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The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name

By

Śacīnandana Swami



Revised Edition

*The Nectarean Ocean
of the
Holy Name*

There is no vow like chanting the holy name, no knowledge superior to it, no meditation which comes anywhere near it, and it gives the highest result. No penance is equal to it, and nothing is as potent or powerful as the holy name.

Chanting is the greatest act of piety and the supreme refuge. Even the words of the Vedas do not possess sufficient power to describe its magnitude. Chanting is the highest path to liberation, peace and eternal life. It is the pinnacle of devotion, the heart's joyous proclivity and attraction and the best form of remembrance of the Supreme Lord. The holy name has appeared solely for the benefit of the living entities as their lord and master, their supreme worshipful object and their spiritual guide and mentor.

Whoever continuously chants Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name, even in his sleep, can easily realize that the name is a direct manifestation of Kṛṣṇa Himself, in spite of the influences of Kali-yuga.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, in *Śaraṇāgati*
(quoted from *Ādi Purāṇa*)

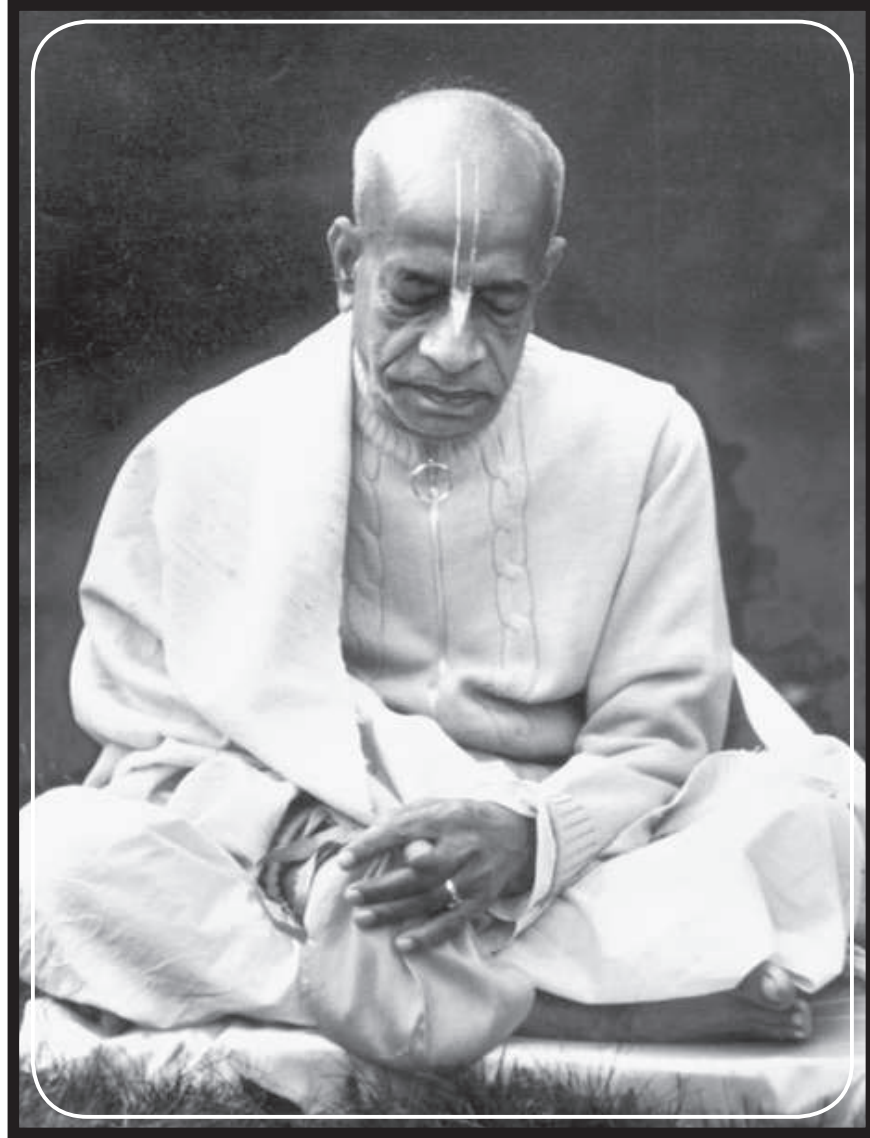
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Dedicated to my eternal spiritual master

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda
who has given the world the holy name,
the life and soul of all spiritual existence.

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Of course I will always remain grateful to all the devotees who helped produce the German version—which served as the literary foundation for this expanded work.

My gratefulness goes to my godbrothers—too numerous to mention by name—who have kindly taught me many secrets of the holy name.

I should not forget all those wonderful people who over the years have helped me to appreciate, at least theoretically, both directly and indirectly that the holy name is the ultimate shelter for us eternal souls in this temporary world and beyond.

I am most grateful, however, to the Personality of the holy name Himself. Had He not appeared—represented by the most merciful incarnation Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, where would we be?



Foreword

Summer 1971. Like many young people of my age, I was standing up for the social and political changes of society with full conviction. It was just at that time that I met my best friend—the holy name.

Like many deep and long-lasting friendships, this one did by no means develop without complication or trouble. I can clearly remember the cultural shock when I heard the devotees singing “Hare Kṛṣṇa” on television for the first time. Later, when I watched incredulously how they were dancing in front of the War Memorial in Hamburg, I had already drawn my conclusion: This chanting does not fit into our European culture. It does not appeal to me, it is too exotic. Yet, right away I was seized by an inexplicable fascination—deep in my heart I felt not only addressed, but also called and challenged—a typical love-hate relationship started to develop.

The more I became gradually acquainted with the holy name, the more I started to love it. When the record “Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple London, together with George Harrison” was played on the radio, I interrupted all activities and conversations and dedicated my full attention to the holy name. Even though in the beginning it made me wonder: What was so special about this song—was it perhaps that beyond all differences between cultures and musical styles it pointed to a deep, universal mystery?

Finally, after having read the Bhagavad-gītā, I would sit on the shore of the Baltic Sea in the evening and string pine wood beads on a curtain cord. Since I had no japa-mālā—the classical beads made of the holy tulasī wood—I tied my own mantra string in order to chant the holy name with more concentration.

How did it all begin? The story of how Kṛṣṇa’s holy name came to the West sounds at first like a spiritual adventure. Prabhupāda, the representative of a millennium-old disciplic succession, came to New York in 1965, following the order of his spiritual master. From a material point of view, he owned only forty rupees, “as much money as you spend in one day in America,” he once said. In his heart, however, he held the most precious treasure: the holy name



of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, he brought an ancient Vedic prophesy and he had come to the West to fulfill it: The holy name would be chanted in every town and village of the whole world.

As soon as Prabhupāda started to implant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra firmly into the rough asphalt of the “capital of sin”, a beautiful tree began to grow with branches and twigs creeping all over the world: the chanting of the holy name.

The holy name is the first contact which the living being can have with Kṛṣṇa in the material world. Gradually, that name reveals itself to the seriously determined person as Kṛṣṇa Himself, with His transcendental form, His qualities, and finally, with His transcendental lilās.

Thus the holy name includes the variety and the aim of all spiritual realization. There is no need to look for God anywhere else: He is present in His Name. At the same time the practice of chanting the holy name is an open secret. Therefore this book, *The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name*, is a humble attempt to reveal more about the deep mystery of the holy name. Most of all, it intends to provide the reader with an improved access to proper chanting methods, through numerous instructions from the age-old practice of chanting the holy name, so that in every single case the name may reveal its full power. Thus, *The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name* is not a mere theoretical treatise; it is first of all a practical guide, with the purpose to be, as far as possible, an everlasting source of inspiration.

Of course I am aware that this publication will not be able to fully expound the topic. For thousands of years, the holy name has inspired innumerable Vaiṣṇava poets to fill palm leaves after palm leaves with the glorification of its glories. Nevertheless, since I have been granted a slight taste of the glories of the holy name, I would like to present some drops of its nectarean ocean, aware of the obvious shortcomings of my attempt.

The *Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name* is based on the work *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* (“The Gem of the Holy Name”) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. By the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and my



godbrothers, I was allowed to study this book in Vṛndāvana in autumn 1988. I became so deeply inspired that I started to present it in a series of lectures in Zurich, which formed the basis for the first German edition of the present book. But this was just the beginning. Since then, I have continuously been engaged in exploring the topic of the holy name and was able to dive deeper and deeper into its nectarean ocean. I acquired more technical and philosophical information and details about individual realizations, which developed into a completely new German edition. Thus, a completely new book about the holy name was created in 1997, which formed the basis for the first English edition. The feedback we received for the German edition of the Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name showed us that a wide spectrum of people acquired a copy of the book. The English version was read by even more.

Since the book had to be reprinted, we took the opportunity to re-organize the original English version of the book. While the content and essence remains the same, minor changes have been made in various parts of the book to improve on the flow and presentation of the material.

Nevertheless, it is quite probable and also desirable that in another ten years, a new edition should be written; for just like an ocean offers many unexplored depths, the nectarean ocean of the holy name similarly holds greater and greater mysteries for the spiritual seeker.

As I am an imperfect conditioned soul—who writes about a subject of the eternal spiritual world, mistakes are bound to creep into this presentation even though we tried our best to repeat the message of guru, sādhu and śāstra.

Also, despite “a staff of the best editors in the world” the English reader will soon detect (if he/she has not done so already) that English is not my mother tongue.

Be it as it may be—we pray that our enthusiastic endeavor will be appreciated by those who wish to spend their time finding the essence, rather than concentrating on the faults.

At this point I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my eternal spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta



Swami Prabhupāda, without whose patient and proficient guidance I would never have met with this ocean of nectar. I hope that he is pleased with my efforts. I would also like to thank my readers for their interest in this topic.

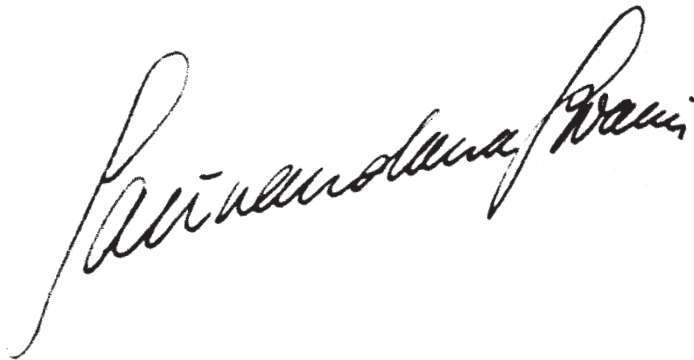
I wish with all my heart that you may find inspiration in reading this book again and again and gain spiritual strength from your own realizations which will certainly come once you decide to dive deeply into The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name.

In concluding, dear reader, let me give you a few hints which will help you to appreciate this book better. The spectrum of readers will most probably range from the person who is just somewhat interested in spiritual life to the devout and well experienced practitioner, whose level of advancement is vastly superior to ours. To make the book equally relishable to all, I suggest visiting it like a botanical garden. There may be areas and sections which do not interest you immediately, whereas others instantly engage your fascination. So you might leave the ordinary route to explore them according to your own order. You might decide to wander at random—and later choose to revisit certain chapters. All this and many more possibilities are fine. Let me however humbly remind you that the real visit to The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name will only take place if you dive into it by chanting yourself with full attention and deep affection.

We would consider it our greatest fortune if this book did its little service to our readers by inspiring them in this way.

Śacīnandana Swami

Autumn 1998



Maṅgalācaraṇa

An Auspicious Invocation

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine
namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanya and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

*vande 'ham śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānviṭaṁ taṁ sa-jīvam
sādvaitaṁ sāvadhūtaṁ parijana-sahitaṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devaṁ
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānviṭāṁś ca*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and unto the feet of all Vaiṣṇavas. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī along with his elder brother Sanātana Gosvāmī, as well as Raghunātha Dāsa and Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. I offer my respectful obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda along with Advaita Ācārya, Gadādhara, Śrīvāsa, and other associates. I offer my respectful obeisances to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with Their associates Śrī Lalitā and Viśākhā.

*vāñchā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānāṁ pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord. They are just like desire trees who can fulfill the desires of everyone, and they are full of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls.



*vande śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya- nityānandau sahoditau
gauḍodaye puṣpavantau citraū śandau tamo-nudau*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, who are like the sun and moon. They have arisen simultaneously on the horizon of Gauḍa to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and thus wonderfully bestow benediction upon all.

*pañca-tattvātmakaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam
bhaktāvatāraṁ bhaktākhyarṁ namāmi bhakta-śaktikam*

I offer my obeisances unto the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, who is nondifferent from His features as a devotee, devotional incarnation, devotional manifestation, pure devotee and devotional energy.

*ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa tanayas tad dhāma śrī vṛndāvanam
ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā
śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalaṁ premā pum-artho mahān
śrī-caitanya mahāprabhor matam idaṁ tatrādarāḥ na paraḥ*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is to be worshiped along with His transcendental abode, Vṛndāvana. The most pleasing form of worship for the Lord is that which was performed by the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless authority on everything, and pure love of God is the ultimate goal of life for all men. These statements, for which we have the highest regard, are the opinion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

*jayatāṁ surataū paṅgor mama manda-mater gatī
mat-sarvasva-padāmbhojau rādhā-madana-mohanau*

Glory to the all-merciful Rādhā and Madana-mohana! I am lame and ill advised, yet They are my directors, and Their lotus feet are everything to me.

*jaya śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda ki jaya*

All glories to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord Nityānanda, Ādvaita Ācārya, Gadādhara Prabhu, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura and all those devotees who follow in their footsteps.

***Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare***



Introduction

Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the Preceptor of the Holy Name

The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name is based on Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Bengali text Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi, which presents a long conversation on the chanting of the holy name between the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and the saint, Haridāsa Ṭhākura. The life and the teachings of Haridāsa Ṭhākura serve as an example for the devotees for all times.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura was one of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's most beloved associates. He appeared in Bengal, thirty years before the Lord, in the family of the influential Muslim Kazi Habibulla. From his childhood, the exceptionally handsome Haridāsa was the object of love and attention for his family. If we consider how at that time the Hindus were persecuted and forcibly converted to Muslims, it is an amazing fact that the Muslim-born Haridāsa soon became the crown jewel of the Hindu society. But the pious Hindus loved him because the nectarean stream of the holy name was incessantly emanating from his heart.

