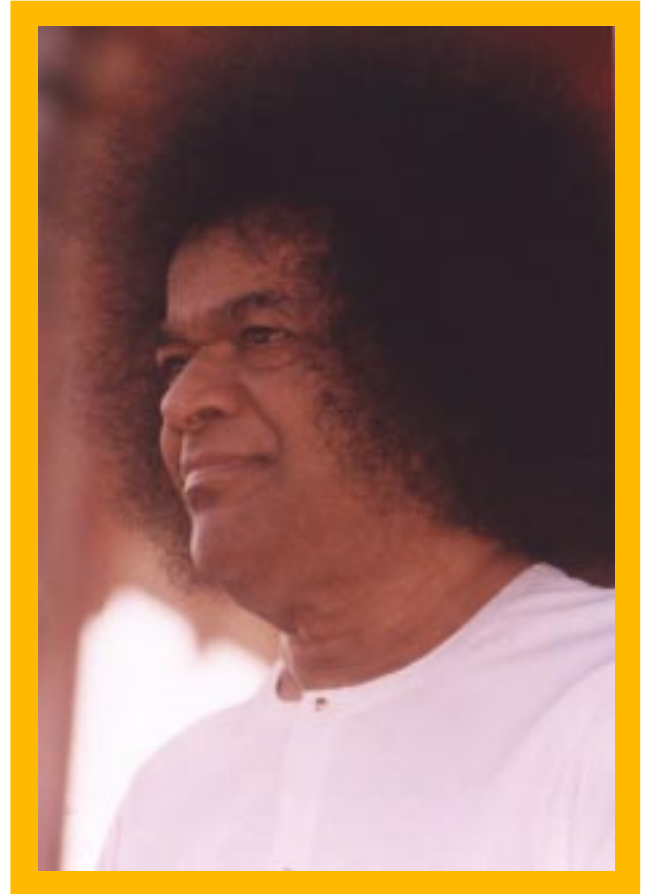


Avoid foul smelling bhajans

“...If there is water content in butter, it will emit a foul smell as you heat it. Those who do bhajans, penance etc with a view to fulfil their worldly desires can be compared to butter mixed up with water. One should not give scope for the foul smell of worldly desires...” - 22 July 2002

Till you steady the mind

“...The Buddha observed silence and became very quiet. He began to experience Soham within him. You can chant the names of Rama, Krishna, and Govinda for some time as a part of your sadhana. Continue the sadhana till the mind becomes steady. Once the mind becomes steady, practice the silence of the mind. The joy we get from singing bhajans and by performing worship is temporary. But by experiencing the essence of the Soham mantra, you will get eternal joy. ‘So’ means ‘that’; and ‘ham’ means ‘I am’...” - 26 May 2002





Chant any Name

“...One who chants Rama’s Name and has the vision of His divine Form will not be born again. There is no amruta greater than Rama’s Name. Spread the glory of Rama’s Name in every nook and corner of the world. You can chant any Name of your choice — Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Siva, etc. Only the Divine Name can grant you peace and happiness. Never forget the Divine Name, wherever you are and under any circumstances...” - 21 Apr 2002

Sing without inhibition

“...Sing the glory of God wholeheartedly without any inhibition. Only then can you experience the divine bliss. Begin this sacred Nama-smarana right from this moment on this New Year’s Day. You don’t need musical instruments for this. It is enough if it originates from the core of your heart...” - 14 Apr 2002

What is true sadhana?

“...One can attain divinity only when one stops hiding one’s own mistakes and stops highlighting the faults of others. True spiritual practice lies in finding out one’s own mistakes and correcting them. It involves giving up evil tendencies and developing noble traits. That is ‘sa’ ‘dhana’. ‘Sa’ symbolises divinity, which is the embodiment of all forms of ‘dhana’ or wealth...” - 12 Mar 2002



Take the simplest path

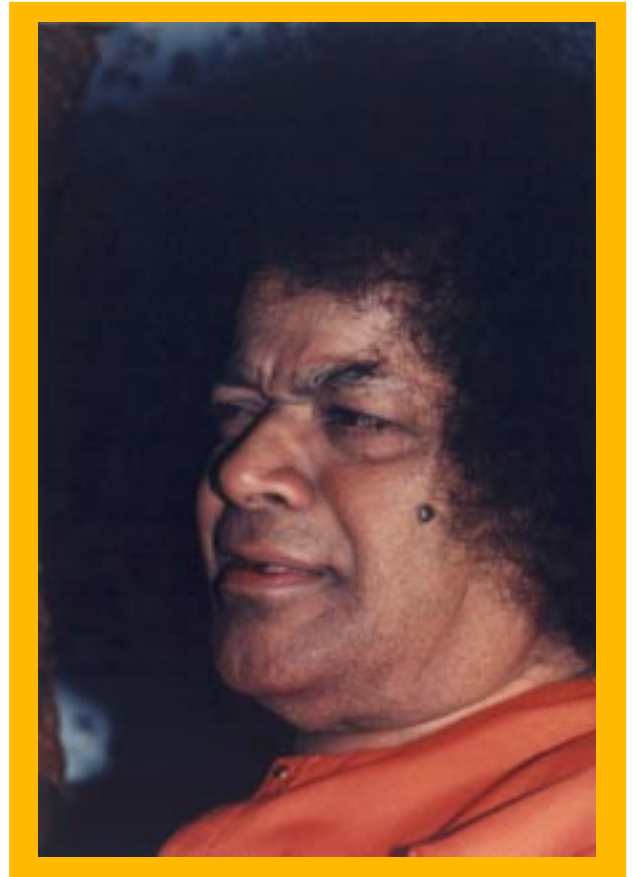
“...It may not be possible for you to undertake rigorous spiritual practices like meditation, penance, yoga, etc. It is enough if you chant the Divine Name. Do not undertake practices which you do not understand. Take to the simplest path. In this Kali Age, chanting of the Lord’s Name alone can grant you liberation. There is no greater path than this. So, sing His glory and cross this ocean of worldly life...” - 24 February 2002

Kill the 'terrorists' within

“...The President of America has said that the terrorists should be wiped out. Who are the terrorists? Anger and jealousy are the ‘terrorists’. These wicked traits are present in every man. Man should make every effort to annihilate them. Only then can the world progress. One should not kill one’s fellow human beings; instead, one should destroy the ‘terrorists’ within and cultivate virtues. This is what I desire from you...” - 19 January 2002

Any time, any place

“...Any mighty task can be achieved by chanting the Divine Name. For spiritual practices like meditation and penance, a specific time and place are required. But for chanting the Divine Name, no such restriction needs to be followed. Wherever you are, whatever you may be doing, you can chant the Divine Name. *Sarvada sarva kaleshu sarvatra Hari chintanam...*”
- 25 December 2001

