

minutes, and you should follow the harmony and rhythm of the music, beginning from the point of tranquility and leading up to a point of activity.

Why is kirtan so powerful?

Kirtan has a wonderful effect on the atmosphere. It is like waving a stick of incense on the subtle plane, making it fragrant. Kirtan is better than Om chanting. Singing kirtan clears away all the complexes, fears, worries and confusions. It is the best way to relax.

Please speak about the purpose of interpersonal conflict in ashram life?

In ashram life the interpersonal conflicts are very minor events. They do not penetrate deep into the consciousness. However, it is through personality clashes and conflicts that we come to know our own selves and others much better. Initially, when people come to the ashram they do not want conflicts, and being unable to face or understand them, they do their level best to avoid them. But after some time, they get used to them and realize that everyone has a different nature and personality and they should be free to express it.

Ashram life is designed in such a way that these conflicts do arise just as they would anywhere else in the world. But by and by we understand their reality and purpose, and we no longer mind them. If there is conflict between you and him, you understand that he has his own nature and you have your own, but still you love him and he loves you. You see, love, union, relationships, practical affairs of life and day to day activities of the ashram can continue in spite of differences and conflicts. In time everybody realizes that conflict is an inevitable law of evolution.

Why should there not be conflicts in ashram life? There is conflict going on everywhere, in all parts of

the world and in all cultures and communities. Conflict is not only occurring amongst humans, it also takes place in the animal kingdom and in every sphere of nature. Even in your physical body the chemicals, hormones and serums are all in constant conflict with each other. And as well as this, the three qualities of one's nature—sattva, rajas and tamas are always in conflict. So let us understand that conflict is an inevitable part of evolution. It is not something that should be dreaded.

If people can understand the inevitability of conflict, perhaps the family system will improve. You know, in the Hindu joint families, just before marriage, all children are taught one very important thing. Differences and conflicts are necessary. You must understand them, adjust accordingly and utilize them.

So, whenever there are conflicts in family life or ashram life, you must be ready to utilize them for gain. This is what I do.

Why do you have men and women staying in the same ashram?

I don't think men and women should be separated. God has not done it, so why should I? Separate facilities are all that is necessary. At the same time, we do not form attachments and personal relationships, because it is far better to live an independent life within the ashram. We work together, that's all. We are neither brother nor sister, husband nor wife, parent nor child. We have no relations with each other. I am not half and you are not half. I am one and you are one. I want you to be a complete unit. That is how one has to grow.

This reorientation to one another may take decades or even centuries. The old cultures and religions have not succeeded in changing man's limited attitudes and views of the opposite sex. Today there are still