At the age of eighteen, Haridāsa renounced the world and went to the forest. Attracted by his sweet singing, hundreds of people came to see him and brought fruits as gifts. With a loud "*haribol*" he would throw the fruits into the crowd. When children picked them up, he would encourage them to call out "*haribol*" themselves—which they did with pleasure, for as a reward they received even more fruits. Haridāsa Ṭhākura's reputation expanded from day to day and he was praised as a 'great soul'. Being disturbed by some envious people, he moved to another place. This time, a rich atheistic landowner, Rāja Rāmacandra Khān, wanted to dissuade him from his meditation and entrusted this task to a prostitute named Hīra. One evening, she came to the hut of Haridāsa Ṭhākura and tempted him to enjoy the night with her. But he continued to chant, disinterested like a child, and asked her to wait until he had chanted



his prescribed number of holy names. By the spiritual power of his chanting, she became so purified that after three days she asked for initiation into the holy name. News spread that Haridāsa Ṭhākura had converted a prostitute to a topmost pure Vaiṣṇavī, and his fame increased more and more.

As a pure devotee, Haridāsa Ṭhākura exhibited extraordinary humility. This was illustrated by an incident which took place in Chandpura. The landlords Hiraṇya and Govardhana had invited Haridāsa Ṭhākura to their assembly, where they discussed philosophical topics. When the debate turned to *harināma*, he contradicted the scholars who were present in the meeting. He declared that the burning of sinful reactions and the liberation of material existence were only by-products of *harināma*—the actual result was the attainment of deep love of God. Thereupon, he was severely criticized by Gopāla Cakravartī, a learned *brāhmaṇa*. But Haridāsa Ṭhākura remained in a humble position and did not consider the *brāhmaṇa*'s offense. Whereas the other participants were highly upset, Haridāsa just replied that Gopāla Cakravartī was not to be criticized, because the importance of the chanting of the holy name could not be comprehended by arguments but only through devotional practice. Kṛṣṇa, however, did not forgive the *brāhmaṇa*—after three days his nose melted away due to incurable leprosy.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura was unhappy when he heard of the *brahmāna*'s fate. Therefore, he went to Śāntipura, where Advaita Ācārya lovingly took care of him. Śrī Advaita gave him food which had been offered to the ancestors and was reserved for the *brāhmaṇas*. He declared that as a Vaiṣṇava, Haridāsa Ṭhākura was transcendently situated, and to feed him was as pious as to feed millions of *brāhmaṇas*. This was intolerable for the *brāhmaṇas* of Śāntipura, and they declared the Ācārya to be an outcaste. Later, feeling great regret, they apologized and declared Advaita and Haridāsa to be 'perfect living beings', situated above the regulations of the four castes.

Haridāsa chanted a daily quota of three hundred thousand holy names without fail. The first one hundred thousand names he chanted in a loud resounding voice, the second hundred thousand he



chanted softly as in whispering and the last he chanted in the mind. Sometimes he would laugh, cry and dance, or he would faint and fall to the ground. At other times he behaved like a madman. But when he spoke out, he revealed deep knowledge and comprehension of the revealed scriptures. People came from far to see him, and finally he became a political problem. The Muslims were eager to spread their influence, but now a member of a very respectable Muslim family had converted to Hinduism! Haridāsa was arrested and brought to Hussain Shah. The Muslim ruler forbade him to chant the holy names under the threat of death sentence. Haridāsa fearlessly responded, “I am not going to stop *harināma*, even if my body is cut into pieces.” He was arrested and imprisoned but in prison, Haridāsa immediately started to preach the glories of the holy name to the other inmates. When they also started to chant, the Shah’s anger increased even more. He gave the order for Haridāsa to be beaten to death in twenty-two market places. The policemen pounded him until they were exhausted—but through Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, his body remained uninjured. After this incident, the influence of *harināma* quickly spread, and even Hussain Shah became strongly touched by it.

Shortly thereafter, Advaita Ācārya started his ‘Vaiṣṇava association’ in Navadvīpa, and Haridāsa joined immediately. As soon as Caitanya Mahāprabhu began to perform *saṅkīrtana* in Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura’s house, Haridāsa Ṭhākura became an important member of the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Then Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu arrived in Navadvīpa and together with Haridāsa, under the instructions of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they loudly chanted through the lanes of Navadvīpa. Those who considered them to be ordinary beggars, were told, “We do not want food or material alms—we want the alms of *harināma*. Chant ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’, that is our request, that is our instruction.” In this way, they preached the importance of *harināma* to the inhabitants of Navadvīpa, who were mostly scholars or worshippers of Durgā Devī. Even sinners like Jagāi and Mādhāi were transformed into saints. At that time, Haridāsa became known as *namācārya*, the preceptor and propagator of the holy name.

When Caitanya Mahāprabhu settled in Jagannātha Puri, He



accommodated Haridāsa in a thatched cottage near a tree which later became famous as the Siddha-Bakula tree. Here, Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to see Haridāsa every day. Although Haridāsa was very old at that time, he continued to chant 300,000 holy names daily. One day he felt too weak to chant his prescribed number of holy names. Lord Caitanya visited him and asked, “Haridāsa, how is your health?” Haridāsa answered, “Master! The body is well, but not the mind. Because of my age, I cannot finish my rounds.” The following day, Haridāsa Ṭhākura passed away in a most glorious way, in the presence of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His devotees. This incident is wonderfully described by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the other devotees came before Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who offered his respects to the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and all the Vaiṣṇavas. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu inquired, “My dear Haridāsa, what is the news?” Haridāsa Ṭhākura replied, “My Lord, whatever mercy You can bestow upon me.” Upon hearing this, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu immediately began great congregational chanting in the courtyard. As He described the transcendental attributes of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, He seemed to possess five mouths. The more He described, the more His great happiness increased. After hearing of the transcendental qualities of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, all the devotees present were struck with wonder. They all offered their respectful obeisances to his lotus feet. Haridāsa Ṭhākura made Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu sit down in front of him, and then he fixed his eyes, like two bumblebees, on the lotus face of the Lord. He held the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu on his heart and then took the dust of the feet of all the devotees present and put it on his head. He began to chant the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya again and again. As he drank the sweetness of the face of the Lord, tears constantly glided down from his eyes. While chanting the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, he gave up his air of life and left his body.

Seeing the wonderful death of Haridāsa Ṭhākura by his own will, which was just like a great mystic *yogī's*, everyone



remembered the passing away of Bhīṣma. There was a tumultuous noise as they all chanted the holy names “Hari” and “Kṛṣṇa.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, overwhelmed with ecstatic love, raised the body of Haridāsa Ṭhākura and placed it on His lap. Then He began to dance in the courtyard. Because of His great ecstatic love, all the devotees were helpless, and in ecstatic love they also began congregational dancing and chanting.

The body of Haridāsa Ṭhākura was then raised onto a carrier that resembled an airship and taken to the sea, accompanied by congregational chanting. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu bathed the body of Haridāsa Ṭhākura in the sea and then declared, “From this day on, this sea has become a great pilgrimage site.” Everyone drank the water that had touched the lotus feet of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and then they smeared remnants of Lord Jagannātha’s sandalwood pulp over his body. After a hole was dug in the sand, his body was placed in it. With His transcendental hands, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally covered the body of Haridāsa Ṭhākura with sand, chanting “Haribol! Haribol!” They constructed a platform upon the site which was protected all around by fencing. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu danced and chanted around the platform, and as the holy name of Hari roared tumultuously, the whole universe became filled with the vibration. (Excerpt from *Cc. Antya* 11.46-70.)

Haridāsa Ṭhākura’s example continues to inspire devotees all over the world, even to the present day. His message is simple: In life and death fill your mouth with the nectar of the holy name—which will provide you with the direct association of the Lord.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote a wonderful poem for Haridāsa Ṭhākura:

He reasons ill who tells that Vaiṣṇavas die
when thou art living still in sound
The Vaiṣṇavas die to live and living try
to spread the holy name around!¹

.....
¹ *Sāragrahī Vaiṣṇava* verse 9; written by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Jagannātha Puri in 1871, in contemplation of the *samādhi* of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura.



nāma-tattva

What is the Holy Name?



1. Śrīla Prabhupāda on the Holy Name

The transcendental vibration established by the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare is the sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. As living spirit souls, we are all originally Kṛṣṇa conscious entities, but due to our association with matter from time immemorial, our consciousness is now adulterated by the material atmosphere. The material atmosphere, in which we are now living, is called *māyā*, or illusion. *Māyā* means “that which is not.” And what is this illusion? The illusion is that we are all trying to be lords of material nature, while actually we are under the grip of her stringent laws. When a servant artificially tries to imitate the all-powerful master, he is said to be in illusion. We are trying to exploit the resources of material nature, but actually we are becoming more and more entangled in her complexities. Therefore, although we are engaged in a hard struggle to conquer nature, we are ever more dependent on her. This illusory struggle against material nature can be stopped at once by revival of our eternal Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare is the transcendental process for reviving this original, pure consciousness. By chanting this transcendental vibration, we can cleanse away all misgivings within our hearts. The basic principle of all such misgivings is the false consciousness that I am the lord of all I survey.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind. This consciousness is the original, natural energy of the living entity. When we hear this transcendental vibration, this consciousness is revived. This simplest method of meditation is recommended for this age. By practical experience also, one can perceive that by chanting this *mahā-mantra*, or the Great Chanting for Deliverance, one can at once feel a transcendental ecstasy coming through from the spiritual stratum. In the material concept of life we are busy in the matter of sense gratification, as if we were in the lower, animal stage. A little elevated from this status of sense gratification, one is engaged in mental speculation for the purpose of getting out of the



material clutches. A little elevated from this speculative status, when one is intelligent enough, one tries to find out the supreme cause of all causes—within and without. And when one is factually on the plane of spiritual understanding, surpassing the stages of sense, mind, and intelligence, he is then on the transcendental plane. This chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is enacted from the spiritual platform, and thus this sound vibration surpasses all lower strata of consciousness—namely sensual, mental, and intellectual. There is no need, therefore, to understand the language of the *mantra*, neither is there any need for mental speculation nor any intellectual adjustment for chanting this *mahā-mantra*. It is automatic, from the spiritual platform, and as such, anyone can take part in the chanting without any previous qualification. On a more advanced stage, of course, one is not expected to commit offenses on the grounds of spiritual understanding.

In the beginning, there may not be the presence of all transcendental ecstasies, which are eight in number. These are: (1) being stopped as though dumb, (2) perspiration, (3) standing up of hairs on the body, (4) dislocation of voice, (5) trembling, (6) fading of the body, (7) crying in ecstasy, and (8) trance. But there is no doubt that chanting for a while takes one immediately to the spiritual platform, and one shows the first symptom of this in the urge to dance along with the chanting of the *mantra*. We have seen this practically. Even a child can take part in the chanting and dancing. Of course, for one who is too entangled in material life, it takes a little more time to come to the standard point, but even such a materially engrossed man is raised to the spiritual platform very quickly. When the *mantra* is chanted by a pure devotee of the Lord in love, it has the greatest efficacy on hearers, and as such this chanting should be heard from the lips of a pure devotee of the Lord, so that immediate effects can be achieved. As far as possible, chanting from the lips of nondevotees should be avoided. Milk touched by the lips of a serpent has poisonous effects.

The word Hara is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are forms of addressing the Lord Himself. Both Kṛṣṇa and Rāma mean “the supreme pleasure,” and



Nectar an Ocean of the Holy Name

Hara is the supreme pleasure energy of the Lord, changed to Hare in the vocative. The supreme pleasure energy of the Lord helps us to reach the Lord.

The material energy, called *māyā*, is also one of the multifarious energies of the Lord. And we, the living entities, are also the energy, marginal energy, of the Lord. The living entities are described as superior to material energy. When the superior energy is in contact with the inferior energy, an incompatible situation arises; but when the superior marginal energy is in contact with the superior energy, Hara, it is established in its happy, normal condition.

These three words, namely Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma, are the transcendental seeds of the *mahā-mantra*. The chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His energy, to give protection to the conditioned soul. This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother's presence. Mother Hara helps the devotee achieve the Lord Father's grace, and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee who chants this *mantra* sincerely.

No other means of spiritual realization is as effective in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy as the chanting of the *mahā-mantra*:

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*



2. The Glories of the Holy Name

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṇa's name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with *māyā*. Kṛṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.

(Padma Purāṇa, quoted in Cc. Madhya 17.133)

I do not know how much nectar the two syllables “Kṛṣ-ṇa” have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.

(Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in Vidagdha-mādhava 1.15; quoted in Cc. Antya 1.99)

Chanting the holy name is the chief means of attaining love of Godhead. This chanting or devotional service does not depend on any paraphernalia, nor on one's having taken birth in a good family. By humility and meekness one attracts the attention of Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of all the Vedas. Therefore if one becomes very humble and meek, he can easily attain the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in this age of Kali. That is the fulfillment of all great sacrifices, penances and austerities because when one achieves ecstatic love of Godhead, he attains the complete perfection of life. Therefore whatever one does in executing devotional service must be accompanied with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord.

(Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in Bhakti-sandarbhā 2.70; quoted in Cc. Antya 4.71, p.)

The holy name is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whenever it is chanted without



offenses by anyone, Kṛṣṇa appears personally on the tongue of that person. Therefore, the devotee says “What is the use of only one tongue? I desire millions of tongues. And what is the use of only two ears? With them, I can perceive too little of Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental nature. I desire millions of ears.”

As the *Bṛhan-Nāradiya Purāṇa* emphasizes, chanting the holy name is not only the most powerful, but also the most suitable method of attaining spiritual knowledge in Kali-yuga.

In this age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress than the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord.

(*Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa* 3.8.126; quoted in *Cc. Ādi* 7.71, p. and 7.120, p.)

This is confirmed in the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad*, which presents a conversation between Nārada Muni and Lord Brahmā. This conversation took place at the beginning of Kali-yuga.

Nārada Muni asked Brahmā: “How can the fallen souls be liberated in Kali-yuga?”

Brahmā answered: “This is the real secret of all Vedic scriptures, which helps you to cross the miserable ocean of Kali-yuga. Simply through the chanting of the names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, men are purified in this age of Kali.”

Nārada Muni again asked: “Which name is it?”

Brahmā answered: “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. These sixteen names, composed of thirty-two syllables, are the only means to counteract the destructive influences of Kali-yuga. After having studied the Vedas, we cannot find a method of religion more appropriate for this age than the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Thus the *mahā-mantra*, consisting of sixteen names, destroys the gross and subtle material coverings of the *jīva*. Then, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa will appear before him like the brilliant beams of the sun after the clouds are dispelled.”

(*Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad* 2-7; quoted in *Cc. Ādi* 3.40, p. and 7.76, p.)



The effects of the holy name are described by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī:

All glories, all glories to the all-blissful holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure.

(Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.9; quoted in Cc. Antya 4.71, p.)

