

## SECTION 8: THE INNER SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVOTIONAL GROUP SINGING

### 1.0 GENERAL

- a. The power of a devotional song lies in the fact that even if a person fails to understand the song, he can totally merge and unite with the rest at the bhajan. Swami says that a devotional song is the lasso by which we can pull God towards us, and it is also the lasso which can pull the hearts of others.
- b. One of the points in the nine-point Code of Conduct is participation in devotional group singing. We must ask our self why Swami has put it down as one of the nine points, namely, participation in devotional group singing at the Centres at least once a month.
- c. In Swami's Great Plan of Dharmasamsthapana (establishment of righteousness), when Swami first emerged in the world and proclaimed, 'I am Sai', he started with bhajans. Bhajan was the beginning. Bhajan was, is and will continue to be the foundation on which the Sai spiritual movement will rest upon. But all of us are not here to sit on the foundation stone of bhajans. Being in the spiritual path, one must build the superstructure on the foundation of bhajan.
- d. After Swami had started the foundation on bhajan, He said 'Do Seva!' Then He said 'Bal Vikas', then EHV, and now He says 'Integration of the World Community'. We must harmonise with Swami's Plan by integrating the message of Sai totally in our daily life. The integration must start with us and within us. One will then become a stone thrown into the sea of society and the ripples start affecting one, two or more persons.
- e. Devotional group singing is one of the spiritual disciplines that caters for all three aspects of individual sadhana. One can stand alone and sing bhajans. One can get one's family together and have a family bhajan (family sadhana). And, one can sing in temples, churches and other places of worship, with permissions from the respective persons in charge.

### 2.0 WHAT IS DEVOTIONAL GROUP SINGING?

- 2.1 Devotional means the bhajan sung must be a devotional song i.e. addressed to the divine or about a divine subject. It means, too, that the song must invoke devotion in others and not only in the singer.
- 2.2 Group means a group of people who are in harmony. When a bhajan is sung, everyone is in pure harmony. Its message is "Can my life be a bhajan?" and "Can I live in harmony with others?" A devotional song has the power to bring everyone, devotees and non-devotees, together.
- 2.3 Singing means the qualities of tune, beat and feeling must be there in the song.



### 3.0 WHAT IS A "SAI BHAJAN" ?

- a. Sai bhajan is not merely a bhajan with Baba's name in it. A SAI bhajan is a bhajan that firstly conforms to basic principles i.e. it has tunes and beats. But more importantly it must have Sweetness (Sangeetham). It must have sweetness for the singer, and it must have the quality to attract: attract others to God. Thirdly, it must have the quality to Inspire.
- b. A SAI bhajan is, therefore, a devotional song which
  - (i) is sung in a group with one medium and fast beat
  - (ii) has the quality to attract the minds of people to the Divine and to inspire them and
  - (iii) has the quality of sweetness as the singer merges with the song.
- c. Devotional Group singing can be one of the most powerful forces to spread the first message of Sai which is Namasmarana (singing the name of God). It is a great seva to inspire people to sing God's name. One who is inspired to constantly sing God's Name, becomes transformed and will go along the path of Divinity and will begin serving.
- d. The biggest problem in our ability to spread Baba's message is the weakness of Sai devotees themselves in not believing what Baba says: - "All names are Mine. All Forms are Mine. What you call Krishna, Rama, Jesus, I am that". We should not feel Swami will only be happy if we bring Baba's name inside the song.
- e. Namasmarana, singing of God's Name, will spread like wild fire once we recognise any name we sing is Baba's whether it is Guru Nanak, Jesus, Buddha or Kuan Yin. Once we overcome our weakness and recognise the vibration of Sai, all Indian and Chinese temple doors will begin to open. We should not insist on putting up Baba's picture. The picture is in our hearts. It is the vibration within us that merges us with the Divine form. The feeling of unification with Him. The halo of the meaning of the song must surround us.
- f. When it is one's turn to sing, one must already be vibrating. The form must come to mind. Each God form has His own distinct vibration. One must recognise and understand the vibration of each God Form and harmonise one's vibration with it. One can recognise the vibration only if one knows the meaning of the song. Lead singers, therefore, have the responsibility of maintaining the vibration of the bhajans. Otherwise, one has to practise until one can sing well. If a lead singer sings in such a way that his singing invokes devotion in others and raises them to great heights then his bhajan also becomes a seva. If a singer is full of devotion but the moment he starts singing and the whole bhajan 'crashes', then he is doing a great disservice.
- g. What is the next aspect? Baba has said "I will install myself wherever My Name is sung". Today Swami says, "I will manifest wherever My work is done". What does it mean? It means that the Centre is no more just a bhajan Centre. It is a Centre. The bhajan is the base on which this framework of Service is to be built.



**4.0 WHY BHAJANS?**

- a. Purpose of bhajans: Bhajans are meant to charge our spiritual batteries every week so that we can live our lives according to SAI teachings and go on to perform service. Each time after we have charged our batteries two choices are open to us. One, we can either make use of our batteries to give light, turn fans and run engines or we can just leave it aside till the next bhajan session. This is why bhajans are critical and centre Chairmen have the responsibility to give new avenues to use the charged batteries to give light, warmth, coolness and comfort to the needy.
- b. Role of lead singers: A lead singer can either be a hero or a zero. Many lead singers take on an aura of leadership, especially to new devotees. People will definitely look upon them as an example to emulate. If they do not fulfil their responsibility or do not do seva, they are misleading the devotees. To sing is one thing. One must also be a leader in fulfilling or at least in trying to fulfil the Nine-Point Code of Conduct. One must be an example, a model and an inspiration.
- c. What about the non-lead singers/chorus? When the bhajan is going on, the non lead singers/chorus should sing in harmony. Then all will feel the vibration of the Divine. Even after the bhajan is over, all will be in harmony. There should not be any cliques. We must conduct ourselves in such a way that we have a policy of equi-distance with everybody. We must be equal to all in the Centre and harmony will grow by itself.
- d. If the bhajan is to be the base of the Sai movement, it must be a solid base. If the bhajan is the inspiration, it is the beginning point from which devotees move on to other sadhana. Then we will understand the significance of the bhajan in our life.
- e. Central Council has instructed all Centres that wherever there are mixed groups of devotees i.e. Chinese and Indians, at least one Chinese and one English song must be sung. This is done so that at least at one point of time, all the devotees will be able to share the bhajan experience. This is not difficult, so make this a sadhana. If the Sai movement is going to spread, we must anticipate the situation when one day we may have to sing in Chinese and even in Bahasa Malaysia or any other language. The Centre must be the place of transformation.
- f. Swami says "Happiness is not in doing what you like to do but in liking what you have to do". This is the greatest challenge for those who are singers in Centres. The transformation must take place and one day there will be a balance of Indian, Chinese and other language songs.
- g. Do not underestimate the inner significance of devotional group singing and its importance. It is a constant effort at perfection.