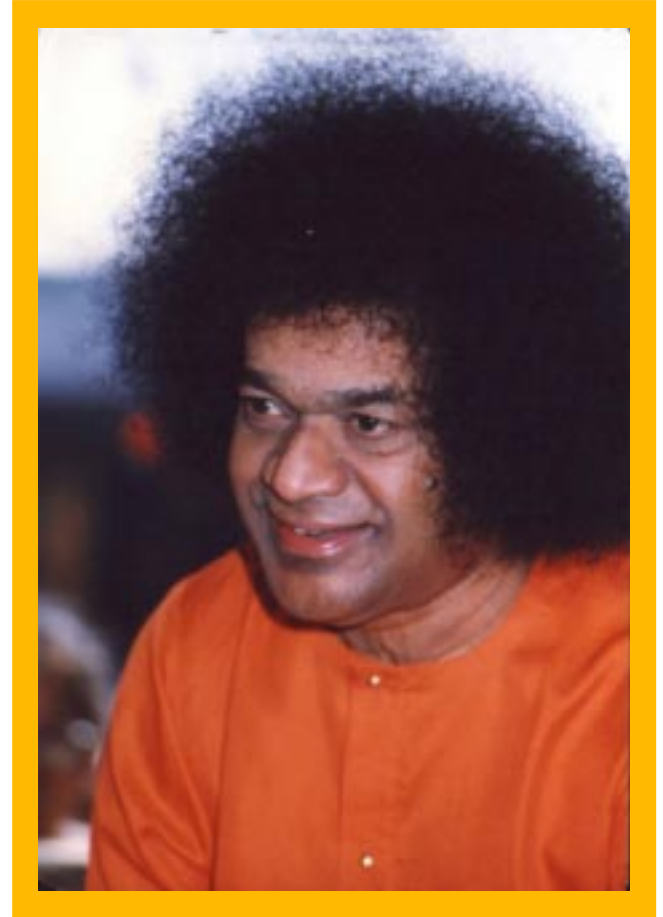


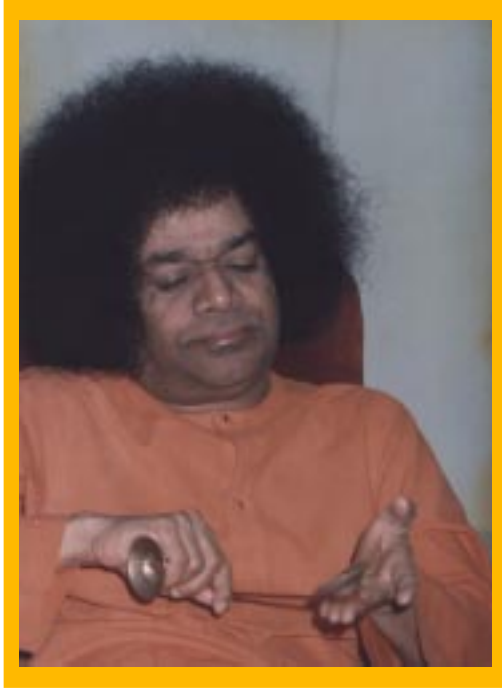
How to worship God

“...Every person should try to recognise the divinity within himself. There is no spirituality higher than this. Adoring this Bhavani Sankara principle is the primary duty of every man... How should we worship God? We should worship Him as our own Self. We should set aside the feeling that God is different from us. There is no temple dearer to God than the human heart. He loves this abode of heart. This is His true residence. We should not look for Him outside us...” - 23 November 2001

Sadhana to attain God

“...Embodiments of Love! God is not separate from you. You are God. But you do various sadhanas to attain God, thinking that He is separate from you. Constantly remind yourselves that you are God. Be blissful always...” - 20 October 2001





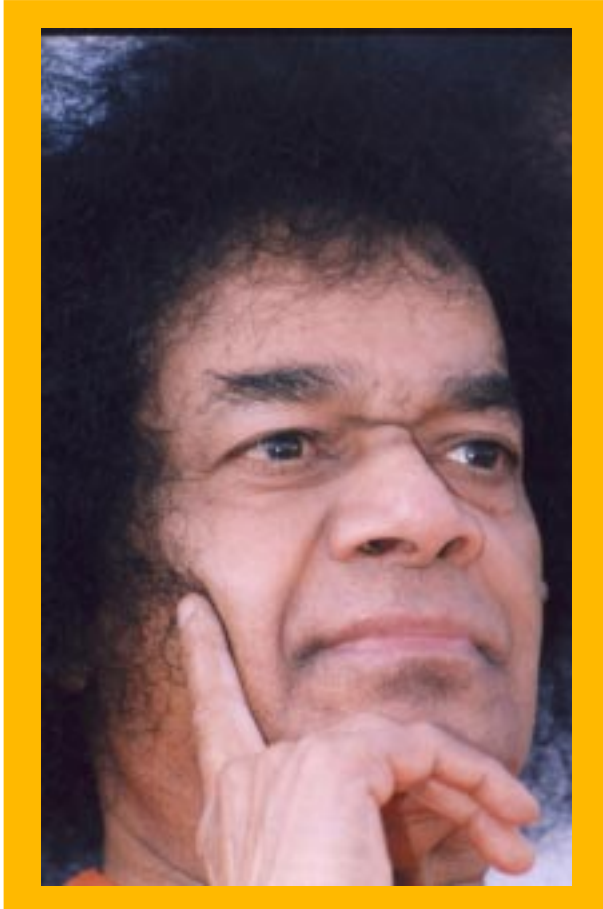
Give up the idea

“...First of all, give up the notion that God has a specific form. All forms that are attributed to Him are man’s own creations and imaginations. God is depicted to be having four hands holding shankha, chakra, gada and padma. If God were really to be born with four hands, people would certainly put Him in an exhibition. It is only to make you understand that God is the master of sound, time, power, and heart that He is depicted to be having these insignia in His hands...”

- 9 October 2001

Avoid negative meanings

“...When you sing bhajans, take care that the words you utter do not convey negative meanings. Here is an example. Our boys sing many Hindi bhajans, in which they often use the word ‘Thu’, meaning ‘you’. They sing ‘Thu Rama, Thu Krishna, Thu Sai (you are Rama, you are Krishna, you are Sai)’, etc. But in Telugu, the word ‘Thu’ conveys a derogatory meaning. You may use ‘Thu Hai’ instead of ‘Thu’. The bhajans you sing must convey sacred meanings. You should not give scope for disrespectful words...” - 22 February 2001

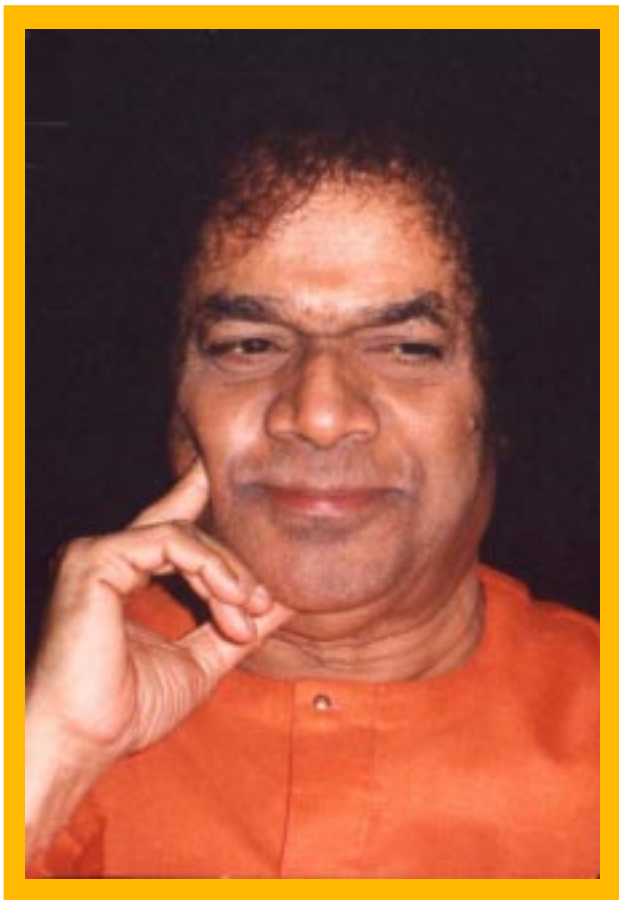


Fix the mind on Atma

“...While doing bhajans, you may sing various songs with different tunes and beats, but your mind should be constantly fixed on the Atma. All your actions must be done with the sole purpose to please God. Arjuna asked Lord Krishna how he could fight in the war if he had to constantly think of God. Krishna replied, “O simpleton, it is your body and the senses that are involved in the warfare. Such being the case, you can always focus the mind on God.” Direct your mind on God instead of on the senses...” - 22 February 2001

Narrow-minded prayers

“...Pray wholeheartedly, ‘Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavanthu’ that is to say ‘May all beings be happy’. Do not pray just for the welfare of your family, friends, and relatives. Such narrow-minded prayers are futile. Your prayer should be for the welfare of all people in all countries of the world...” - 1 January 2000



You will see Divinity manifest

“...Bhajans are highly sacred. Bhajan singing makes the heart sacred. What is important is that it should come from the heart. Bhajan is not just rhythm, tune and beat. You should sing God’s Name with love. You will see the manifestation of Divinity with your physical eyes when you sing His glory with all love...” - 14 March 1999

What is true sadhana?