In the *Bṛhad-Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, it is said:

Simply by chanting one holy name of Hari, a sinful man can counteract the reactions to more sins than he is able to commit. (Quoted in ŚB.6.2.7, p.)

The holy name displays its force even when chanted unknowingly or unintentionally. In this connection, the story is told of a Muslim who had contracted severe enteritis after eating spoilt meat. Following the call of nature, he ran into the wood. But he was too weak to be able to get on his feet after evacuating. All this had been perceived by a wild boar which regarded human excrements as a delicious meal and was impatiently waiting to swallow it. Finally, the wild boar could no longer control its senses. It attacked the poor man and pierced his heart with its tusks. Dying, the Muslim cried, “Harama!”

Harama, an Arabic word, refers to anything that is prohibited by the Islamic faith. In this word, the syllables of the holy name, “Rāma”, are contained. Thus, the Muslim unintentionally chanted the holy name and attained *mokṣa*. This is the result of chanting the holy name unconsciously, just for one time. We can hardly imagine how effective it is to chant the holy name constantly and consciously.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, we hear:

Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead. (*Cc. Antya 4.71*)



Nectar of the Ocean of the Holy Name

As long as we are on the platform of *nāma-aparādha* or *nāma-ābhāsa*, our chanting will not be tasteful. But simply by continuing to chant we will certainly make an experience of Kṛṣṇa's real nature. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī compares this to a patient suffering from jaundice:

The holy name, character, pastimes, and activities of Kṛṣṇa are all transcendently sweet like sugar candy. Although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of *avidyā* (ignorance) cannot taste anything sweet, it is wonderful that simply by carefully chanting these sweet names every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root. (*Upadeśamṛta* 7)

In the *Bṛhad-viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra*, one thousand names of Viṣṇu are enumerated. As there are so many names of God, the question may arise which name should be chanted. In this connection, the following verse is spoken by Lord Śiva to his wife Durgā:

I chant the holy name of Rāma, Rāma, Rāma and thus enjoy this beautiful sound. This holy name of Rāmacandra is equal to one thousand holy names of Lord Viṣṇu.

The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* adds:

The pious results derived from chanting the thousand names of Viṣṇu three times can be attained by only one repetition of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

In other words, one name of Kṛṣṇa is three times as powerful as the name of Rāma, and one name of Rāma is equal to one thousand names of Viṣṇu. This gives a hint to the importance of the names of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.

There is a relationship between the chanting of the holy name and the different levels of devotional service. It is possible to recognize a Vaiṣṇava by the manner of his chanting, as explained by Lord Caitanya:



A first-class Vaiṣṇava is he whose very presence makes others chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. (*Cc.Madhya* 16.74)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is one such first-class Vaiṣṇava. By his mercy alone, people are able to chant Kṛṣṇa's holy name: Whenever they come across a devotee of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in public, they exclaim, "Oh, here's a Hare Kṛṣṇa!" In this way begin to chant.



3. The Meaning of the Holy Name

It is an offense to interpret the meaning of the holy name according to one's own conception. One should adopt the explanation given by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the scriptures:

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* consists of thirty-two syllables and three different names: Hare, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. "Kṛṣṇa" means "the all-attractive". The syllable *kṛṣ* is the attractive aspect of the Lord and *na* is derived from the word *ānanda*, "spiritual bliss". Thus the name of Kṛṣṇa contains God's most attractive and pleasant aspect. The *Nirukti* dictionary renders a further explanation: *kṛṣ* means either "to draw" or "the entire existence", and *na* stands for "termination". "Kṛṣṇa", therefore, also means "He who draws the conditioned souls to Him" and "He who finishes the material existence of birth and death."

"Rāma" means "spiritual enjoyment." It is a name of Śrī Balarāma, but also of Śrī Rāmacandra. In Hyderabad, two *sannyāsīs* of our movement discussed the question whether the name "Rāma" truly refers to the one or the other. Finally they asked Śrīla Prabhupāda for his *siddhānta* (conclusion). Śrīla Prabhupāda answered, "As to Vaiṣṇava authorities, there is no difference between Balarāma and Rāmacandra, for both are God. Thus, 'Rāma' can mean Balarāma and Rāmacandra as well."

"Hare" is the vocative case (addressing form) of "Hari". This is another name of Kṛṣṇa: "He who grants liberation". The name "Hare", however, also refers to another personality. When Śukadeva Gosvāmī recited the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he avoided pronouncing the name: Rādhā, or Śrīmatī Rādhārāni.

For, had the two syllables *rā-dhā* directly passed his lips, Śukadeva Gosvāmī would immediately have fallen into transcendental ecstasy. As soon as he spoke the name of Śrīmatī Rādhārāni, the most excellent of all *gopīs*, he became so overwhelmed by remembering Her that he could not continue to speak. Therefore he only once mentioned the word *ārādhitaḥ*, "a certain *gopī* who worships Kṛṣṇa the best". This is the only reference to Śrīmatī Rādhārāni in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*¹. Śukadeva Gosvāmī never pronounced the



name “Rādhā,” because otherwise he would have been unable to complete his advice to Mahārāja Parīkṣit in the form of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Another name of Rādhārāni is Hara, and “Hare” is again the vocative case of this name. Thus, “Hare” refers either to Lord Hari or to Śrīmatī Rādhārāni.

In concluding, we can say that the *mahā-mantra* expresses the following prayer: “Oh energy of Kṛṣṇa (Hare, Rādhē), Oh Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your devotional service.”

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa means addressing Them, “O my Lord, O my Lord’s energy.” So when you address somebody, you want to ask for something. If they reply, “Yes, why are you calling?” then we ask, “Please engage me in Your service.”

This is the prayer. (Lecture from 2/12/74 in Bombay)

In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and we should carefully avoid concocting our own interpretation.²

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¹ In *ŚB.* 10.30.28; this *śloka* is quoted and explained in *Cc. Madhya* 8.100.

² Refer to Chapter VII for a further discussion on the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.



4. The Effects of the Holy Name

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitarāṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step.

(Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1)

This verse mentions seven transcendental results which are attained by chanting the holy name:

- 1. *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*:** The mirror of the heart is purified. The material mind resembles a mirror covered by the dust of innumerable material impressions. They are collected in many lives and prevent one from recognizing the eternal spiritual form of the soul. The “dust grains” on the mirror of the mind are subtle. They consist mainly of desires to enjoy separately from Kṛṣṇa, and of bad habits or *anarthas*. The original, spiritual mind, however, is free from the dust of material coverings, and by chanting the holy name, this dust is removed and the spiritual state of the mind is re-established. This spiritual mind allows one to recognize the real form of the self. Śrīla Prabhupāda described this state as awakening from an evil dream.
- 2. *bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam*:** Chanting extinguishes the sufferings of the tremendous blazing fire of material existence. In the daily morning prayers the spiritual master is addressed:

The spiritual master is receiving benediction from an ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, so the spiritual master delivers the materially



affected world by extinguishing the blazing fire of material existence. (*Śrī Gurv-aṣṭaka* 1)

This fire of material existence is extinguished by the nectarean rain of the holy name, and the holy name is received from the spiritual master. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the most important instruction of the spiritual master is to chant sixteen rounds daily.

3. **śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitarāṇam:** Chanting resembles the cooling moon rays which cause the white lotus of good fortune (or auspiciousness) to burst into bloom. A white lotus flower fully blossoms when it is touched by the moon rays. Similarly, the moonlight of the holy name reveals all auspicious things to the serious chanter, and even if one chants on the *nāmābhāsa* stage—which is not yet the perfected stage—he will be freed from all past sins which make him suffer.
4. **vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam:** Chanting is the life and soul of all knowledge. The Sanskrit word *vadhū* means “bride.” In the heart of a devotee who chants the holy name, Bhakti-devī, the bride of the Lord, appears together with her two sons named knowledge and renunciation. Chanting evokes transcendental knowledge in the heart and naturally relieves one from the unhealthy grip of material attachments.
5. **ānanda-ambudhi-wardhanam:** Chanting arises the auspicious ocean of transcendental life. This means that the whole spiritual life develops from one’s chanting, like a big tree which grows out of a seed.
6. **prati-padam pūrṇa-amṛta-āsvādanam:** On every step, chanting conveys perfect, sublime nectar. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in this connection:

The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power Kṛṣṇa manifests that when His holy name starts to blossom a little further it then reveals His own divine forms and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa. Blossoming fully, the flower of the holy name takes me to Vraja and reveals



Nectar an Ocean of the Holy Name

to me His own love-dalliance. This name gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Kṛṣṇa's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mind. The name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental touchstone, a mine of all devotional mellows. It is eternally liberated and the embodiment of pure *rasa*. When all impediments to the pure chanting of the holy name are taken away and destroyed, then my happiness will know its true awakening.

(Śrī Nāma-māhātmya 6-8)

7. *sarva-ātma-snapanam*: Chanting has a cooling and refreshing effect on every one. The desire to enjoy material life to its utmost extent is like a spreading fever, or fire, which affects the conditioned soul and tempts him to act sinfully, even against his own will. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

It is lust only, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world. (*Bg.* 3.37)

By chanting the holy name, however, this fever is lowered and thus one's material life ends. One who is always sincerely engaged in hearing and chanting the holy name will be able to remember the Lord in the hour of death. Then he will be elevated to the spiritual kingdom.



5. The Holy Name is the *yuga-dharma*

In this age of Kali there is no religious principle other than the chanting of the holy name, which is the essence of all Vedic hymns. This is the purport of all scriptures. (Cc. *Adi* 7.74)

The chanting of the holy name is the *yuga-dharma*, the religious process for the present age of Kali. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains the different ages of the world and their corresponding *yuga-dharmas* as follows: (ŚB. 12.3.52)

1. **Satya-yuga:** meditating on Viṣṇu;
2. **Tretā-yuga:** performing sacrifices;
3. **Dvāpara-yuga:** worshipping the Deity of the Lord; and
4. **Kali-yuga:** chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Thus, whatever result was obtained in the other ages by their respective *yuga-dharmas* can be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. There is a special reason for this, which is explained by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

In this age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, is the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simply by chanting the holy name, one associates with the Lord directly. Anyone who does this is certainly delivered. (Cc. *Ādi* 17.22)

An interesting statement in this regard is found in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhita*. He describes that after analyzing people's level of advancement, the past compilers of the scriptures have established the appropriate holy names to deliver one in the different ages. They are called *tāraka-brahmā-nāma*. Although the conditions of life decrease from age to age, there is yet a progression in those *mantras*, in terms of the devotional mellows (*rasa*) which they provide.

The holy names to deliver one in the first age, Satya-yuga, are as follows:

nārāyaṇa-parā vedanārāyaṇa-parākṣaraḥ
nārāyaṇa-parā muktirnārāyaṇa-parā gatiḥ



Nectar of the Holy Name

Lord Nārāyaṇa is the supreme goal of all knowledge, language and liberation. He is the supreme destination.

This prayer expresses feelings of awe and reverence before the opulence of the Absolute Truth in the form of Nārāyaṇa. Thus in Satya-yuga, the mood of devotion was pure *śānta-rasa* (neutrality) and a little *dāsya-rasa* (servitorship).

For the next age, Tretā-yuga, the following *tāraka-brahmā-nāma* was compiled:

*rāma nārāyaṇānanta mukunda madhusūdana
kṛṣṇa keśava kaṁsāre hare vaikuṅṭha vāmana*

[I worship the Supreme Lord by His names] Rāma, Nārāyaṇa, Ananta, Mukunda, Madhusūdana, Kṛṣṇa, Keśava, Kaṁsāri, Hari, Vaikuṅṭha, and Vāmana.

These are all names of the Lord which again invoke Lord Nārāyaṇa's prowess. However, the names of Madhusūdana ("the killer of the Madhu demon") and Kaṁsāri ("Kaṁsa's foe") indicate the *rasa* of friendship (*sakhya*). For Kṛṣṇa's friends it is natural to address Kṛṣṇa in this way. Thus in Tretā-yuga, full *dāsya-rasa* and a reflection of *sakhya-rasa* are present, but the mood of veneration is still prevalent.

In Dvāpara-yuga, the age before Kali-yuga, the following mantra was chanted for liberation:

*hare murāre madhu-kaitabhāre
gopāla govinda mukunda śāure
yajñeśa nārāyaṇa kṛṣṇa viṣṇo
nirāśrayaṁ mām jagadīśa rakṣa*

Oh Lord Hari, foe of the demons Mura, Madhu and Kaiṭabha; Oh Gopāla, Govinda, Śāuri; Oh Mukunda who awards liberation; Oh Nārāyaṇa, Lord of all sacrifice; Oh Kṛṣṇa, Oh Viṣṇu, Lord of the universe, please protect me, since I have no other shelter.

The names that are mentioned in this verse aim towards Kṛṣṇa, who is the shelter of unsheltered persons. In this stage there is a predominance of *śānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, and *vātsalya rasas*.



The *tāraka-brahmā-nāma* for the age of Kali, finally, is none other than the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura thus concludes by establishing the exceptional position of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*:

These are the topmost sweet names of the Lord. There is no prayer [for shelter or liberation] in this *mantra*, but provocation for all *rasas* mixed with intimate attachment. There is no mention of the Lord's prowess or giving of liberation. This *mantra* reveals only that a soul has an indescribable attraction for the Supreme Soul by the thread of love. These names are for those who are on the path of *mādhurya-rasa* (conjugal attraction, the highest of all *rasas*). Constant deliberation on these names are the best form of worshipping the Lord.



nāma-kīrtana
Chanting the Holy Name



1. Three Ways of Chanting

According to *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, there are three ways of chanting with different effects:

1. **Mānasa**: Chanting in the mind.
2. **Upāmsa**: Soft chanting that only the chanter himself can hear it. An example is the chanting on the *japa-mālā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained why it is preferable to chant in the *upāmsa* style: It is easier to concentrate.

At the present moment the mind is always disturbed, full of anxieties. You cannot concentrate. Therefore this process, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, it is forcibly. When you chant loudly, at least you hear “Kṛṣṇa.” Your mind is immediately turned to Kṛṣṇa. So that is meditation. Because after all, meditation means you have to concentrate on the Supreme. So when you hear Kṛṣṇa, the name, you immediately remember the person Kṛṣṇa, and there is no difference between His name and the person. So immediately you associate with Kṛṣṇa. Forcibly. Even you don’t like, I’ll chant “Kṛṣṇa,” you’ll be forced to associate. You will chant “Kṛṣṇa,” I’ll be forced to associate. This is going on. One devotee is forcing another devotee to remember Kṛṣṇa. And what he’ll do by meditation? He’ll think of his office or his home or his dog or his cat. That’s all.

