



Dear Budding Bhajanists,

Radhe Krishna

Welcome to this novel session of **Namasankeerthana Study Group**. The very fact that you are present here shows that you are all blessed by the Lord to engage yourselves in propagating the Namasankeerthana, which is the aim of this group. Before proceeding further, let us all find out what is Naama and why is it so important.

Naama is the name to identify an entity. As all of us have a name by which alone we are identified, a name is required even for God to identify Him or address Him. Without a name we cannot address anything to anybody. To transact our dealings with others we need name and form. If you do not see your friend sitting next to you, you cannot transact or deal with him. If you do not know his name you cannot address him. Therefore name and form are the basic requirements for transaction. Each one of us has a form and name which individualises us. We have given name to God, but we cannot see God. Therefore, we use a photo or Statue of the God relating to the name. Thus our transaction with the God is possible now with the form and name.

Where does this name come from? In our case, our parents give us the name when we were very young and by every one repeatedly calling us by that name, that name comes to stay as identification of us. In the case of God, the name is given by great Seers and Sanyasins, who have experienced God.. The medium of transaction between you and your friend or anyone else in this world is the speech. For transaction with God it is the Prayer. Prayer is done through a Nama Japa (repeatedly chanting the name), Sthothra, Sloka or Song, in praise of God. Through these you invoke and seek His blessings. When you chant the name, sloka, sthothra etc., you may do silently within you (Bhajanam) or loudly or even in a group, which then becomes a mass prayer. Prayer can be for one's own welfare or for the entire mass. Again when the Naama or Sthothra etc. are sung in a tune with laya and thaala, it becomes a Bhajan. When such performance is done by a group of people called Bhajanists or before an audience, it is known as Naama Sankeerthanam. Naama Sankeerthanam thus consists of Sloka/Sthothra/Keerthana/Naamaavali etc. sung in tune. Repetition of a few names or short songs in praise of a God in tune is called Naamaavali and a full song with Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam are known as Keerthanaas. When Sloka/Sthothra, Keerthana and Naamaavali are taken up together and sung in a group, it is called Namasankeerthanam.

Our aim in this group is to learn as many Naamaavalis as possible and slowly learn to perform Naamasankeerthanam, the objective, the source, the rules, the padhdhathi and their meaning in due course. It is essential that each one of you attend all the sessions, so that you do not miss any important aspect of this study. I wish you all a peaceful, joyful and worthy learning ahead.

Radhe Krishna

Achala Bhakthan