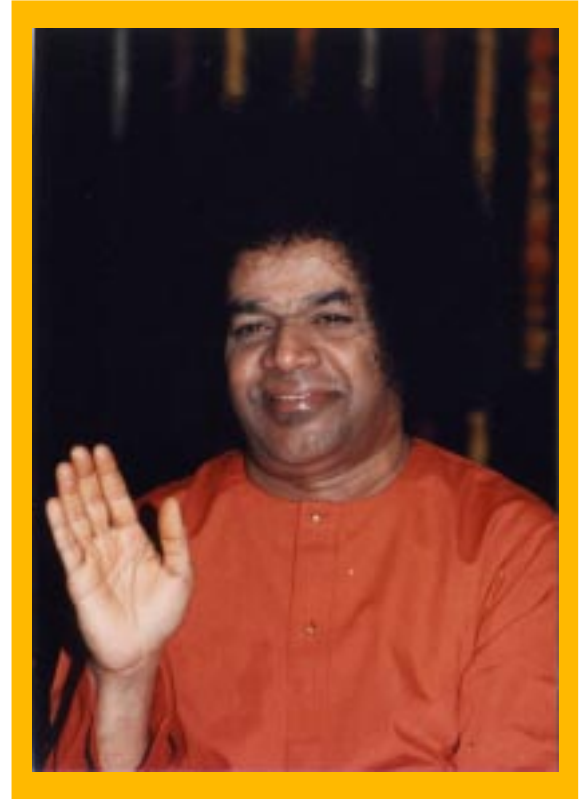
“...Buddha attained Nirvana by controlling his five senses and making proper use of them. What is Nirvana? It is nothing but merger in bliss. Bliss can be attained by controlling the five senses. This is the true sadhana. Mere chanting of the Lord’s Name will not suffice. First and foremost, the senses have to be controlled...” - 15 February, 1999

Do community work in harmony

“...Just as all of you joined together in perfect harmony and unison in following My bhajan (‘Govinda Krishna Jai’), have the same principle of unity in undertaking service activities. You should take part not only in community singing but also in community work. Only then will you be blissful...” - 20 November 1998

Focus on the internal spirit

“...There is one other matter, which you should consider in this context. You are performing bhajans, japa, dhyana or other spiritual exercises. All these are external forms of worship which do not serve to promote Nivritthi-marga or the exploration of the internal spirit. They are good acts in themselves. But they are unrelated to spirituality. Spirituality implies relationship of Atma to Atma...” - 20 July 1997





Move from Dvaita to Advaita

“...Good acts yield good results. But they do not contribute to spiritual progress. You should not remain content with performing bhajans, rituals and acts of worship or sath-karmas. When will you embark on the real spiritual adventure? You should go forward from Dvaita to Advaita, from dualism to non-dualism. You become a jnani only when you have the advaitik consciousness or the experience of oneness with the Divine...” - 20 July 1997

Consideration for overseas

devotees

“...Leaders in bhajans should realise that many overseas devotees are deeply interested in bhajans and are eager to take part in them. The bhajans should be simple and easy for them to follow...” - 11 April 1997

Short and sweet Names

“...You should not expect people to follow whatever you sing. You should see that they can easily respond to your song. The names you chant should be short and sweet. Therefore, in your bhajans use short names like Rama, Krishna, Allah, Yesu and so on. Then all would be able to follow you with ease. If you use high-sounding words, few can follow you...” - 11 April 1997



Proper melody and rhythm

“...There is special merit in singing the Lord’s name with due regard for melody and rhythm. The Lord is a lover of music. Moreover, when singing is done with fervour, it helps to drive out all bad thoughts from the mind. Melodious music can move the Lord and move all the participants. Hence, when you take part in bhajans sing with all your heart and soul. You must sing with such love for the Divine that you forget yourself...” - 11 April 1997



Beyond melody and rhythm

“...The bhajans this time were done in a ritualistic fashion. Greater attention was paid to raaga, thaala, laya and shruti or the melody, the beat, the rhythm and the tone. All these are vyaava-haarika or conventional qualities. To elevate the bhajans to a spiritual level, what is required is true feeling and ecstasy of devotion. The songs should flow not from the lips but from the heart...”
- 8 March 1997

Adhere to your culture

“...In following Swami’s teachings people tend to follow them according to their convenience. For instance, when Swami said that there is only one caste, the caste of humanity, this statement is used as authority for uninhibited marriages between any two persons. This is a travesty of Swami’s teaching. Caste differences are to be eliminated. But cultural differences should be respected. Swami has emphasised that every cultural group should adhere to its culture. Swami’s teachings should be adhered to in their entirety and not selectively according to one’s convenience. I fervently appeal to all devotees to participate in the bhajans with their heart and soul and make community singing a blissful spiritual experience for one and all...” - 8 March 1997



Devotion is the key

“... You should sing whole-heartedly with the desire to please God. God makes no distinction between a proficient musician and a beggar in the street. It is the devotion and sincerity that matter. Merge your soul in the bhajans you sing. Spiritualise your bhajan-singing. Then you will experience real bliss...” - 8 March 1997

Your debt to God

“... What is the bali or tax to be paid to God? Only the expression of our gratitude by a heartfelt prayer. It is unfortunate that even those who are gifted with good voices do not sing aloud in bhajans. Man has been endowed with a tongue to sing the praise of God. If he fails to do so, he remains in debt to God...” - 1 July 1996

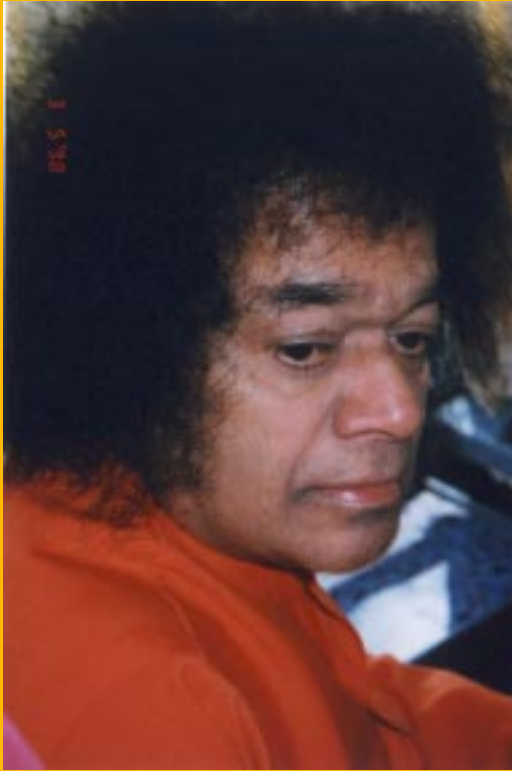
When bhajans end

“...Bhagavan desires from all of you only discipline. Hence, when the discourse is over or when the bhajans end, you should go out in silence. As a rule, observe restraint in speech everywhere. You should realise that the voice of the Divine is heard in the depths of silence...”
- 4 July 1996



The first prayer

“...In our bhajans, the first prayer is addressed to Vinayaka (ie Ganesha). The bhajan starts with Om, the Pranava. It is the combination of Pranava with Vinayaka which serves to redeem our lives...” - 29 August 1995



Concentrate on the bhajans

“...Devotees who attend bhajans turn their looks this side and that side without concentrating on the bhajans. If they are not interested in the bhajans, why should they come at all?...” - 9 April 1995

Self improvement

“...Many people imagine that Sai Baba is holding Akhanda bhajans and celebrating various festivals to glorify his name. They are utterly foolish persons. Sai Baba seeks nothing from anyone. Improve yourselves. Become better. Experience your bliss. Make your lives sublime. Utilize these festivals and devotional activities for this purpose...” - 14 January 1995



Divine vibrations emerge

“...During community singing, divine vibrations emerge sanctifying the whole atmosphere. The same result cannot be expected when one sings alone. Community singing promotes unity, which leads to purity and divinity. Today there is no unity, purity or divinity. What mankind needs today is unity based on the spiritual oneness of humanity...” - 18 December 1994