(Lecture from 11/10/68)

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* confirms:

Although capable of destroying all sins, the remembrance of Lord Viṣṇu is achieved only with extraordinary effort. On the other hand, one may perform *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* simply by moving his lips, and thus this process is superior. (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 11.453)

3. **Vācika**: Loud chanting which everybody can hear, for example in a *kīrtana*. This chanting is a hundred times more powerful than chanting *upāmsa*, because it can be heard by others.

It is known that Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the great teacher of the holy name, chanted 192 rounds every day. He chanted 64 rounds loudly, 64 quietly, and the last 64 rounds in the mind. In the *Caitanya-*



Bhāgavata we find the following passage:

Local *smārta-brāhmaṇas* criticized Haridāsa Ṭhākura for loudly chanting *japa*. They said, “Haridāsa, why must you chant so loudly? The actual injunction is to chant softly in your mind. Which scripture instructs you to chant loudly?”

Śrīla Haridāsa humbly replied, “The principle effect of chanting the name of God loudly is that it purifies the soul one thousand times more than any other form of worship. Nowhere in the scriptures is loud chanting of the holy name condemned; on the contrary, there are excellent benefits which have been described in many places. In one scripture it says, ‘Loud chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name is a thousand times better than silent chanting.’”

“Why is the result of loud chanting magnified a thousand times over any other process?” demanded a dubious *brāhmaṇa*.

Haridāsa replied, “O *brāhmaṇa*, please try to understand that when any living entity, be it man, bird or beast, hears the holy name chanted by a pure devotee, he goes directly to Vaikuṅṭha after leaving this body. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, ‘O Acyuta, anyone who chants Your name purifies all who hear his chanting, as well as himself.’ One who chants the holy name to himself liberates himself only, but one who chants the Lord’s name loudly liberates anyone who hears him. The sound of the Lord’s name is beneficial for everyone.”

Haridāsa Ṭhākura continued, “Therefore, all scriptures assert that loud chanting of the Lord’s name is a thousand times more effective than any other religious process. Prahlāda Mahārāja says in the *Nāradya Purāṇa*, ‘Compared to the person who is attached to chanting *japa*, the person who performs loud chanting of the holy name of Śrī Hari is one hundred times better. One who chants *japa* liberates only himself, but one who chants loudly liberates himself and any other living entity who hears him.’” (*Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, Chapter 17)



Nect ar ean Ocean of the Holy Name

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his *Krama-sandarbha*:

The names of God should be chanted loudly.

And Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana explains in the *Stavamāla-vibhūṣana-bhāṣya*:

If one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* loudly, Kṛṣṇa personally dances on the tongue.

The holy name is so powerful that on the advanced stage, it elevates one far beyond the material platform. Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābajī, the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, was so weak in his old age that he could no longer walk and had to be carried in a basket. But when he felt spiritual ecstasy in *kīrtana*, he jumped out of his basket and enthusiastically danced and jumped around.

This example shows how the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, especially the loud chanting in the assembly of other Vaiṣṇavas, can raise one to a stage beyond the physical level. Whenever devotees meet, they chant the holy name together. This is their life and their greatest joy.



2. Kṛṣṇa's Nature and His Energies

Now let us deal with a most important and relevant topic: the different stages of chanting in relation to one's spiritual progress. In other words, we will speak about the difficulties and obstacles in the spiritual life of a devotee, and how to overcome them. With this topic we dive fully into *nāma-cintāmaṇi*, the priceless gem of the chanting of the holy name.

Not every one who hears the holy name can immediately appreciate this gem. Most people see it as some ordinary Indian folk *mantra* which has become famous through the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Therefore, its unique value should be illustrated by the following story from our Vaiṣṇava tradition:

Once a disciple received instructions from his spiritual master. Finally he asked for the most secret instruction and got the following answer, "Simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

After leaving his spiritual master, the disciple first came across some ordinary washer-women who were chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* while scrubbing the laundry on the bank of the Gaṅgā. Then he saw some fishermen hauling in their nets, and they too were chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Finally, he met some little boys who were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in their village. Hereupon, he returned to his spiritual master and doubtfully asked him, "What kind of secret have you given to me that it is known even to the washer-women, fishermen and little village boys? Could that be the most precious instruction?"

Instead of long explanations, the *guru* gave him a precious gem. "Go to the washer-women, fishermen and village boys and see if they can appreciate the value of this gem." The disciple went to the washer-women and showed them the gem. But, being quite uneducated, they could not recognize its value. They thanked him and said that they only could think of using it like an ordinary stone, for beating out the dirt of the laundry.

"No", said the disciple, "I won't give you the gem, for you'll



have to pay the proper price. For washing you can use a stone or a piece of wood.”

He went further and came to the fishermen. “You offer us this stone”, one of them said, “but we have no use for it, except of fixing it at the end of a net to make it sink to the ground.”

“Oh”, said the disciple and continued his way until he met the boys. But they, too, did not want to pay a proper price for the gem but said, “We could just play ball with it”.

“Now”, asked the *guru* after the disciple had returned, “What happened?”

“No one wanted to pay the due price for it, they could not appreciate the value of the gem.”

“Similarly”, said the *guru*, “people cannot appreciate the value of the holy name, and for this reason they are indifferent to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is an open secret which is revealed only to those who are qualified for it.”

The Three Main Potencies of Kṛṣṇa

In order to appreciate the value of the holy name, we first have to understand Lord Kṛṣṇa, since He and His name are identical. Haridāsa Ṭhākura once said to Lord Caitanya, “Kṛṣṇa is *vibhu*—omniscient, omnipresent and almighty, and He is the owner of *vaibhava*, His innumerable potencies.” As Kṛṣṇa is identical with His name. He is also nondifferent from His *vaibhavas*. Three main *vaibhavas* are distinguished:

1. *Cit-vaibhava*: This is Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual potency and includes His abode (the Vaikuṅṭha planets), His innumerable holy names, and His transcendental forms. Moreover, it exhibits Kṛṣṇa’s quality to bestow ecstatic bliss upon His devotees and manifests His transcendental pastimes (like the *rāsa-līlā* in Vṛndāvana and the *saṅkīrtana* in Navadvīpa). When a devotee feels transcendental bliss, he is inspired by the *cit*-potency—the same potency which manifests the Vaikuṅṭha planets. The *cit-vaibhava* is divided into three sub-potencies:

a) *Sandhinī*: develops the variety of spiritual existence.



- b) **Samvit:** manifests knowledge and the relationships among the devotees and to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- c) **Hlādinī:** displays the blissfulness of spiritual emotions, spiritual relations, and the divine exchange of *rasas* (mellows).

2. **Acit-vaibhava:** This term refers to the non-spiritual manifestation, consisting of the material universes. The field of the *acit-vaibhava* is under the influence of the illusory energy of the Lord. Therefore this energy is also called *devī-dhāma*, the kingdom of *māyā*. The components of this kingdom are the five gross and the three subtle elements.

Māyādevī forces atheists to perform sinful activities and in this way deprives them of the nectar of chanting the holy name. But if she becomes appeased by an atheist's rendering service to saintly Vaiṣṇavas she showers him with her grace and connects him to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Māyādevī is an eternal maidservant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. She punishes the wayward *jīvas* who drift away from serving Him. Those who want to serve *māyā* are simply cheaters who can never know happiness. Yet Māyādevī rewards those who chant the holy name; she helps them cross over the ocean of material nescience.

(*Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Chapter 7)

3. **Jīva-vaibhava:** These are the living entities who are spiritual by quality. Due to their independence, they are able to experience unlimited bliss which, however, can only be tasted on the spiritual level. Those who take shelter of Kṛṣṇa remain in the spiritual kingdom (*cit-vaibhava*) as eternally liberated souls and attain transcendental bliss in the association of Kṛṣṇa. But those who rebel against Kṛṣṇa and selfishly think of their own happiness have to accept a material body in the material universe (*acit-vaibhava*) and are submitted to the threefold sufferings of material existence.



The Path to the Spiritual World

How can the fallen living beings be liberated from the tortures of material existence—even though they have rebelled against Kṛṣṇa and have left the *cit-vaibhava*, the spiritual manifestation, to enter the *acit-vaibhava*? By His mercy, Kṛṣṇa descends as *avatāra* in the form of Caitanya Mahāprabhu in order to propagate the chanting of the holy name to these fallen souls. He appears in the age known as the most fallen, namely Kali-yuga. In this age, no other Vedic rituals are effective as the chanting of the holy name.

In order to liberate the conditioned souls from the power of material energy, Kṛṣṇa has revealed the Vedas. They are supposed to lead the living entities via *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* to *upāsānā-kāṇḍa*. In the beginning, the living entity should learn how to redirect his activities toward God (*karma-kāṇḍa*). Later, the intellectual activities, the power of thinking (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*), should be dedicated to God, until finally the path leads to *upāsānā-kāṇḍa*, worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This includes worshipping the demigods as parts of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Śiva, for example, can be worshipped as the greatest devotee of Saṅkarṣaṇa, with the result of becoming freed from material ego. Similarly, one can worship Lord Brahmā as a worshipper of Pradyumna and thus obtain intelligence. *Upāsānā-kāṇḍa*, in other words, refers to any kind of worship, including that of the demigods—provided it is performed with the understanding of their position as Kṛṣṇa’s servants. As Śrīla Prabhupāda says, the exclusive aim of *upāsānā-kāṇḍa* is to attain pure worship of Kṛṣṇa:

The whole Vedic adventure is to draw one’s attention entirely unto the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa without any diversion, as instructed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

(ŚB. 2.4.1, p.; Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of *Bg.* 15.15)

By giving all classes of men the opportunity to start at their respective levels of advancement, the Vedas want to attract the vast variety of different conditioned mentalities, thus offering them a chance to advance in spiritual life.

In Kali-yuga, however, this gradual, fairly complicated process,



which leads to pure worship of Kṛṣṇa through engagement of body and mind, is no longer effective. In this age of quarrelling and hypocrisy, men are too fallen to follow this process. In Kali-yuga, *karma* and *jñāna* even draws one away from Kṛṣṇa.

This can be seen in many contemporary Indians. They are strongly attached to the process of exclusive demigod worship, without any interest in detachment—what to speak of worshipping Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, the *jñānīs* only want to merge into the impersonal Brahman, without the desire to surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

These two processes, although described in the Vedas as a means to proceed towards Kṛṣṇa, are no longer practical in Kali-yuga. Therefore, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared to give us the holy name—like a father who has realized that he has to administer a very strong medicine to cure his severely diseased child.

The most evident difference between *bhakti*—as taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—and any other philosophy and process for self-realization is that in *bhakti*, the way and the goal are the same: Kṛṣṇa's holy name is the way, but it is also the goal, Kṛṣṇa Himself. The following story illustrates this point:

Once there was a beggar who went to the king because he wanted to see gold. The king said, “Well, climb up these stairs which lead to my treasury, and open the last door. There you will see gold.” The beggar climbed up the stairs, opened the door and saw the chamber filled with gold. Then, when he turned around, he realized that the stairs he had climbed up were also made of gold! Since he had not known what gold looks like, he simply could not recognize it until he saw the gold-filled treasury.

Similarly, the way to attain Kṛṣṇa—namely the chanting of the holy name—is already Kṛṣṇa Himself, and only because we forgot our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we not aware of this fact. However, once we start with the path of *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa will gradually reveal Himself through His holy name. We owe this path to the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and, of course, to his most dear servant, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who took the holy name to the West.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Sixty-four Qualities

Since Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form and His holy name are nondifferent from Himself, His name is also identical with His form. Thus, remembering Kṛṣṇa or chanting His holy name immediately invokes His beautiful form to appear in the mind. As a result, both the name and the form of Kṛṣṇa may reside there harmoniously together.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has sixty-four unlimited, transcendental qualities, enumerated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī as follows:

(1) beautiful features of the entire body; (2) marked with all auspicious characteristics; (3) extremely pleasing; (4) effulgent; (5) strong; (6) ever youthful; (7) speaks all languages fluently; (8) truthful; (9) talks pleasingly; (10) eloquent; (11) highly learned; (12) highly intelligent; (13) a genius; (14) artistic; (15) extremely clever; (16) expert; (17) grateful; (18) firmly determined; (19) an expert judge of time, place and circumstances; (20) sees and speaks on the authority of the Vedas; (21) pure; (22) self-controlled; (23) steadfast; (24) forbearing; (25) forgiving; (26) grave; (27) self-satisfied; (28) possessing equilibrium; (29) magnanimous; (30) religious; (31) heroic; (32) compassionate; (33) respectful; (34) gentle; (35) liberal; (36) shy; (37) the protector of surrendered souls; (38) happy; (39) the well-wishing friend of all devotees; (40) controlled by love; (41) all-auspicious; (42) most powerful; (43) all-famous; (44) popular; (45) partial to His devotees; (46) very attractive to all women; (47) all-worshipable; (48) all-opulent; (49) all-honorable; (50) the Supreme Controller; (51) changeless; (52) omniscient; (53) ever-fresh; (54) *sac-cid-ānanda* (possessing an eternal, omniscient, blissful body); (55) possessing all mystic perfection; (56) He has inconceivable potency; (57) uncountable universes generate from His body; (58) He is the original source of all incarnations; (59) He gives salvation to the enemies whom He kills; (60) He is the attraction of liberated souls; (61) He performs wonderful varieties of pastimes; (62) He is surrounded by devotees endowed with wonderful love of Godhead; (63) He can attract all living entities all over the



universes by playing on His flute; (64) He has a wonderful excellence of beauty which cannot be rivaled anywhere in the creation. (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 21)

None of the expansions and incarnations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa possess His transcendental qualities in full degree. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is the proprietor of these sixty-four qualities in totality. His expansions like Nārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra are equipped with the first sixty qualities, whereas only fifty-five qualities are partially exhibited in Brahmā and Śīva. Ordinary living beings hold mere fractions of the first fifty qualities.

Among Kṛṣṇa's four characteristic aspects (name, form, qualities and activities), the holy name is the original one, because it enables the perception of the other three. Therefore, chanting the holy name is the prime activity of the Vaiṣṇavas. The whole panorama of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is present in the holy name.

Thus it is said that only two spiritual objects exist in this material world: the living entity and Kṛṣṇa's holy name.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Principal and Secondary Names

The different manifestations of Kṛṣṇa can be categorized as principal and secondary. Similarly—since the holy name is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa—there are principal and secondary holy names.

Principal names (*mukhya*) are names like Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, Gopāla, Rāma, and Gopīnātha. They refer to Kṛṣṇa in His eternal *līlās*, the pastimes with His devotees in the spiritual world.

