

Swami's Flock Chants in Park to Find Ecstasy

50 Followers Clap and Sway to Hypnotic Music at East Side Ceremony

By JAMES R. SIKES

Sitting under a tree in a Lower East Side park and occasionally dancing, 50 followers of a Hindu swami repeated a 16-word chant for two hours yesterday afternoon to the accompaniment of cymbals, tambourines, sticks, drums, bells and a small reed organ.

Repetition of the chant, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta says, is the best way to achieve self-realization in an age of destruction.

While children played on Hoving's Hill—a pile of dirt in the middle of Tompkins Square Park—or bicycled along the sunny walks, many in the crowd of about 100 persons standing around the chanters found themselves swaying or clapping hands in time to the hypnotic, rhythmic music.

"It brings a state of ecstasy," said Allen Ginsberg, the poet, who was one of the celebrants. "For one thing, the syllables force yoga breath control; that's one physiological explanation."

The ecstasy of the chant, or mantra—"Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare Hare"—has replaced LSD and other drugs for many of the swami's followers, Mr. Ginsberg said.

Drugs Are Replaced

He explained that Hare, pronounced HAH-ray, is the name for Vishnu, a Hindu god, as the "bringer of delight." Rama, pronounced RAH-mah, is the incarnation of Vishnu as the prince of responsibility. Krishna is the God-narrator of the Bhagavad-Gita, one of the chief Hindu religious books. The chant therefore names different aspects of God, Mr. Ginsberg said.

Another celebrant, 26-year-old Howard M. Wheeler, who described himself as a former English instructor at Ohio State University now devoting his full time to the swami, said: "I myself took 50 doses of LSD and a dozen of peyote in two years, and now, nothing."

The swami orders his followers to give up "all intoxicants, including coffee, tea and cigarettes," he said in an interview after the ceremony. "In this sense, we are helping your Government," he added.

However, he indicated, the Government apparently has not appreciated this help sufficiently, for the Department of Immigration recently told Swami Bhaktivedanta that his one-year visitor's visa had expired and that he must leave, he said. The case is being appealed.

The swami, a swarthy man with short-cropped grayish hair who was clad in a salmon-colored robe over a pink sweater, said that when he first met his own teacher, or guru, in 1922, he was told to spread the cult of Krishna to the Western countries through the English language. "Therefore, in this old age [71], I have



The New York Times (by Allyn Baum)

Two youths are stirred to dance at concert presided over by Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta in Tompkins Square Park.

taken so much risk," he said. He arrived in the United States in September, 1965.

The swami, whose title is equivalent to the reverend, conducts chanting and gives lectures at his International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Inc., a storefront at 26 Second Avenue, between First and Second Streets, on Mondays,

Wednesdays and Fridays from 7 to 9 P. M. and every morning at 7 A. M. He has scheduled another session in the park at Seventh Street and Avenue A on Sunday at 2 P. M.

His followers were said to include a lawyer, a mathematics professor and several teachers and social workers, as well as full-time devotees.