Supremely valuable

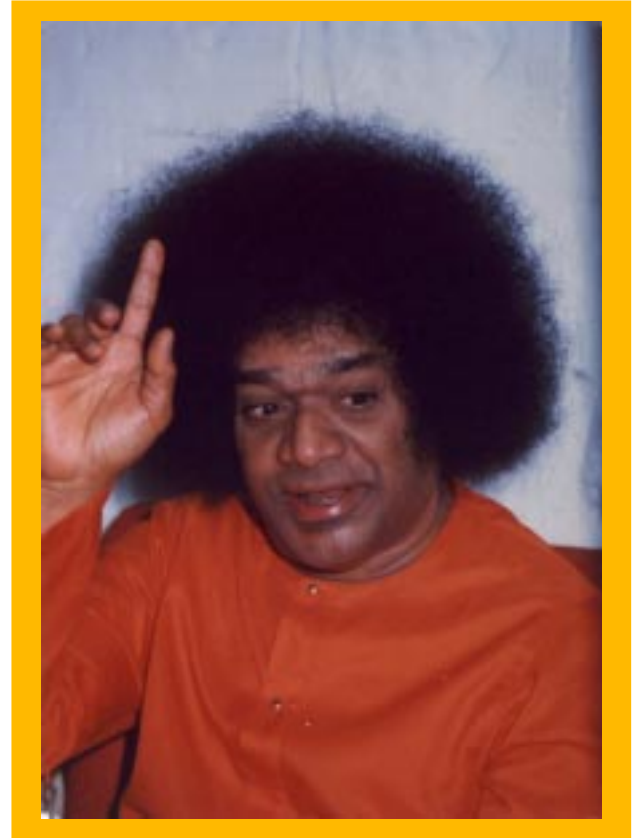
“...People may say that when you go to Sai Baba, there is nothing but bhajan. Realise that there is nothing greater than bhajan. What bliss there is in bhajans! What a demonstration of oneness it is when myriad throats join in uttering the name of God!.... Bhajans are therefore supremely valuable. It has been said that in the Kali Age there is no greater spiritual practice than chanting the name of the Lord...” - 23 October 1994

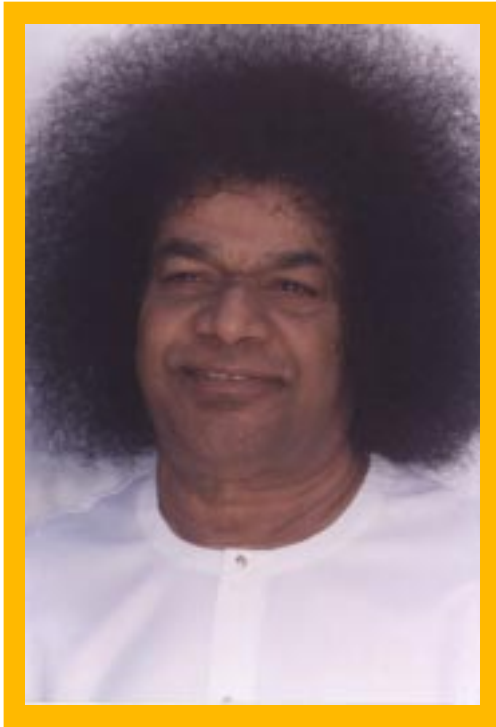
Vibrations purify the air

“...If you sing alone in your shrine, the vibrations return to you as 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 with antibiotics as it were. Bhajans are therefore supremely valuable...” - 23 October 1994

Inner significance of bhajan

“...The inner significance of observances like Nagar-sankeerthan and bhajans is to fill the atmosphere with sacred vibrations and holy thoughts. The power of the divine name and form is all pervading. The electromagnetic waves in the atmosphere can preserve sounds and forms for all time...” - 27 September 1992





Animal qualities must go

“...People participate in bhajans. This is doubtless a good act, but it is only an auxiliary element in spiritual discipline. They may participate in bhajans, but are they transforming their attitudes as a result? No!...all the animal qualities like bad feelings remain along with participation in bhajans! Without getting rid of such attitudes, the continuous participation in bhajans is of no value...” - 24 May 1992

The meaning of Rama

“...There are only two means by which the Lord can be bound or enjoyed, namely, through the Name and through Love. The name can be Rama, Hari, Hara or any other name, because the All-pervading Divine bears all names. The name ‘Rama’ is not confined only to the son of Dasaratha. The Atma that confers bliss is known as Rama. The sage Vasishta gave the name Rama to Emperor Dasaratha’s son. The name Rama

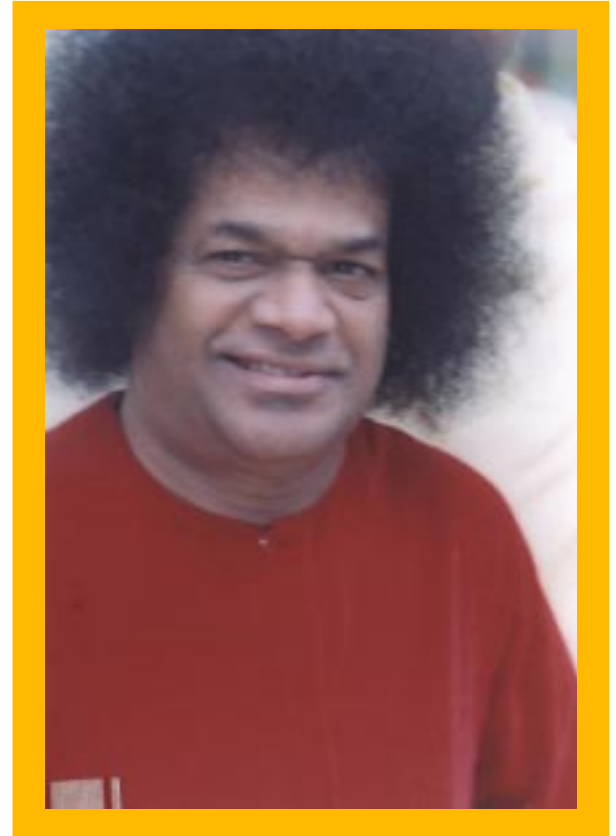
symbolises the universal attributes of the Divine such as omniscience, omnipotence and omnifelicity...” - 2 March 1992

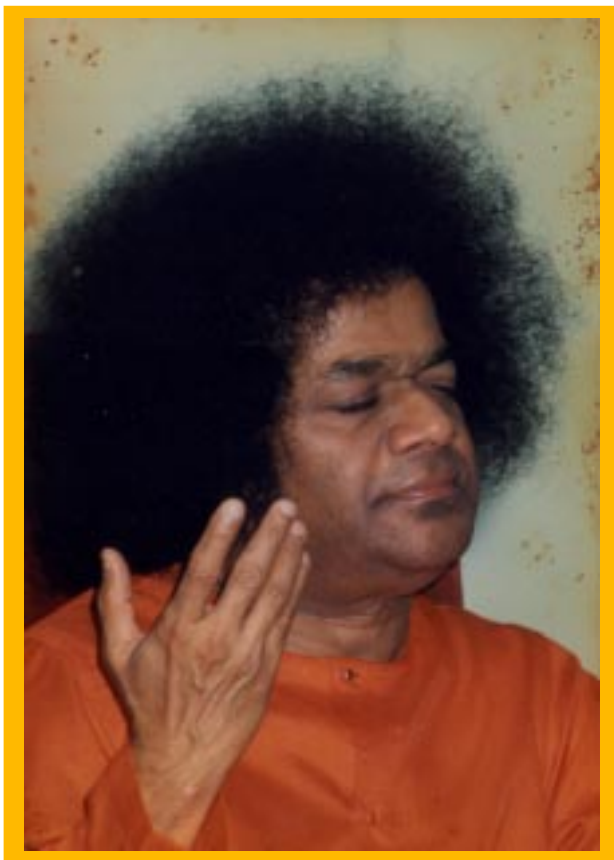
Four kinds of Sankeerthan

“...Sankeerthan is of four kinds: One is Guna Sankeerthan; the second is Leela Sankeerthan; the third is Bhaava Sankeerthan; and the fourth is Naama Sankeerthan. It is the supreme good fortune of the residents of Prasanthi Nilayam to enjoy all the four forms of Sankeerthan. The bhajans sung here are a combination of all the four forms of Sankeerthan...”
- 3 March 1992

Only then will the Divine respond

“...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. You must sing the Names aloud, full-throated, as far as the voice can reach. Only then will the Divine respond in full measure and shower His grace...” - 3 March 1992





For the well-being of the Universe

“...There is a big difference between Keerthan and Sankeerthan. Keerthan is an individual affair. It is singing by an individual for the fulfilment of his prayers, whereas Sankeerthan aims at the well-being of the whole Universe. Sankeerthan aims at demonstrating Unity...” - 3 March 1992

Attaining God-realisation

“...There is no greater means of God-realisation in the Kali Yuga than chanting the names of the Lord. *Dhyana* in Kritha Yuga, *Yajna* in Thretha Yuga, *Archana* in Dwapara Yuga and *Naama Sankeerthan* or reciting the name of the Lord in Kali Yuga are the methods prescribed for realising the Divine. Remembering the Name is the panacea...” - 3 March 1992