The secondary names (*gauṇya*) characterize His relationship with the material world. These are names like Paramātmā (the Supersoul), Viṣṇu ("the All-pervading one"), Īśvara ("the Controller"); we may also add names like Allah ("the Almighty"), "Creator", or just "God". As Śrīla Prabhupāda once mentioned, the name "God"—which means "good"—is more a general designation than a personal name.

Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's personal names outweighs all the other names:



Nectar an Ocean of the Holy Name

This chanting, Hare Kṛṣṇa. You can chant the whole day and night, and dance, and you'll never get tired. But take another name. Just after half an hour, finished. It is botheration.

(Lecture from 17/2/69)

Kṛṣṇa's names are distinguished as principal and secondary because only the principal names allow the chanter to attain the highest spiritual planet and develop love of God, the ultimate aim of human life (*premā pumartho mahān*). This is because they directly point at Kṛṣṇa's eternal, spiritual activities, whereas the secondary names refer only to God's function in the material world. Unable to awake an understanding of Kṛṣṇa's activities in His eternal spiritual kingdom, they can only supply material advantages, or liberation at best. Some Christians and Hindus use the name of God with this material understanding when praying, "Dear God, give me a Mercedes Benz!", or "Dear God, make me pious that I may go to heaven!" The aim of such prayers is material wealth or the heavenly planets, but never love of God.

This very love, however, should be our highest goal. We should therefore aspire for activities on the liberated stage. A Vaiṣṇava's sole interest is the spiritual energy, *cit-vaibhava*, not the *acit-vaibhava*—ignorance and activities in ignorance. Ultimately, he is not even concerned with God's handling of the ignorant material creation. His exclusive object is the eternal, spiritual reality.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda was preaching in the West, he was often asked if "Kṛṣṇa" was the only name of God. Śrīla Prabhupāda answered that one could chant "Allah" or any other name of God, like "Jehovah", "Adonai" etc. "If you already have one name of God, and chant, then you can continue to chant it." Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted these people to take their own religion seriously. However, he did not conceal that the name of Kṛṣṇa is God's highest name. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that those who did not know any other name, could chant the name "Kṛṣṇa" by receiving it from him.



3. Three Stages of Chanting

Now, by considering the different stages of chanting and their relationship to the progressive degrees of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we will study the path through these stages, leading to the perfected platform of pure love of Kṛṣṇa. Three stages are distinguished:

1. **Śuddha-nāma**: This is the pure stage of chanting where Kṛṣṇa fully reveals Himself, together with the entirety of His innumerable potencies. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes, in the verse which we have already quoted on page 20, the ecstasy of *śuddha-nāma* chanting:

The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power Kṛṣṇa manifests that when His holy name starts to blossom a little further it then reveals His own divine forms and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa. Blossoming fully, the flower of the holy name takes me to Vraja and reveals to me His own love-dalliance. This name gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Kṛṣṇa's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mind. The name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental touchstone, a mine of all devotional mellows. It is eternally liberated and the embodiment of pure *rasa*. When all impediments to the pure chanting of the holy name are taken away and destroyed, then my happiness will know its true awakening.

(Śrī Nāma-māhātmya 6-8)

A devotee who chants *śuddha-nāma* experiences Kṛṣṇa appearing personally on his tongue. As an effect of this chanting, he is bestowed pure love of God.

2. **Nāma-ābhāsa**: This is chanting on the clearing stage, with the deliberate endeavor to avoid offenses and to hear the holy name with full attention. On this stage, pure love of God will not manifest immediately—it is only attained by *śuddha-nāma*. Nevertheless *nāmābhāsa* is considered very auspicious, because it leads to pure chanting and destroys all sins. By serving the spiritual master with full attention while chanting *nāmābhāsa*, one



gradually rises to the platform of *śuddha-nāma* and thus attains the final goal, pure love.

3. *Nāma-aparādha*: Chanting with offenses. On this stage, pure love is even further away than on the clearing stage. As long as the chanting is performed with offenses, it is absolutely impossible to attain love of God. Nothing else should be aspired than to progress to the next stage as quickly as possible. Offenses have to be given up.

4. Questions

Before proceeding to the next chapter, I recommend that you answer the following questions:

1. Why did Lord Caitanya preach the chanting of the holy name in Kali-yuga?
2. Why did He not recommend *karma* or *jñāna*?
3. What is the difference between the principal and the secondary name of God?
4. Describe the different kinds and effects of chanting.



nāma-aparādhā
Chanting on the Offensive Stage



The Effects of *nāma-aparādha*

The repeated chanting of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa should bring us very quickly to the stage of pure love of God; we should become free from material desires and attain perfection. If these signs do not manifest at all, or only very gradually, it has to be concluded that we are still committing offenses against the holy name of the Lord. Which are these serious offenses that deprive us of the fruits of our spiritual activities, and how can they be avoided?

In a conversation with Nārada Muni, the great sage Sanat-Kumāra describes ten different kinds of offenses:

(Padma Purāṇa, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.15-18)

- 1. Offense:** To blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the holy name of the Lord.
- 2. Offense:** To consider the names of the demigods like Śiva or Brahmā to be equal to, or independent of, the name of Lord Viṣṇu.
- 3. Offense:** To disobey the orders of the spiritual master.
- 4. Offense:** To blaspheme the Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version.
- 5. Offense:** To consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be imagination or exaggeration.
- 6. Offense:** To give some interpretation on the holy name of the Lord.
- 7. Offense:** To commit sinful activities on the strength of the holy name of the Lord.
- 8. Offense:** To consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa one of the auspicious ritualistic activities offered in the Vedas as fruitive activities (*karma-kāṇḍa*).
- 9. Offense:** To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the holy name.



10. Offense: To not have complete faith in the chanting of the holy names and to maintain material attachments, even after understanding so many instructions on this matter.

It is also an offense to be inattentive while chanting the holy name.

By committing offenses against the holy name, we lose our taste for spiritual activities; we just won't feel any pleasure in hearing, chanting and performing devotional service. We are like a person affected with high fever who finds it impossible to eat delicious food. Such a person, however, can be cured in due course of time, by proper medicine and a suitable diet. Then the body will be able to eat the usual food again. Similarly, through continuous, long-lasting spiritual practice the devotee can nullify the consequences of *nāma-aparādhās* and regain his taste for the holy name. Through repeated hearing and chanting, and through other processes, pure love of Godhead is revealed step by step, as described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. On the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes freed from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is matured in *bhāva*, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love of God is called *prema*, the highest perfectional stage of life. (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.4.15-16)



Nectar and Ocean of the Holy Name

In the following pages, we will discuss each offense by dealing with three questions:

1. What is the constitution of the offense? What “substances” are they made of?
2. How is it committed?
3. How can it be rectified?



1. Offense

To Blaspheme the Devotees Who have Dedicated their Lives for Propagating the Holy Name of the Lord

(satāṁ nindā nāmaṇḥ paramam aparādham ...)

It is not wonderful for persons who have accepted the transient material body as the self to engage always in deriding great souls. Such envy on the part of materialistic persons is very good because that is the way they fall down. They are diminished by the dust of the feet of great personalities.

(ŚB. 4.4.13)

By chanting the holy name, the *bhakti-latā*, the seed of devotional service, grows in our heart. We have to cultivate it steadily, until it finally reaches the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, which means until we are completely Kṛṣṇa conscious. The offense of blaspheming a devotee is compared to a wild elephant that treads down all the plants in the garden of devotional service and tramples on them without distinction.

If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper are dried. The gardener must defend the creeper by fencing it all around so that the powerful elephant of offenses may not enter. *(Cc. Madhya 19.156-157)*

Who is a *sādhu*?

First we have to ask who is a *sādhu*, or a saintly person. Is he a man with a long beard? No. The principal quality of a *sādhu* is his full surrender to Kṛṣṇa. The subsidiary qualities like being merciful, tolerant, equal to all, and so forth succeed the principal one. At times we see Indian *sādhus* smiling cheerfully at everybody, but not all of them are devotees of Kṛṣṇa; on the other hand there may be devotees who do not appear to be very friendly and sometimes even chastise others. If these devotees, however, possess the principal quality, complete surrender to Kṛṣṇa, then they are *sādhus*.



Nectar Ocean of the Holy Name

This principal quality of a devotee, called *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*, is present in every devotee, whereas all the other qualities—*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*—vary from devotee to devotee. They are automatically developed if someone has fully surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and is engaged in devotional service. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enumerates them as follows:

Devotees are always (1) merciful, (2) humble, (3) truthful, (4) equal to all, (5) faultless, (6) magnanimous, (7) mild and (8) clean. They are (9) without material possessions, and (10) they perform welfare work for everyone. They are (11) peaceful, (12) surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and (13) desireless. They are (14) indifferent to material acquisitions and are (15) fixed in devotional service. They (16) completely control the six bad qualities. They (17) eat only as much as required, and they are (18) not inebriated. They are (19) respectful, (20) grave, (21) compassionate and (22) without false prestige. They are (23) friendly, (24) poetic, (25) expert, and (26) silent.

(Cc. Madhya 22.78-80)

In essence, a pure devotee can be recognized by his constant chanting of Kṛṣṇa's holy names. He regards himself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than a tree, and he is always ready to offer respect to others, without expecting honor from others. For such a devotee, the holy name bestows pure love of God.

There are four kinds of offenses against devotees which have to be strictly avoided:

1. A devotee should not be criticized for his social background. We may sometimes hear, "He comes from the labor class, he has never really learnt anything. He cannot even quote Shakespeare." Or in India we often hear, "These Western Vaiṣṇavas are all *mlecchas* and *yavanas*, they are not at all qualified." This attitude has to be given up.
2. A devotee should not be criticized for past sins or faults which he committed in this lifetime.
3. A devotee should not be criticized for an unintentional sin (accidental falldown).



4. A devotee should not be criticized for the traces of previous sinful habits, for example when his memory is damaged from having taken undesirable substances. Another example might be someone who was very sensuous previously but who now focuses all his sensuous desires on *prasādam* of the Lord, thereby eating impressive quantities.

Three Types of Vaiṣṇavas

To complete our understanding, the three kinds of Vaiṣṇavas in relation to the holy name should be mentioned:

1. **Uttama-adhikārī** : He is a pure devotee who sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere and knows that everything rests in Him. His life is completely centered around the holy name; thus he is able to taste the pure nectar of the holy name. One should serve him and learn from him.
2. **Madhyama-adhikārī** : He is aware of the importance of the devotees of the Lord and is always seeking their association. He knows Kṛṣṇa's position as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that of the living entities as His eternal servants. He feels compassion for the ignorant and evades the company of atheists. Because he is a preacher, he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. One should seek his company.
3. **Kaniṣṭha-adhikārī** : He is also called *vaiṣṇava-prāya*, "next to a Vaiṣṇava". He is a weak reflection, the shadow, of a devotee. His faith is meager, and although he worships the Deity of the Lord, he is not engaged in any service to the Vaiṣṇavas. He chants on the *nāmābhāsa* stage and one should offer him obeisances in the mind.

The Importance of Associating with Devotees

Strikingly enough, the very first offense refers to the blaspheming of devotees. Why are devotees so important for our chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa?

The answer is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally appears in the heart of a pure Vaiṣṇava, together with *bhakti* (devotion), *hlādinī* (His pleasure-



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giving potency), and *saṁvit* (His knowledge-giving potency). By associating with such a pure Vaiṣṇava, one also receives this *bhakti*. It can even be felt how *bhakti* exudes from the body of such a devotee.

I will never forget when I bowed down my sinful head before Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time. It was at the London airport at two o'clock in the morning; the flight was delayed and I was very tired. In those early days I had many difficulties in the temple. I seriously wondered whether I should really continue to associate with the devotees at all, as I had many bad habits and my false ego was often hurt by them. I wanted to make my decision dependent on the meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Suddenly I heard the devotees shout, "Jaya Prabhupāda!" I could not see him yet, but I observed some special influence and energy-filled excitement at the customs behind the frosted windowpane. That could only be Śrīla Prabhupāda!

Then he turned around the corner. Such strong effulgence emanated from Śrīla Prabhupāda that it appeared like thousands of suns rising simultaneously. This is my only way to describe the scene. Previously I had made up my mind to look at him as long as possible, but now I just prostrated myself on the ground. I remembered descriptions in the Bible of the "burning thornbush" in which God appeared, and that it was not recommended to stare into it for one would be blinded.

The influence of Śrīla Prabhupāda was so strong, that I foolishly thought of protecting myself! When I finally dared to look up, I looked right into his smiling face, which seemed to say a big "Welcome." Śrīla Prabhupāda had mercifully stopped to greet me. When he passed, I got up, my eyes stained with tears, and I knew: "Now my material life is over." I could feel how the *bhakti* energy exuded from the body of a pure Vaiṣṇava.

It is said that there are three objects which can help us to attain *bhakti*, since they have come into direct contact with a pure devotee: his food remnants, the water which has washed his lotus feet, and the dust from his lotus feet. They should be especially worshipped and accepted. If one is able to catch and hold this



bhakti energy in his heart and develop faith in it, then *bhakti* will evolve as a matter of course and bestow ecstasy.

In this way, devotion will swiftly appear in the heart, causing one to chant, and then, by the power of the holy name, all good qualities will manifest in the devotee.

There are also very pragmatic reasons for associating with devotees: They remind us of Kṛṣṇa by talking about Him, or engaging us in His service, and by inspiring and sometimes correcting us.

In other words, association with genuine devotees can help us advance on the path of *bhakti*!

Causes of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhās*

The next question is how *vaiṣṇava-aparādhās* (offenses against devotees) can originate. There are several causes, for example, judging devotees by material standards, feeling envious of them or finding faults with them. But the main cause is *asat-saṅga*, undesired association with other persons, because in the association of materialists we lose *bhakti*. *Asat-saṅga* can be subdivided into two classes:

1. Portentous association with women that is contrary to the Vedic tradition. This means to associate with women other than one's wife, outside of a Vedic marriage, just to satisfy one's senses or simply to desire sensual association. The same principle applies, of course, to women who have association with lusty men outside their Vedic marriage. Another undesirable habit is to keep the company of a husband who is dominated by strong sensual desires for his wife and in the same principle it is undesirable to keep the company of a wife who is dominated by strong sensual desires for her husband.
2. Association with four kinds of nondevotees:
 - a) Māyāvādīs who believe that the Lord and the living entity are temporary and that the Lord's transcendental Deity form is material, and who think that in the end all is one;
 - b) Hypocrites who pretend to be devotees in order to make a living;



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- c) People who just hanker after sense enjoyment and have an envious, quarrelsome character; and
- d) Atheists who do not believe in any form of God.

