

Bhagavan Stuti:

Open Your Mind With Songs of God

By SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA

Open Your Mind With Songs of God

Stuti literally means praise and a *stotram* is a hymn or song dedicated to God's glory. Is it necessary to praise the Lord? Would He be affected by our praises and does He really need them? What could be the benefits that accrue from singing His glory? From our experiences of dealing with the empirical world, we understand it is natural to appreciate someone who has performed well.

Suppose we were to receive a beautiful ring as a gift, would we not instantly thank the giver? How is it then that we forget to thank the giver of not only the finger - without which we would not be able to wear the ring - but also this entire world around us and beyond?

Tulsidas says: *Hari tum bahut anugraha keene* - "Thank you Lord for being so kind to me." We can well argue that the Lord is not affected by our expressions of gratitude or lack of them. He just does what he has to without expecting any rewards or hoping to have His praises sung. So though He might remain unaffected, but we are greatly benefited from singing His glories. When we build a house, the walls do not expect us to beautify them. They are not affected by our efforts at interior decoration.

We do not decorate the interiors of our homes for the sake of the walls; we do it because it brings us pleasure. It makes us feel good. God is neither gratified, pleased nor overjoyed by praise. He is happy that we want to do something to show our appreciation.

His devotees have felt the need to express their sentiments and so religious literature abounds with the many hymns that have been written to glorify Him. We gain on three major fronts when we praise the Lord. Firstly, we become aware of the many blessings we have received from Him. Secondly, we wish to express our gratitude for what we have received.

Thirdly, through the flowering of our humane qualities we develop respect for his gifts and so use them well and efficiently. Swami Chinmayananda said: "What we have is His gift to us and what we do with it is our gift to Him." A *stuti* normally has an element of exaggeration. This may be true when we speak of humans. But in the case of God no praise can ever be enough.

Tulsidas said that even if we had unlimited time, we cannot adequately describe His glory. It is like saying that the light of the Sun equals the light of billions of glow worms. This is no praise. It is an insult to the Sun, because nothing really can be compared adequately to the brilliance of the Sun. Likewise, any praise showered on God remains inadequate.

We like to act after fully understanding the benefits that may accrue from the actions we are undertaking. We always need to know the reason for doing something.

Similarly, we need to know the reason for singing the Lord's praise. For centuries, why have devotees extolled His virtues? *Bhagavan stuti* cleanses the heart, removing from it all the accumulated impurities. This is the greatest benefit. Like a *mantra*, it protects the person taking the Name.

The Lord's name protects the devotee and purifies his mind and heart. A sanctified heart enables us to seek out the truth. This cleansing process facilitates our efforts to break free and get liberated.