The power of music

“...When the Name is chanted as a song set to music, it delights the heart immensely. Many pandits recite the names as slokas or verses. They do not experience the intense yearning expressed in the stanzas. Some actors are able to pronounce 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...” - 3 March 1992



When many sing together

“...When all the participants in a bhajan sing in unison, what sacred 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. That was the reason why Guru Nanak commended community singing...” - 13 February 1991

The safest form of Sankeerthan

“...Except in *Nama Sankeerthan* (the chanting of the Name), the other forms of *Sankeerthan* are liable to give rise to doubts and difficulties. Hence, in this *Kali Yuga*, the easiest and safest form of *Sankeerthan* is *Nama Sankeerthan*— community chanting of the Names of the Lord. This will not give rise to any doubts or excite emotional disturbances. As one goes on chanting the name, he experiences an inner joy, which is indifferent to praise or blame. The constant repetition of the name of the Lord should lead to an imprinting of the Name on the heart. This can only happen when the heart is softened by love of the Lord...” - 20 October 1988

The difference

“...The difference between *Keerthan* and *Sankeerthan* is that the former relates to chanting by the individual in privacy, while the latter relates to community singing. In *Sankeerthan*, all the participants experience joy in common, hence it is superior to *Keerthan*, where the joy is confined to a single individual. Many a devotee who will never venture to sing aloud will join in community singing spontaneously without reserve...” - 20 October 1988



Unity among faiths

“...It was to promote unity among people of different faiths that Guru Nanak started community bhajans which generate vibrations of harmony and peace. Regard yourselves as embodiments of Love and dedicate your lives like Jesus to the service of your fellow men...”

- 25 December 1986

Emphasis entirely on Name

“...A person who has an individual style of his own may sing as he likes in private, but he is not suitable for community singing. There are some rules to be observed in conducting community bhajans. Alapana or classical elaboration of a raga may be done in keerthan or individual singing, but it is wholly out of place in community bhajans. Hence, in such bhajans the accent should be entirely on the Name....” - 8 November 1986

Threefold concentration

“... Singing the Lord’s Name is the most effective of all forms of devotional singing. The first requisite is purity of thought, word and deed. The name that is uttered by the tongue should be meditated upon by the mind. What is uttered and dwelt upon should be hailed by clapping the hands. This threefold concentration on the Divine name- unity of mind, speech and action - purifies the heart and nourishes the feeling of devotion...”- 8 November 1986



For humanity as a whole

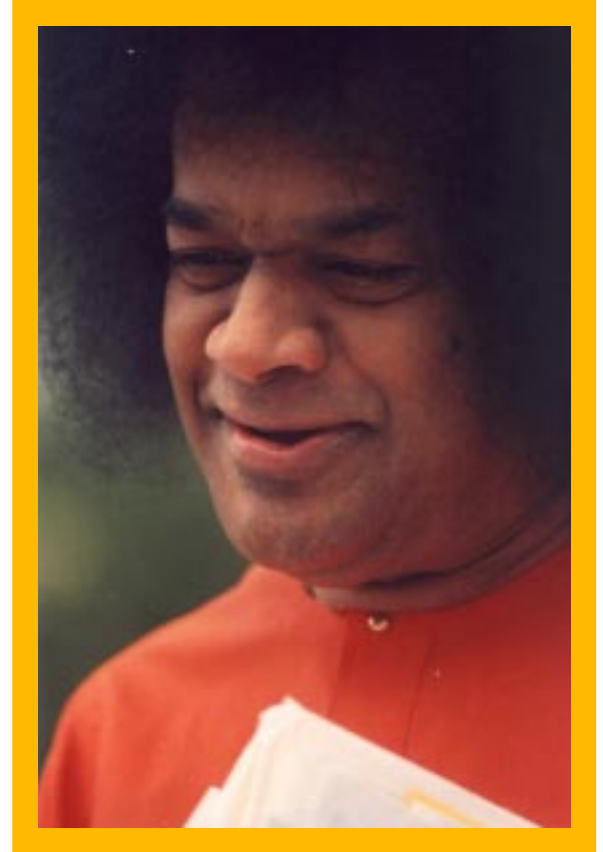
“... Today we are having the Akhanda Bhajan. This is being done not for the sake of one individual, one nation or one community. It is for the welfare of humanity as a whole...”
- 8 November 1986

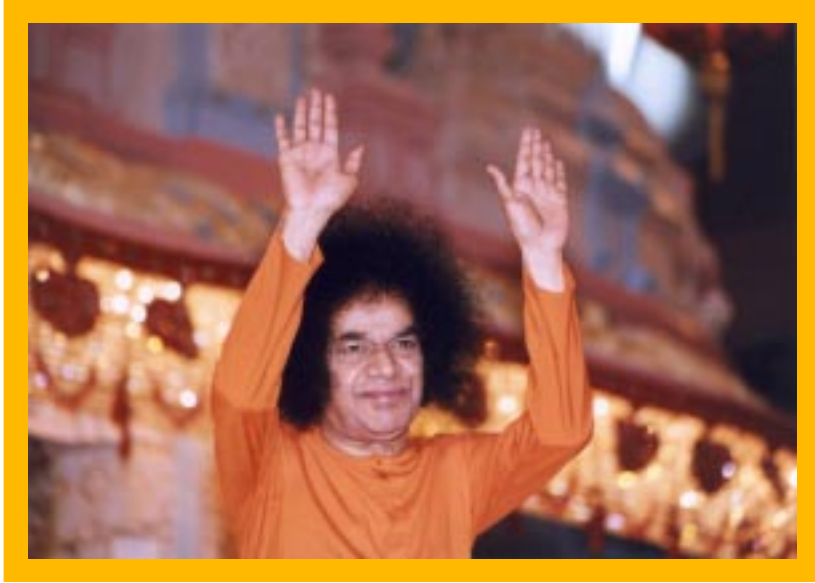
Guru Nanak & Tyagaraja

“...In the year 1459, Guru Nanak, the first Sikh guru, started the practice of bhajans or community singing. In 1798, the great South Indian saint-composer Tyagaraja invested bhajans with raga and tala ie musical form and rhythm...” - 8 October 1986

Spirit of holiness is absent

“...It was in this spirit of intense love for the Lord and pure devotion that bhajans were started in the past. But in bhajans today this spirit of holiness is absent. More importance is given to raga and tala ie the tune and the rhythm, than to bhava or feeling. The attempt is more to please the hearers by sweet singing than to promote in them finer feelings of devotion...” - 8 October 1986





Will lead to loss of faith

“...As long as God is regarded as different from the devotee, the true nature of Bhakti cannot be understood. It is this feeling of difference which ultimately leads to loss of faith in God, despite the practice of bhajan, japa, dhyana and yoga. One who regards himself as different from God can never become a true devotee. He must consider himself divine in substance, even as a spark is not different from the fire from which it came...” - 27 August 1986

Spirit of sacrifice

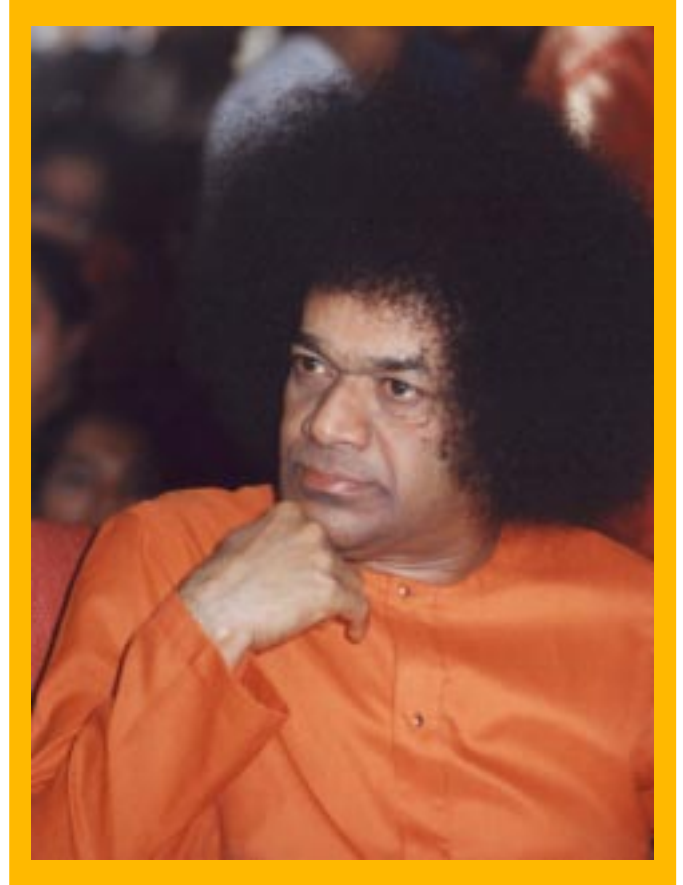
“...If there is no spirit of sacrifice in the bhajan or meditation that you do, however earnestly you may do it, it becomes a self-interested exercise. There is self-interest in seeking one’s moksha or salvation. To be concerned about your own Ananda or bliss is also selfishness. The Lord will love only those who love others...” - 17 November 1985