These two types of *asat-saṅga* are the cause for criticizing devotees. One should even avoid the association of those who criticize devotees for not wanting to keep the company of nondevotees!

But what about devotees living outside of a temple community? Don't they keep almost exclusively the company of nondevotees? The scriptures are practical, not fanatical. They discuss three ways of association:

1. To give association,
2. To take association, and
3. To have social dealings.

If one happens to be in a situation where he cannot give association—that is, talk about Kṛṣṇa conscious subjects—he can externally behave normally according to social customs and inwardly keeps one's spiritual vision. However, one should avoid to 'take' association, that is, to allow oneself to become influenced by nondevotee values.

Our appreciation for the devotees will decrease by undesirable association (*asat-saṅga*), so that some time or other we may commit offenses. And these offenses can completely destroy our *bhakti*. Let us therefore seriously endeavor to avoid criticizing others. To do so, we have to learn to become tolerant and also to grant everybody what we claim for ourselves: namely to be accepted as we are.

Three Kinds of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhās*

What about criticism and blasphemy in the mind? Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that in Kali-yuga sinful activities performed only in the mind are not counted as offenses. Nonetheless, three kinds of offenses have to be mentioned: (1) offenses in the mind, (2) offenses with words, and (3) offenses through activities. (*Kṛṣṇa Book*, Chapter 88)



Generally, offenses develop in the mind and are expressed later on a gross level. First one thinks negatively about another, then one can find harsh words to express one's feeling of dislike for the other person and eventually when that is not enough, one can confront the person personally and get into an argument or even physical fight! In this way offenses arise successively: First in thinking, then in feeling, and finally in acting.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* warns us to beware of the following offenses against Vaiṣṇavas, which include offenses committed with body, mind, and words:

My dear King, if one derides an exalted devotee, he loses the results of his pious activities, his opulence, his reputation and his sons. Vaiṣṇavas are all great souls. Whoever blasphemes them falls down to the hell known as Mahāraurava. He is also accompanied by his forefathers. Whoever kills or blasphemes a Vaiṣṇava and whoever is envious of a Vaiṣṇava or angry with him, or whoever does not offer him obeisances or feel joy upon seeing a Vaiṣṇava, certainly falls into a hellish condition.

(Quoted in *Cc. Madhya* 15.261, p.)

In the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, it is stated:

Lord Caitanya said, “All living entities in the countless universes are My eternal servants. Therefore every living being that hurts or abuses another living being, will be destroyed. Even a *sannyāsī* who blasphemes an innocent person will fall down and lose all his piety.

Then Lord Caitanya raised His golden arms and declared to the whole world, “Just give up the tendency to criticize others, and chant: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare! I will personally liberate every one who chants the name of Kṛṣṇa without criticizing others.” When the assembled devotees heard Caitanya Mahāprabhu speaking like this, they exclaimed with full joy, “Jaya! Jaya! Jaya!”

However, by the mercy of Lord Caitanya the first kind of offense—namely offenses committed in the mind—have been



extinguished. Only offenses committed by word or action are taken into consideration. On the other hand, simply thinking positively in reference to devotees or to devotional service is taken into account. That is Lord Caitanya's special mercy.

How can vaiṣṇava-*aparādh*as be Rectified?

If anyone offends a devotee in a moment of delusion or madness, he should honestly repent, go to the offended devotee and seriously beg for forgiveness. Because a devotee is merciful by nature, he will forgive the offender. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, "By offering sincere obeisances to someone, one obliges the heart of that person." Such is the beauty and important power of a serious obeisance.

If one realizes that he has not appreciated a Vaiṣṇava properly and has offended him for various reasons, it is best not to wait too long, but to approach him immediately and offer obeisances unto him.

But one should also consider the reason for this advice: The Vaiṣṇavas are very dear to Kṛṣṇa, and only through them it is possible to advance spiritually. Therefore, one should not delay to repent. Else, one will remain in a contaminated state of mind for a long time. With this attitude one commits further offenses and thus enters into a vicious circle.

Questions

1. What are the characteristics of a Vaiṣṇava?
2. Name the three kinds of offenses against Vaiṣṇavas.
3. Why do the Vedic scriptures glorify the *sādhu* so much and emphasize that one should keep company with him?
4. List the different kinds of bad association.
5. How can *sādhu-nindā* be overcome?
6. List the different kinds of Vaiṣṇavas?



2. Offense

To Consider the Names of Demigods Like Śiva or Brahmā to be Equal to, or Independent of, the Name of Lord Viṣṇu

(śivasya śrī-viṣṇor ya iha guṇa-nāmādi sakalam)

What distinguishes the holy names of Kṛṣṇa from the names of the demigods? First of all, it must be understood that Lord Viṣṇu is not subjected to the laws of the material world. He is the form of full consciousness and knowledge, and although He is the powerful controller of the material world, He exists eternally beyond the three modes of nature. Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana is the original Viṣṇu who possesses the sixty-four transcendental qualities. Nārāyaṇa and the three *puruṣa-avatāras* are attributed with sixty of them, whereas the *jīvas*, the living entities, have only up to fifty qualities, to a minute extent. Because the demigods are also *jīvas*, they possess the same fifty qualities, but to a greater extent. Lord Śiva, who takes a position between the *jīvas* and Lord Viṣṇu, is characterized by five additional attributes.

All of them, however, the *puruṣa-avatāras* and the *jīvas*, among which are the demigods, obtain their qualities from Kṛṣṇa, in the same way as an electric bulb receives its energy from the power station. Different bulbs can, according to their wattage, transform that power in different ways—some can radiate with 1000 watts, others only with 10 watts. Similarly, the living entities are able to reflect a part of Kṛṣṇa's attributes to different percentages. But they all, including Śiva, Brahmā and Nārāyaṇa, receive their qualities from Kṛṣṇa. Consequently, they cannot be equal to Him.

A second reason is the identity of Kṛṣṇa's name with Kṛṣṇa Himself, a transcendental fact that is not applicable to the demigods, what to speak of lower living entities. Kṛṣṇa's name, His form, His qualities, and so on, should never be considered to be separate from Him. He is non-dual. As the complete whole, He is the Absolute Truth. If someone out of ignorance is attached to a dualistic concept of God, he can attain at best the *nāmābhāsa*



stage of chanting, but will never obtain *prema*, pure love of Kṛṣṇa. Only by the mercy of a bona fide spiritual master, who is absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, can one overcome his *anarthas* and receive the pure name through a stepwise purifying process.

Although the European culture is less familiar with the idea of demigod worship, one might still wonder how to treat the demigods properly. For this, it is necessary to understand why demigod worship is recommended in the Vedic scriptures. This is done in order to give some people faith in at least something higher. A devotee, on his part, sees the demigods in their real position: They are servants of the Lord, and thus he respects them and offers them *prasādam* of the Lord.

How can the Second Offense be Rectified?

The second offense should be rectified by repenting sincerely, taking shelter of Viṣṇu—and by never committing this offense again. If one remembers Kṛṣṇa, His name, and the chanting of His Name, this offense will gradually vanish.



3. Offense

To Disobey the Orders of the Spiritual Master

(*guror avajñā*)

Finally, after having traveled through innumerable bodies amongst the 8,400,000 different forms of life, the spirit soul gets the chance to accept a human body. This happens either due to natural evolution or by dint of unintentionally performed pious activities (*ajñāta-sukṛti*). Only in this very rare human form of life are spiritual activities possible. The demigods and residents of the heavenly planets experience the reactions of their previous pious activities. Likewise, animals are bound by the reactions of their previous *karma* and are deeply absorbed in gross ignorance, which obstructs them from independently performing pious activities. No form of life other than the human body is appropriate to lead a spiritual life and to serve the Supreme Lord.¹

If one does not endeavor very carefully to become self-realized, he will return to the cycle of repeated birth and death. An intelligent person will therefore use this rare opportunity and accept a spiritual master who can lead him to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. By his merciful instructions, the spiritual master aims to elevate us to the spiritual platform.

Thus the third offense, to disobey the orders of the spiritual master, is a very serious offense. The *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi* begins the explanation of this offense by describing the characteristics of a bona fide spiritual master, thus enabling us to recognize such a person.

Characteristics of a Bona Fide Spiritual Master

The qualified spiritual master is in control of his senses. His principal qualification is that he knows Kṛṣṇa and understands the science of Kṛṣṇa. Whether a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sūdra*, a householder or a *sannyāsī*—the determining factor is his ability to liberate the living

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¹ This topic is discussed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His teachings to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, starting in *Cc. Madhya* 19.151.



entity from the cycle of birth and death. (Cc. *Madhya* 8.128)

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that a spiritual master is he who has realized the conclusions of the scriptures and can convey them to others. One who cannot deliver his dependants from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master. It is not enough to be a good speaker. As long as one is not firmly fixed in spiritual life, he cannot be a spiritual master. This is illustrated by the following story:

Once a mother went to a *sādhu* with her diabetic son. Although she had tried everything before, nobody could dissuade her son from eating sugar. Thus, hoping that the *sādhu*'s word would impose weight upon her son, she asked for his help. But all the *sādhu* said was, "I cannot render this advice to your son. Come back in one week!" After one week the mother returned with her son, and the *sādhu* said very rigorously, "Do not eat sugar again, otherwise you will kill yourself!" The boy answered, "If you say it, then I will immediately stop eating sugar!" Amazed, the mother asked the *sādhu*, "Why didn't you say that a week ago?" "Well," replied the *sādhu*, "at that time I was eating sugar myself."

We can see how important it is for a spiritual master to teach by example and to be *brahma-niṣṭha*, firmly situated in spiritual life. Otherwise he cannot induce others to give up their material life and begin with spiritual life.

Three Kinds of Spiritual Masters

There are three kinds of gurus. The *dikṣā-guru* or initiating spiritual master, gives the Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and the *gāyatrī mantra* (by *brāhmaṇa* initiation). The *śikṣā-guru* gives spiritual instructions.

Both should be regarded as equally important. One can accept many *śikṣā-gurus* simultaneously, but only one *dikṣā-guru*, one initiating spiritual master can be accepted. An example is found in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, who at the end of each chapter of his *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* offers obeisances to several spiritual masters. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī received *dikṣā* initiation from one spiritual master, but he received instructions from several *śikṣā-gurus*.



The third kind of *guru* is very special: The founder-*ācārya* within a *sampradāya* (disciplic succession) is a spiritual master who has formulated fundamental directions, or who has re-strengthened and expanded the *sampradāya* by establishing a specific spiritual movement. Therefore, he is regarded the most important *śikṣā-guru* of the whole *sampradāya*—even for the succeeding generations. Śrīla Prabhupāda is such a founder-*ācārya*.

The unique, particular position of the founder-*ācārya* is explained in *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi* as follows:

A devotee must understand that the previous *ācārya*, the original spiritual master of the *sampradāya*, is the *śikṣā-guru*, and only his teachings are to be accepted and not those of any other scholar or teacher. The teachings left by the founder-*ācārya* of the *sampradāya* are to be especially honored. He is to be respected as the crown jewel of all spiritual masters. His perfect philosophical conclusions have to be adopted by every member of the *sampradāya*; all contradicting teachings must be rejected. One should only accept his teachings and conclusions, and none other, and one should not receive spiritual initiation in any other disciplic succession.

In his *Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala*, Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura describes how Nārada Muni once went to Vṛndāvana to meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Nārada Muni saw how Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu was personally worshipped by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and her associates on one side, and by Rukmiṇī Mahārāṇī and her associates in Dvārakā on the other side. They all prepared an opulent *mahā-abhiṣeka* for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Nārada Muni expressed his worries about the conditioned souls who had forgotten their eternal, loving service for Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the universe of the four-headed Brahmā. Thereupon, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, summoning all his present maidservants, declared:

In every age I appear in the material world to deliver the saints and reestablish religion. Without understanding the purpose of My advent, the ignorant people continue to commit sinful activities. It hurts Me that after Satya-yuga sinful activities



Nectar Ocean of the Holy Name

gradually increase with the progress of the ages. Seeing the appealing condition of Kali-yuga, I feel compassionate and personally incarnate in order to manifest My love.

Now without considering anything else, everyone just come with me, and we'll destroy the sinful activities of the age of Kali. With the powerful weapon of *nāma-saṅkīrtana* I'll cut the hard knots of demoniac desires from the heart of everyone.

Even if the sinners reject religion or flee to foreign countries, still they will get the mercy. I will send My *senāpati-bhakta*, My supreme commanding devotee, to go there and deliver them.

I will inundate the entire universe with My love. Not a pinch of misery or lamentation will remain. I will freely give My ecstatic love to the demigods, and all moving and non-moving living entities. (*Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala, Sūtra-khaṇḍa 2*)

This description of the especially empowered *senāpati-bhakta* clearly refers to His Divine Grace Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa-consciousness (ISKCON). Śrīla Prabhupāda preached Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a very special way; his style was unique. He imparted Vedic knowledge to the West on the basis of the preceding *ācāryas*, by extracting the essential points from all the *sampradāyas* and peerlessly explaining them. In this way he revealed the mature conclusions of the whole spiritual science of the Vedas. This achievement cannot be described in words. Moreover, he converted this knowledge, according to place, time and circumstances, into a language which could be understood by his audience.

Thus, he initiated the “fallen western *mlecchas* and *yavanas*” into the chanting of Vedic *mantras*, as they became qualified—a step, which no one had dared to do before him. To Śrīla Prabhupāda, we also owe today's custom that both men and women are accepted to practice spiritual life in the temple .

Simultaneously, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us excellent instructions to protect our spiritual life. He stressed very much on a proper spiritual practice. He especially emphasized that one should chant



the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* as often as possible. As will be seen later, he actually instructed us to chant twenty-four hours a day if possible, that is, if our service allowed the time.

One should always be faithful and loyal towards the instructions and conclusions of the founder-*ācārya*. One should avoid receiving teachings from other sources, since they may imply different directions and cause bewilderment and havoc on one's spiritual path. One should only follow a *dīkṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru* who very faithfully follows the teachings of the founder-*ācārya*.

How Should One Respect the Spiritual Master

The question may arise how to properly respect the spiritual master, in order to avoid an offense against him. First, both the *dīkṣā-guru* and the *śikṣā-guru* must be understood as intimate servants of Kṛṣṇa. They are manifestations of His energy. One should never mistakenly regard the *guru* as an ordinary person. Kṛṣṇa has sent him to the disciple as his eternal spiritual master, and he should always be worshipped as a dear servant of the Lord.

The spiritual master should always be worshipped before one starts to worship Kṛṣṇa. He should be offered a nice seat, shoes, foot-bathing, cloth, etc. Then, with his permission, the Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa can be worshipped. Food should first be offered to the Deities and then to the spiritual master. Then the *prasādam* may be offered to other Vaiṣṇavas. One cannot worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa without the permission of the spiritual master. Before chanting the holy names, one should also remember the spiritual master and his instructions. It helps to invoke his presence by prayer while chanting.

There are further statements in the Vedas. One should, for example, respect his bed (i.e. one should not sit or lie down on his bed), as well as his seat, his shoes, his vehicle of transport, the water from his foot-bathing, and his picture or photograph. Furthermore, in the presence of one's *guru* one should not worship another person as *guru*.

Moreover, one should accept the spiritual master as his lord and



master and follow his words. By seeing him, one should prostrate before him. One should glorify the *guru* in a loud voice (“Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda!”), and should never fail to abide by his orders. One should accept the remnants of his food as *prasādam*, and never discuss topics in the presence of the *guru* if he does not like to hear them. Humbly surrendering to the lotus feet of the *guru*, one should act in such a way that he is satisfied. By following these injunctions, while performing *saṅkīrtana* of Kṛṣṇa’s name, one will attain all perfections.

Initiation

Now an important question arises which of course affects many *bhaktas* and *bhaktins*: How will I be initiated?

Initiation is given after having received knowledge about the holy name from the *guru*, when full faith in the holy name has developed in the heart. This is again an indication on how the qualifications of a Vaiṣṇava are related to his chanting of the holy name. One who chants with full faith is qualified for initiation, because he has received, and can appreciate, the most important present from the spiritual master: the holy name.

How and Why does the Third Offense appear?

Whenever we see the spiritual master with mundane vision and consider him an ordinary human being, the third offense appears. Because the spiritual master walks amongst us—like one of us—we need to be careful not to commit this disastrous offense by treating him like an ordinary person. The best is to concentrate on his lectures and spiritual instructions and not on his physical appearance, which seems to be like ours. To equate the *guru* with an ordinary human being is wrong because the body of an advanced devotee is different from an ordinary person’s body—as it is fully spiritualized due to his full engagement in devotional service.



How can the Third Offense be Rectified?

The third offense can be very easily committed, by failing to follow one of the many instructions received from the spiritual master.

If one has rejected or disrespected a bona fide *nāma-dīkṣā-guru* because of bad company or contact with nonsensical literature, one should immediately give up such unfavorable company and literature and, repenting piteously, fall at the *guru's* lotus feet. Since the *guru* is very merciful, he will reestablish a fallen disciple in his former position. By continuing to chant, the disciple will attain *prema*, pure love of God.

This is the wonderful feature of the third offense: While approaching the bona fide spiritual master, one can always count on his mercy. Of course, one should endeavor to extinguish the causes of one's disrespect and not commit this offense again and again. This is strongly emphasized by Nārada Muni:

One must conquer the modes of passion and ignorance by developing the mode of goodness, and then one must become detached from the mode of goodness by promoting oneself to the platform of *śuddha-sattva*. All this can be automatically done if one engages in the service of the spiritual master with faith and devotion. In this way one can conquer the influence of the modes of nature. (To King Yudhiṣṭhira; in *ŚB.* 7.15.25)

Even if the heart is filled with passion and ignorance and one repeatedly undergoes difficulties in his spiritual life, one is promoted to the platform of goodness just by worshipping the spiritual master. Thus one can completely conquer the influence of the modes.

“What is the greatest offense?” a devotee once asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, who answered:

The first offense is if you accept *guru* and again disobey him, then what is your position? You are not a gentleman. You promise before *guru*, before Kṛṣṇa, before the fire, that “I shall obey your order; I shall execute this,” and again you do not do this. Then you are not even a gentleman, what to speak about being a devotee. This is common sense. (Lecture from 11/02/75)



4. Offense

To Blaspheme the Vedic Literature or Literature in Pursuance of the Vedic Version

(śruti-śāstra-nindanam)

The Four Defects in the Human Acquisition of Knowledge

Why has Kṛṣṇa given us the Vedic literature and why should we accept the four Vedas as they have been revealed to us by Kṛṣṇa?

The process to gain knowledge with one's own resources is obstructed by the four natural faults of the human being:

1. **Bhrama:** the propensity to commit errors (“To err is human”). This happens when the senses are not fully attentive.
2. **Pramāda:** to be subject to illusion. This is due to imperfect sense perception: One sees something, but it is something different.
3. **Vipralipsā:** the propensity to cheat oneself and others. In other words, things are reported in a different way as they have been perceived.
4. **Kāraṇāpāṭava:** imperfect senses and imperfect mind.

Our senses can therefore not be relied on as absolute authority. Especially in spiritual affairs the senses are very limited. They cannot perceive anything but unconscious matter. Without Kṛṣṇa’s help, the spiritual platform would be completely inaccessible. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa gave us the four Vedas which are beyond the four faults of our senses. They enable us to proceed towards the spiritual goal. Thus through the Vedas, ignorance is extinguished and transcendence is revealed.

The Teachings of the Vedas

The contents of Vedic philosophy may be summed up in the following nine points:

1. There is only one Supreme Lord.
2. The Lord is omnipotent, equipped with all energies.
3. Kṛṣṇa is *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*, the source of all *rasas* (mellows). He eternally resides in His holy abode and bestows blissful pleasure unto all living entities.



4. The *jīvas* (living entities) are the Lord's eternal parts and parcels. They are unlimited in number, infinitesimal, but fully conscious.
5. Although the *jīvas* are eternal, some of them are bound in the temporary material universe, attracted by illusory pleasures.
6. Other *jīvas* are eternally liberated. They worship Kṛṣṇa and live with Him in the spiritual world, experiencing *prema*, pure love of God.
7. Kṛṣṇa exists with all His potencies—the material energy, the *jīva*-energy, and the energies of the spiritual world. He exists with His transcendental form, His name, His qualities, His *līlās*, and is simultaneously one and different from everything (*acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*). This is possible by Kṛṣṇa's unlimited power.

The living entity who understands the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* recognizes himself as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa and knows that he is like a beam, or spark, of the original sun, Śrī Kṛṣṇa—simultaneously one in quality but different in quantity.

8. The Vedas describe the nine-fold process of devotional service (*sādhana-bhakti*), which is subdivided into *vaidhi-bhakti*, devotional service following the rules and regulations, and *rāgānuga-bhakti*, spontaneous loving service. These nine processes, and the devotees who performed them perfectly, are as follows:

<i>śravaṇam</i>	hearing	Mahārāja Parīkṣit
<i>kīrtanam</i>	chanting	Śukadeva Gosvāmī
<i>smaraṇam</i>	remembering	Prahlāda Mahārāja
<i>pāda-sevanam</i>	servicing the lotus feet of the Lord	Lakṣmī Devī
<i>arcanam</i>	worshipping the Deity	Ṛṥthu Mahārāja
<i>vandanam</i>	offering prayers	Akrūra
<i>dāsyam</i>	becoming a servant of the Lord	Hanumān
<i>sakhyam</i>	becoming a friend of the Lord	Arjuna
<i>ātma-nivedanam</i>	complete surrender to the Lord	Bali Mahārāja

The perfect example of a devotee who impeccably performed all nine processes is Mahārāja Ambarīṣa.



The first seven of these nine processes belong to *vaidhi-bhakti*. They establish *sambandha-jñāna*. The last two, *sakhyam* and *ātma-nivedanām*, are performed in *rāgānuga-bhakti* and explain *abhidheya* and *prayojana*. The most important process in devotional service is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

9. The ultimate goal and the original position of the *jīva* is to be situated in *bhakti* or *prema*, pure love of God. By engaging in pure devotional service, the living entity will attract the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and thus attain this stage of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Pure devotional service is characterized by the eagerness of the devotee to always serve Kṛṣṇa in a favorable attitude. Without being satisfied by anything else, he is constantly endeavoring to increase this loving devotion. Pure devotional service is free from the desire of fruitive activities or empirical knowledge. The Vedas recommend the cultivation of devotional service by taking complete shelter of the holy name.

These nine items are based on the Vedas, which are considered to be the source of all true knowledge.

Why is it an Offense to Blaspheme the Vedas?

The question may be raised how this offense is related to the chanting of the holy name. The answer is that the Vedas emphasize the chanting of the Lord's name as a means to attain the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even the greatest personalities in the spiritual sky are always engaged in chanting the holy name. Since the Vedas consider the chanting of the holy name as the most important process, it is a great offense to criticize the Vedas, because then the holy name is criticized as well.

How Should the Vedic Conclusions be Applied?

The sum total of all Vedic conclusions results in pure devotional service by which the living entity attains pure love of God. Wherever the principal teachings of the Vedas can be applied, it would be wrong to use secondary teachings instead. From the beginning to the end the Vedas emphasize the importance of the holy name.



By chanting the holy name, the living entity attains the supreme spiritual realm. Because the pure devotees always seek the shelter of the holy name, the complete Vedic knowledge is revealed to them and they attain pure love of Kṛṣṇa step by step.

How Can the Fourth Offense be Rectified?

If one blasphemes the Vedic scriptures by mistake, one should openly repent and offer obeisances to the scriptures. With great respect one should offer flowers and *tulasī* leaves to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the other Vedic literature. Because the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* contains the essence of the Vedas, it is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and will bestow unlimited mercy upon the sincerely repentant offender. One should develop full faith that his life will be successful if he follows the scriptures that describe the glories of Śrī Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This advice is given in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* itself. The *Bhagavad-gītā* also stresses the importance of following the scriptures:

He who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whims attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination. One should therefore understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may gradually be elevated. (*Bg.* 16.23-24)

In conclusion, we should follow the scriptures which describe the glory of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. At the same time, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* reminds us to avoid blaspheming other religious scriptures—such as the Bible, the Koran or the Talmud— by giving a good example:

Just as the honeybee takes nectar from all flowers, big and small, an intelligent human being should take the essence from all religious scriptures. (*ŚB.* 11.8.10)



Questions

1. Who is a founder-*ācārya*?
2. At which point is one qualified for initiation?
3. Why is it detrimental to criticize the Vedic scriptures? How is this offense related to the chanting of the holy name?



5. Offense

To Consider the Glories of Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be Imagination or Exaggeration

(artha-vāda)

Some people consider it a great exaggeration when they read in the scriptures that by chanting the holy name only once, one is freed from more sins than he is ever able to commit. Did you not also ask yourself at times, “I have been chanting more than once, but still I am full of so many faults”?

Skeptics argue that the policy to offer enticing results is frequently found in the Vedic scriptures, and thus, the wonderful effects of chanting, as for example that the chanter becomes free from anxiety, are mere baits to motivate the reader.

But the goal in *bhakti-yoga* is completely different from attaining personal gain. It aims at satisfying Kṛṣṇa—in other words, it is a matter of selflessness.

Thus, the unparalleled results of chanting the holy names, which are mentioned in the Vedas—such as the annulment of planetary influences and the gradual awakening of love of God—are fully realistic glorifications of the holy name. They are not exaggerations to attract the conditioned souls. After all, the Vedas instruct the conditioned souls in the process of selflessness, with the final aim to develop pure love in their hearts. Why then should it try to stimulate them by offering selfish goals? This would be an irreconcilable contradiction.

The results which are promised are bound to appear in the life of the chanter—sooner or later. They are like seeds that fructify in due course of time. It depends on two factors.

1. The mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
2. Our sincere endeavor to avoid offenses.



How Can the Fifth Offense be Rectified?

What is to be done if one thinks that the glories of the holy name are mere imagination? One should go to an assembly of devotees.

In their association, one should hear with great attention about the Lord's pastimes and qualities. One should present his doubts, desiring sincerely to obtain proper knowledge. The devotees, who are fully conversant with the glories of the holy name, will mercifully forgive and embrace the offender. Thus one will not repeat this offense.



6. Offense

To Give Some Interpretation on the Holy Name of the Lord

(hari-nāmnī kalpanam)

The meaning and effect of the holy name should not be interpreted. This includes the attempt to explain the effect of the holy name with biophysical processes. A student once claimed that by chanting, various chemicals are released into the body, causing certain brain centers to be strongly flooded with blood and thus effecting something like ecstasy. This is an example of *hari-nāmnī kalpanam*. In Germany, a man tried to convince Śrīla Prabhupāda that chanting works like hypnotism. Śrīla Prabhupāda answered, "No it is not hypnotism—it is purification."

Another interpretation is that "Kṛṣṇa" means "black". Someone who is black—that is the argument—cannot be understood. This is the reason why Kṛṣṇa cannot be understood by chanting. All these interpretations of the holy name are offensive.

The mundane interpreter tries to explain totally spiritual phenomena with his material logic. The holy name has inconceivable spiritual energies, as we have seen in Chapter Two. It is the sound incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The attempt to regard the holy name as a part of this world and equate it with anything material is foolish.

How Can the Sixth Offense be Rectified?

As with the fifth offense, one should admit in an assembly of devotees and beg them to enlighten one about the true nature of the holy name. With a repentant heart, one should beg for forgiveness for offending the holy name.



7. Offense

To Commit Sinful Activities on the Strength of the Holy Name

(nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhih)

In order to get a better understanding of this extremely severe offense, it is necessary to analyze the concept of 'sin'. Obviously there are different conceptions of this term.

The Different Stages of Sin

According to the Vedas, every sin has three stages:

1. Ignorance,
2. The desire to commit a sin, and
3. The sinful act in itself.

It is very important for a devotee to remove the cause of sin and ignorance to make further progress on the spiritual path. To this end, it is important to obtain spiritual knowledge.

As long as a devotee is dwelling on the intermediate stage between sinful life and pure life, he will keep a certain relationship to his past sins. Some neophytes on the spiritual path vividly remember their past sinful lives; they reside in the gray area of not yet being fully determined to accept every thing favorable for their spiritual advancement. Their actions may already be spiritualized, but their mind is still attached to previous habits. Thus it may occur that they fall back on them. However, as long as they do not commit further sins in this intermediate period, the effects of past sins will soon vanish, and the more they are absorbed in chanting the holy name, the sooner these traces will completely fade away.

Intentional and Unintentional Sins

It is important to distinguish between intentional and unintentional sins. If a devotee commits a sin without purpose (a so-called accidental falldown), this sin is only temporary and will be washed away by the power of the holy name. But if a person commits



intentional sins, thinking that the bad effect will be washed off by the power of the holy name, then he cannot be regarded as a serious devotee. He is a cheater and will have to face the bitter result of his offenses, viz. fear, lamentation, and eventually spiritual death.

Even the mere thought of committing a sin with the intention to annihilate it later through the strength of the holy name cannot be compensated by any remedy. What to speak of someone who actually commits the offense. Only a materialist can think like that. Such a person cannot be engaged in devotional service. In no case is it allowed to commit sins, thinking they will be forgiven by the strength of the holy name—we must not think of it at all.