Importance of Om

“... Sadhana does not merely consist of bhajans and meditation. All these are auxiliaries. The primary requisite is concentration on the Pranava or Om. All sadhana should be based on Pranava. To utter the name without the Pranava or Om is like using a revolver without cartridges. By meditating on the Pranava, one can glimpse the nature of the Supreme Reality...” - 23 July 1983

Avoid ego in bhajan

“...Bhajan done with egoistic pride will be as harsh as the crow's caw. So, try to avoid the ego marring your sadhana, even to a small extent...” - 19 November 1981



Society is a form of God

“... We must try to rise to higher stages from natural devotion through Paraa Bhakthi. Perform your bhajans, perform your pujas, but when you enter society, recognise society as a form of God, and thereby acquire good qualities in serving society. If you develop the idea that God, who is omnipresent and immanent in all of creation and the universe, is confined to a picture which is three inches by four inches, you are narrowing your conception of God...” - 12 May 1981



Seat men and women apart

“... Some members from Western countries do not seem to favour the rule of the Sathya Sai Organisation, which lays down that at bhajans and at other meetings, men devotees should sit apart from women devotees. The rule should be applicable to all members - whether they are Indians or non-Indians, in India or elsewhere. It is a part of the spiritual discipline that is necessary for devotees...to control our senses and minds...” - 22 November 1980

Sing and clap loudly

“...When a man has fallen into a well and is unable to get out, he does not mutter to himself. He shouts loudly to get men to save him! What do you do to drive away birds sitting on a branch? You clap your hands loudly. Similarly, sing the names ‘Govinda, Gopala, Narayana’ aloud, and clap your hands with vigour so that the birds of evil passion, kaama, krodha and lobha, infesting your mind will fly away...” - 21 September 1980

Get rid of the beast within

“...The word adhyatmik (spirituality) is used often by aspirants and preceptors. What exactly is implied by adyatmik? Is it bhajan? Or does it involve japa or meditation? Or religious rituals and ceremonies and pilgrimages to holy places? No. These are only beneficial acts. Adhyatmik, in its real sense, relates to two progressive achievements or at least sincere attempts towards those two achievements: elimination of the animal traits still clinging to man, and unification with the Divine. Bhakthi does not end with japa, bhajan and dhyana. It consists of devotion to the ideal of getting rid of the beast and rising up to the Divine. Give up the pashu or animal, and gain Pashu-pathī or God...”

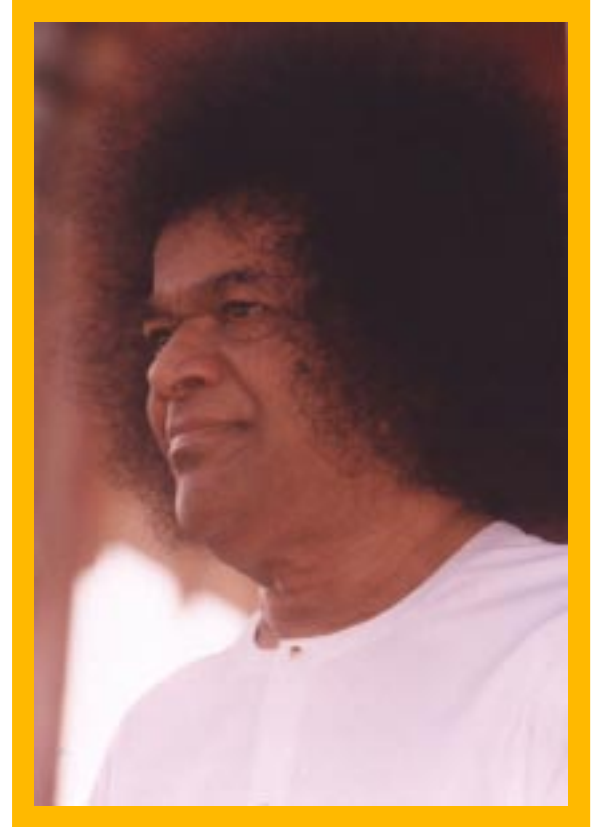
- 9 July 1979

We become what we contemplate

“...God does not shower Grace on people because they sing His praises. Nor does He come down upon them because they do not deify Him. Recitation of the Divine attributes enables us to dwell on elevating ideals and to approximate ourselves more and more to the Divinity that is our nature. We become what we contemplate...” - 9 March 1978

Stop the two enemies

“...Kama and krodha are the two enemies. Bhajan such as this is a good disciplinary process by which the two can be kept away. Kama is the lust for physical pleasure, for power, for fame, for wealth and for scholarship. Krodha is anger, which is the result of foiled lust. If you long for peace of mind, you must take up the sadhana that will confer peace on you...” - 4 December 1976

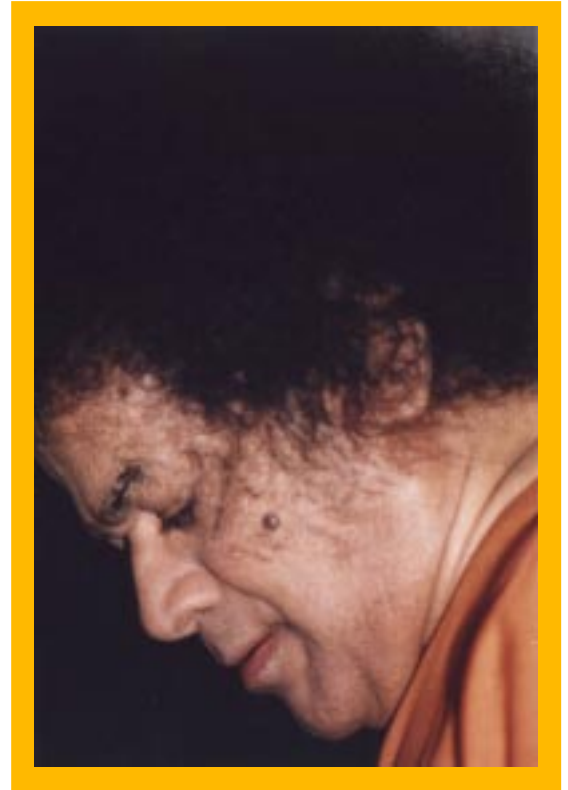


Get rid of Ignorance

“...Liberation means getting rid of bondage. The fundamental bond which has to be got rid of is the bond of Ajnana or primal Ignorance. Death is sweeter than the bondage that Ignorance can impose on man. Cast away Ignorance - you are free, liberated from all bonds that very moment! All spiritual disciplines have this liberation as their goal. Nama-sankeerthan ie bhajan too helps you get rid of this basic ignorance...” - 14 November 1976

The Name is not 'just sound'

“...Those who rely on reason alone or on the limited laws of science argue that the repetition of the Name, which is after all just sound, cannot cleanse or correct the mind of man. But the Name is not just 'sound.' You are sitting there quietly, listening, but if some one merely says 'scorpion', you get frightened! Or when some one says 'lime juice', your mouth starts watering. The mere sound creates so much reaction...” - 14 November 1976





Purify air and food

“...Singing this intense yearning for God and enjoying the experience of adoring Him helps to purify the atmosphere. Man is today forced to breathe air that is polluted by sounds that denote violence, hatred, cruelty and wickedness. When the environment is clean and free from evil vibrations, the food too is pure and the person develops a tendency to be loving and simple. It is to ensure such an atmosphere that this sadhana of global bhajan is initiated the world over...” - 14 November 1976

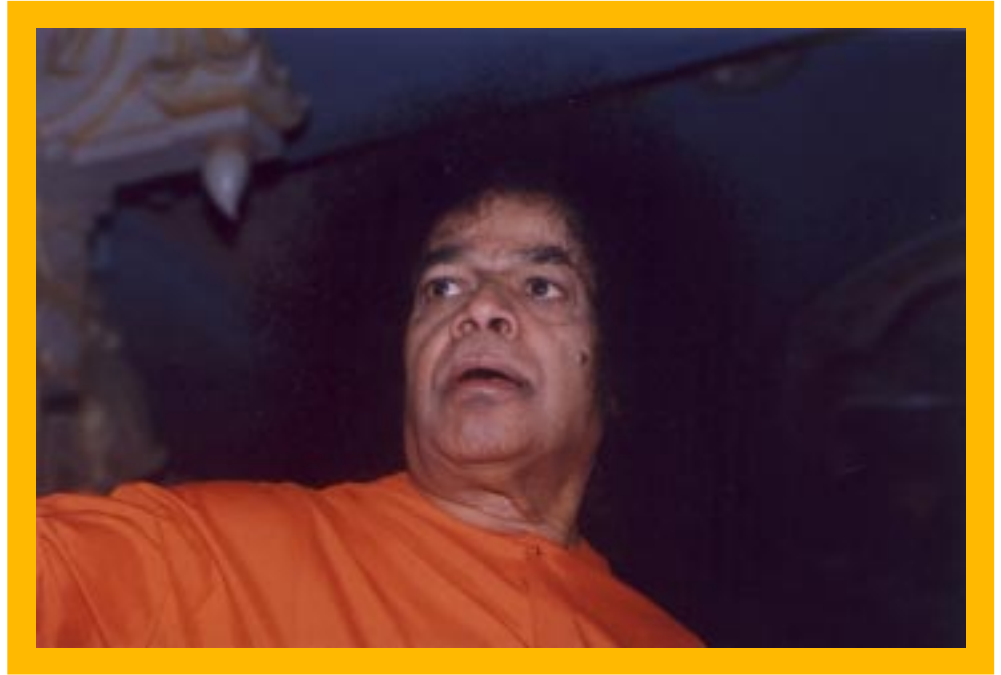
Make your life a bhajan

“... Life is a song, sing it. That is what Krishna taught through His life. Krishna sang the Geetha for Arjuna to

listen. Geetha means ‘song,’ and He sang because He was Ananda wherever he might be - in Gokulam, on the banks of the Yamuna or at Kurukshetra between the warring armies. You too must pass your days in song. Let your whole life be a bhajan. Believe that God is everywhere at all times, and derive strength, comfort and joy by singing His Glory in His Presence ...” - 14 November 1976

Supreme keerthan

“...Keerthan is ‘singing aloud the Glory of God’. Sankeerthan is the process of singing that originates in the Heart, not from the lips or 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 manifestation of inner ecstasy. It does not seek the admiration or the appreciation of the listeners. Keerthan of this supreme type, alone, deserves the name Sankeerthan...” - 14 November 1976



Don't waste your breath!

“...Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts. Without love, free, full and selfless, no spiritual sadhana can succeed. Without it, bhajan is a waste of breath...” - 14 November 1975

Purpose is different

“... The purpose of this type of loud congregational prayer is different from the silent individual prayer. It is a joint, concerted and mutually helpful effort of Sadhana to overcome the six internal foes of man - Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Conceit and Hatred. These nocturnal birds infest the tree of life and foul the heart where they build their nests. When we sing aloud the Glory of God, the heart is illumined and they cannot bear the light. Besides, the voice that rises from many throats frightens them and they fly away...” - 1 April 1975

You can be very wrong

“... Do not judge others as inferior, because they do not participate in bhajans, nagar-sankeerthans, or your type of Study Circles. You can be very wrong, if you estimate a person's spiritual development by mere externals. Inner purity cannot express itself through pompous show. Only He who sees into every heart can know who resides therein: Rama or Kama (God or selfish desire)...” - 3 March 1974

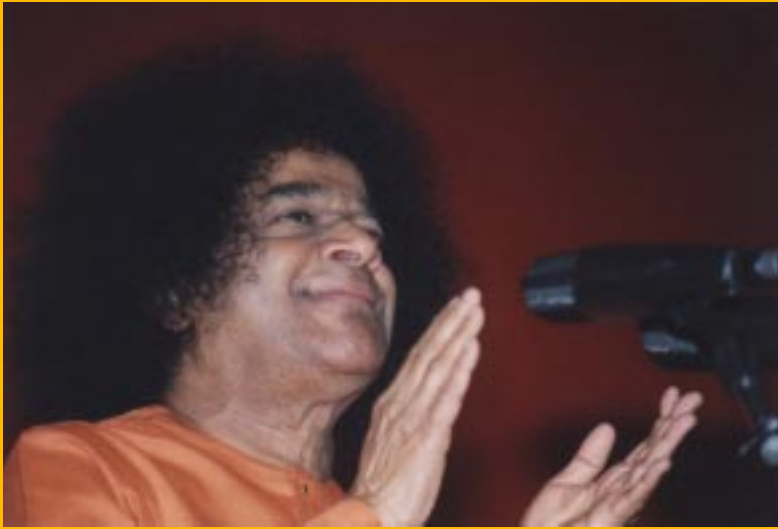


Mark of true surrender

“...You declare that you have surrendered; but that is just a verbal statement. Your mind and your heart are not fully in Me and so, the surrender is only in name. As a sign of this deed of surrender and in order to sustain it, nothing more is enjoined than constant remembrance of the Name...” - 21 February 1974

Be constantly aware of Soham

“...Bhajan must become an unbroken stream of Bliss on your tongues and in your hearts; it must confer on you the uninterrupted awareness of Soham — of the Unity of I and He, of This with That. It is called Akhanda Hamsa Japa - unbroken japa of the Hamsa manthra, ie Soham, the sacred inner sound of breath. I will ensure freedom from anxiety, fear and grief...” - 21 February 1974



Must be sweet to the ear

“...Pay attention to the tune, the meaning, the variety, the voice, the raga and tala, the tune and the beat, and other fine points of the bhajans.

If your voice is not pleasant or sweet, keep quiet; that is the best service you can do! Do not cause discontent, discord and disharmony, insisting on singing, because you are an office-bearer, or something! The bhajans must be sweet to the ear. Bhajan is a sadhana for all who share in it...” - 15 January 1972

Become more loving

“...Prema (love) must grow with every moment of sadhana. It must sweeten every word, deed and thought of yours. Emerge from dhyana as a person more charged with love! Emerge from bhajan with a greater measure of love!...” - 23 July 1971

Nothing gives Me more joy

“...Bhajan must spread good-will, love, ecstasy; it must cleanse the polluted atmosphere; it must invite all to share in the joy and peace. The Nagar-sankeerthan must be inspiring, radiating devotion and love. The Ananda that I derive from bhajan, I do not get from anything else. That is the reason why I am emphasising these points...” - 23 July 1971



Feel it in your Heart

“...Be sincere, and feel in your Heart what you are singing with your voice. You need not worry about the raga being appropriate or the tala being accurate. When Rama is prompting you to sing, the raga and the tala can never be wrong. Rama is the pen, Rama is the thought, Rama is the word, Rama is the style, Rama is the composition. How then can error creep in?...” - 23 July 1971

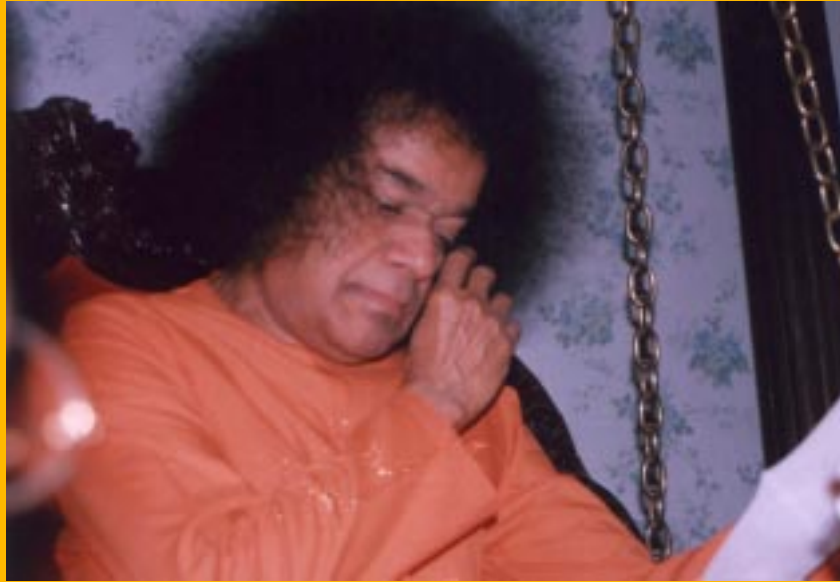


Sing loudly

“...Partake in bhajan and share in the singing loudly and with enthusiasm. Some ask Me, ‘Why should we sing aloud? Isn’t it enough if we feel it in the silence of the mind?’ However, I know all this is mere dry Vedanta! They are prepared to advise others in the Samithi, but are unwilling to practise the advice themselves!...” - 15 May 1971

To expand the mind

“...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. Bhajan 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...” - 24 February 1971



Variety of Names

“... When a namavali extols Shiva, the next one will have to be on Krishna, the next on Rama and so on. A person whose favourite form is Rama or Shiva will feel neglected, if out of inadvertence, you stick to only one Form. Let the atmosphere of bhajan be free from competitive conceit and fanaticism. That is My advice...” - 5 January 1971

When agitated and angry

“... When you are agitated by anger or hatred or agony, drink cold water; lie down quietly; sing a few bhajan songs. Or walk some long distance alone, pretty fast, so that pestering thoughts are driven into silence and the solitude...” - 4 October 1970



I install Myself there

“...Conduct bhajans, for the Lord has said, “Wherever My Glory is sung, there I install Myself.”
Bhajan cleanses the atmosphere and sanctifies the air you breathe...” - 13 May 1970

Good voice and musical talent

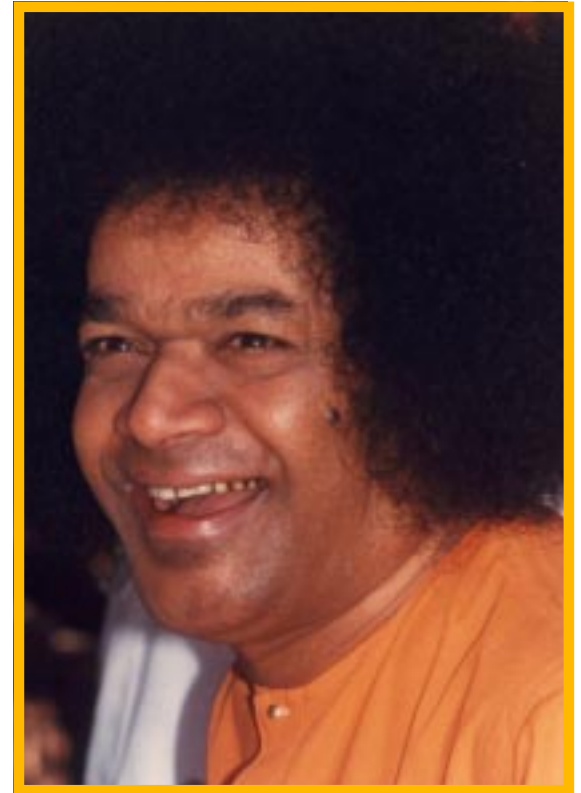
“...Do not compete with each other in singing *Naamaavalis* and cultivate envy or hatred. Let those with a good voice and musical talent lead; the *Keerthan* must be pleasant, it should not jar on the ear. If your voice is grating or out of tune, do not disturb the melody, but repeat the *Naamaavali* in your mind...” - 22 Nov 1969

Meditate after bhajan

“...Apart from the dhyana that you do individually, it is good for you to sit for ten or fifteen minutes, at the place where you did bhajan, and after Omkar, collect your thoughts and meditate on the God whom you adored so long. Or you can meditate on the flame of the lamp in front of you and cause it to illuminate your inner consciousness and overflow...” - 18 May 1968

Like a snake charmer

“...When you emerge into the world, you have no thirst for sensual pleasure. Do not allow it to enslave you and blind you to the goal. The senses are cobras, which man is now enraging by his desires: when they are excited by the heavy thuds of desire, they raise their hoods and strike. If they are charmed by the music of bhajan chants, full of the melody of devotion, they swing but do not strike. That is the secret of making them harmless...” - 23 May 1967



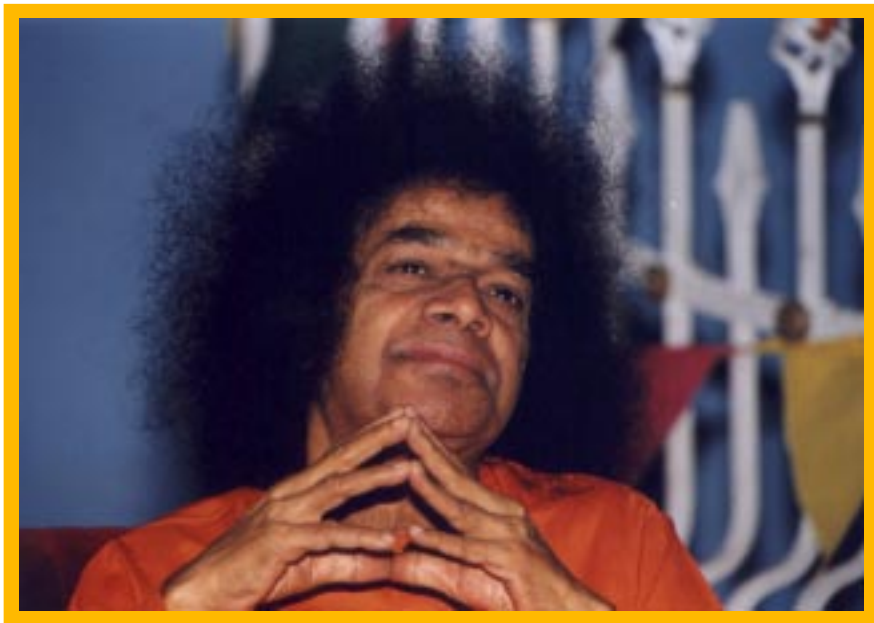


The next higher class

“... How long can you stagnate in the same class? Have you no wish to get promoted to the next higher class? In bhakthi or devotion, there are two classes, Sahaja -bhakthi and Visessa-bhakthi. Sahaja-bhakthi is satisfied with worship, bhajan, etc. Visessa-bhakthi craves for purity of character, suppression of impulses, practice of daya, prema, shaanthy, ahimsa and inquiry into the why and wherefore of man..... ”-
14 January 1967

Why burn camphor?

“... The waving of the camphor flame at the end of the bhajan sessions is to remind you that your sensual cravings must be burnt away without leaving any trace behind, and you must offer yourself to God for being merged with His Glory..... ”-
8 September 1966



If you are ill

“... Generally, I speak sweet, but on this matter of discipline, I will not grant any concessions. Attend all the sessions in the Hall. Do not take shelter behind excuses. If you are ill, bhajan will help the cure, or let Me tell you, it is far better to die during the Bhajan with the Lord’s name on the lips..... - 28 April 1962”

Don't be ashamed

“... Some people may laugh at all this bhajan and call it mere show and exhibition, and recommend instead quiet meditation in the silent recess of the shrine room. But coming out in company and doing bhajan like this helps in removing egoism; one is not afraid of jeering, nor ashamed to call out the Name of the Lord. One gets inspired by the devotion of others - 29 September 1960”



Such low voices!

“... I was listening to the bhajan you did here yesterday and today. Your voices were low; they could scarce be heard outside this Hall. I know that in a certain institution where they decided to do akhanda bhajan, they had to hire a few persons at so much per hour so that their plan could succeed! Do bhajan with faith and enthusiasm. Let the whole city shake with the devotion you put into every Name that you sing. The Name promotes comradeship and establishes concord; it stills all storms and grants peace.....”- 10 July 1959

Hare Rama, Hare Krishna

“... When you do bhajan and sing the Names of God, you should contemplate on underlying truths. The Namavali, ‘Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare’ has sixteen words, and each of the sixteen signifies a virtue which has to be cultivated along with that bhajan ie you must be a bhaktha, tapoyuktha, samsaramuktha, padasaktha, vihitha, dhanasahitha, yaso-mahitha, kalmasha-rahitha ” - 10 July 1959