Where is the borderline between the two kinds of sin? Whereas a smaller or greater blunder is unintentional, here we speak of intentional sins—if they are premeditated, or planned in advance. In the previously mentioned offenses there were always possibilities to neutralize them. Here for the first time the consequences are very severe.

It is through the process of devotional service that one attains perfection; but if one rejects this process—especially by abusing the unique strength of the holy name for the fulfillment of sinful desires—then his life-span, mind, and words will be ruined.

No one should think himself to be in an unimpeachable position due to his chanting and being situated in spiritual life. These thoughts and their succeeding actions have disastrous effects. A neophyte may consider himself to be in an especially privileged situation, as he lives now in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He may think that now, being protected by the power of devotional service, he can do what his mind and senses dictate to him. This is the 'I am saved' syndrome. As long as one is on the stage of *nāmābhāsa*, he has to be aware of this offense. If we are in bad association, we are likely to return to our old habits.

For example, many devotees were previously great lovers of rock and roll music. After some time in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they may hear the Rolling Stones again and get into circles where they used to go before their spiritual life. Thus it may happen that they attend



a concert of the “Stones”, cultivating the company of their former friends—and again they are entangled in sinful life. Therefore, it is very dangerous to cultivate bad association. In this way, one should always be vigilant, on the lookout for possible danger. One should be careful of feeling ‘safe’ in one’s position as a Vaiṣṇava who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa and then gradually commits sins. Especially on our level, we should always avoid bad association.

Chanting Destroys All *anarthas*

The best means to become free of sinful propensities is to sincerely take shelter of the holy name with pure motivation. The holy name is eternally situated in pure goodness. Only very fortunate souls can take shelter of Kṛṣṇa’s holy name. The process of chanting, quickly removes the *anarthas* in the heart and causes *hṛdaya-daurbalya* (weakness of the heart) to disappear. Someone who develops unflinching faith in the holy name will immediately be released from the propensity to act sinfully. Then his heart will shine with resolute purity.

Chanting softens the heart and evokes compassion for all conditioned souls. The chanter is constantly endeavoring for their spiritual well being. He cannot bear to see the sufferings of the conditioned souls and tries by all means to deliver them from their distress. He has no lusty desires, no urge to enjoy the senses. He accepts only what is favorable for executing devotional service and rejects that which is unfavorable. He is convinced in all circumstances that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his protector, savior and maintainer. He does not identify himself with his body. In a humble state of mind he constantly chants the holy name of the Lord. In this way he loses all inclination to commit sinful activities.



How can the Seventh Offense be Rectified?

If by some error this offense is committed, one must cleanse oneself in the assembly of pure Vaiṣṇavas. Sinful desires are like thieves on the path of *bhakti*, and the pure Vaiṣṇavas are the guardians of this path. One should therefore call aloud the name of his guardian, the spiritual master, 'Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda!' for when the guardian appears, the thieves run away. Since the Lord personally confirms to be our guardian, one can chant Kṛṣṇa's name as well.

What about devotees who repent and come back to spiritual life after having committed sins? Since they consult the assembly of pure Vaiṣṇavas, they take up the above-mentioned process and can be re-established in their spiritual life. Especially if they take shelter of their spiritual master, the sinful thieves of *bhakti* will run away.¹ Devotees who return, however, have generally committed unintentional sins due to weakness of their heart. Those who deliberately commit severe sins, desiring to hurt devotees, rarely come back to the spiritual path. Lord Viṣṇu personally places obstacles on the path of those who offend Vaiṣṇavas.

Let us summarize: Whereas the all-merciful Lord is prepared to forgive the unintentional blunders of devotees, He does not tolerate when someone commits premeditated sins, calculating to be excused by the chanting of the holy name.

.....
¹ The thieves on the path of *bhakti* are described in *Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā*, Text 5.



8. Offense

To Consider the Chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa One of the Auspicious Ritualistic Activities Offered in the Vedas as Fruitive Activities (*karma-kāṇḍa*)

(dharma-vrata-tyāga-hutādi-sarva-śubha-kriyā-sāmyam ...)

What is the difference between chanting the holy name and pious activities? The holy name is directly Kṛṣṇa; the way and the goal are identical. The holy name is the process and simultaneously the goal; it is full of spiritual bliss and bestows highest perfection.

As for ordinary pious activities—such as altruistic work, fire sacrifice, *yoga*, purifying baths at holy places, *varṇāśrama* duties, demigod worship, austerity, etc.—the means (or the way) and the goal have to be distinguished. Such actions are solely material although they are good material activities and bring a good material goal. But how can they help to attain a spiritual goal? Chanting, on the other hand, is already the goal: it is Kṛṣṇa Himself. One must definitely act in the mode of goodness to be elevated gradually—but ultimately one has to give up all material activities, good and bad, and act only for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. Chanting, however, is never to be given up—not on the conditioned platform, nor in the liberated state.

The Original Form of the Holy Name

No activity can be compared with chanting the holy name. The Supreme Lord is the transcendental sun; His divine form is fully spiritual. All His Deity forms are absolute, just like His name, His abode, and His pastimes. Unlike objects made of inert matter—which are separate from their names—the holy name is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. The holy name chanted by a pure devotee descends directly from the spiritual world, Goloka Vṛndāvana. It emanates directly from his soul, permeates his entire body, and dances on the tip of his tongue. One who chants like this is actually chanting the name; whereas he who nourishes a material concept of the holy name is lost.



How can the Eighth Offense be Rectified?

If one commits this offense, it is advisable to go to the Vaiṣṇavas and obtain *sambandha-jñāna* in order to remove one's ignorance. One should avoid this mistake in the future and start to chant seriously.

After having spoken about the eighth offense, Haridāsa Ṭhākura addressed the following prayer to Lord Caitanya:

My dear Lord, my thoughts and my intellect are thoroughly mundane: therefore I simply mouth the names of the Lord. I am too unfortunate to experience the transcendental touchstone qualities of the holy name. O Lord! I beg You to please appear as the holy name and dance on my tongue. I fall at Your lotus feet and pray. If you like, You can keep me in this material world and deprive me of the spiritual sky; whatever You desire, You are free to fulfill. But please let me taste the divine nectar of Kṛṣṇa's holy name. You have incarnated amongst the *jīvas* to distribute the holy name, so kindly also consider me, an insignificant *jīva*. I am a fallen soul and You are the savior of the fallen. Let this be our relationship. O Savior! On the strength of this relationship, I am begging from You the nectar of the holy name. (*Harināma-cintāmani*)

By cultivating such a humble and eager attitude, following in the footsteps of the *nāmācārya*, the eighth offense can surely be avoided.



9. Offense

To Instruct a Faithless Person About the Glories of the Holy Name

(aśraddadhāne vimukhe 'py aśṛṇvati...)

Often, devotees may wonder if they have committed this offense by requesting any person they meet, “Well, just say Hare Kṛṣṇa! It is an Indian greeting.”

Someone who chants the holy name must have faith. This faith is engendered by *saṅkīrtana*, loud chanting of the holy name. If someone has attained faith, he will approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the holy name from him.

The term “faith” has to be understood properly. It means to firmly believe in the glories and the potency of the holy name. A real Vaiṣṇava will not give the holy name to someone lacking this faith, for this person will severely harm his spiritual life by committing offenses. Simultaneously, the person who gives the holy name will lose all his devotional merits and quickly fall down.

But what about all the preachers who are constantly committing this offense, by giving the holy name—either orally or in the form of literature—to people who have no real faith? Are they bereft of any chance? No! This offense refers especially to giving the holy name by the means of *dīkṣā*, initiation. To instruct a faithless person on the glories of the holy name means to initiate him.

The habit to accept disciples without having instructed them about spiritual life and having instilled faith in them is a great offense on the part of the *guru*. A *guru* who behaves like that will fall down and lose all the good results of his spiritual life.

Faithless persons should first, as mentioned above, gain faith through singing the holy names. After some time, they will approach a bona fide *guru*, receive initiation into the holy name and thus easily attain *prema*, love of God, the highest goal of life.

Although we have heard that this offense is mainly committed by a *guru* who gives initiation to an unqualified disciple, it can also be committed by someone who openly speaks about the confidential glories of the holy name to an unqualified audience.



Which Persons Are Unfit to be Initiated into the Holy Name?

The faithless person lives in the imagination that after having accepted the holy name, he no longer needs to fear mistakes and sins. He thinks that after initiation everybody should offer their prostrated obeisances (*daṇḍavat*) unto him, and that he should be served by others. Such a person is unfit for spiritual life.

How then can the faithless be liberated? As already mentioned, he has to develop faith through loud *saṅkīrtana* before he can receive the holy name. This means that one should encourage such persons to chant the holy name, but without instructing them about the most advanced, intimate secrets, as for example that Kṛṣṇa dances on the tongue of the chanter. Faithless persons cannot understand such topics. At least they will consider it an exaggeration. It is a general principle for preachers to avoid statements which cannot be understood by their audience.

For the same reason, one should not confront the beginner with a list of all the offenses against the holy name. First, he should receive encouraging instructions. By chanting the holy name, he will slowly be purified and acquire a higher taste, which enables him to gradually desist from material activities and take the offenses more seriously. When Śrīla Prabhupāda propagated Kṛṣṇa consciousness among the hippies in New York, he first encouraged them to chant the holy name. Only later he told them not to take drugs.

Thus, one should simply encourage the faithless beginner to accept the spiritual path. Later, when he is established in spiritual life and seeks further progress, one can help him to become safe on his path. When he has developed faith in the chanting of the holy name, he will approach a bona fide *guru*, accept the holy name from him, and finally attain *prema*. Even thieves, prostitutes and scoundrels can give up their sinful mentality and thus gain faith.

As soon as their faith is strong, they can be instructed about the holy name in detail. In this way, the holy name can be spread everywhere.

It is interesting to see that Lord Caitanya first invoked initial



faith in Jāgāi and Mādhāi before He gave them the holy name. We should not stop encouraging people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but first of all we should invoke so much faith in them so that they actually begin to chant with understanding. Then, by chanting their faith increases and their spiritual life can improve.

The Difference Between the Chanting of an Initiated and an Uninitiated Devotee

The spiritual master establishes a genuine relationship between the *jīva* and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is essential in spiritual life to approach a bona fide *guru* and receive initiation from him. This is advised by Kṛṣṇa:

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth. (*Bg.* 4.34)

At the time of initiation, *karma* and material contamination leave the sincere disciple, and he receives a strong feeling of liberation from his/her past. On this level it is much easier for him to render devotional service. Thus often, one should very thankfully remember the spiritual master who has enabled us to chant with greater strength.

But, even chanting in the uninitiated stage has its effects: it qualifies one for initiation. Chanting before initiation leads to initiation, and then the spiritual life really starts.



Questions

1. Name the different kinds of sin.
2. Enumerate the different stages of sin.
3. What is the danger for those who are on the intermediate stage between the two kinds of sin?
4. How can one be freed from the great offense of having committed an intentional sin?
5. What does it mean to “give” the holy name?
6. Since Lord Caitanya instructed us to propagate the holy name everywhere, why does the Vaiṣṇava *guru* not initiate someone in the holy name who has no faith.



10. Offense

To Not Have Complete Faith in the Chanting of the Holy Names, and To Maintain Material Attachments, Even After Understanding So Many Instructions on this Matter.

(śrutvāpi nāma-māhātmyam yah prīti-rahito 'dhāmaḥ ...)

In order to consciously avoid this offense, it is necessary to understand the nature of material attachments, how they bind to material consciousness and obstruct offenseless chanting. For this, it is helpful to study the mentality of a materially attached person.

Because his intelligence is covered by false ego, a person with material mentality sticks to the concept of "I" and "mine". He thinks, "I am a *brāhmaṇa*", "I am a Vaiṣṇava", "I am a musician", or, "I am a rich man". In other words, he thinks himself to be the doer, he sees the world as his property and considers himself the creator of his destiny and the enjoyer of his activities (*ahaṁ mamādi-paramaḥ*). He thinks himself to be his own protector and maintainer and lives in the conception of "This is my position, my wealth, my wife, these are my brothers, my sons, and my daughters." Thus he is fully convinced of being able to attain all perfection and fame through his own efforts.

Such persons are very proud of their knowledge; they consider themselves to be the lord and master and believe that they are able to increase and expand art and science by their own intelligence. Lord R̥ṣabhadeva calls this: *janasya moho 'yam ahaṁ mameti*. The illusion of the materially attached is the wrong conception of *ahaṁ* (I) and *mama* (mine).

Attachment to bodily designations is a symptom of spiritual immaturity. It is an obstacle in the development of devotional service. This deeply rooted mentality can only be overcome by complete surrender to the holy name.

When the spirit soul wants to enjoy in this material world, he has to accept a false identity, just to be able to move and act in this foreign medium. If we want to dive into water, we similarly



have to first dress in a diving suit. Our lungs have to be adapted to the respiration under water by means of oxygen bottles, and our eyes need diving glasses. This means that we actually exchange our senses, in such a way that we are able to exist under water. Similarly, the spirit soul has to put on the 'diving suit' of the material body to be able to exist in the kingdom of *māyā*. Our lungs are nothing but material 'oxygen bottles' of the spirit soul.

In one of His ecstasies, Lord Caitanya impressively expressed this point:

My dear friends, unless I serve the transcendental form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all My days and all My senses will become entirely useless. Now I am uselessly bearing the burden of My senses, which are like stone blocks and dried wood. I do not know how long I will be able to continue without shame. (*Cc. Madhya 2.28*)

The self-realized, spiritually perfected soul can clearly realize the material body which he carries around with all its needs as a burden. Not only his material covering (the body), but this whole material existence is discerned by him as an unnatural encumbrance, in the same way as one may feel the pressure of a bundle of wood on the shoulders. Sarvajña Ācārya describes such an attitude:

Oh my Lord, how extraordinary Your devotees are! For them, the wide ocean is like a tiny puddle, the sun like a fire-fly, the looming, golden Mount Sumeru like a lump of dirt, a powerful emperor like a minor servant, priceless jewels like useless stones, desire trees like dry twigs—for them, the whole material existence is like an insignificant bundle of straw. What else is to say? They regard their own body as a useless burden. (*Manah-sikṣā*, Text 5, p.)

The materialistic person, however, completely misconceiving this burden, explains, "That's me". When such a person hears about the glories of the holy name, he does not accept them. If he chants, then it is only as a mere social obligation or out of custom. In this way, he will never experience real pleasure in chanting and hearing the holy names. He is a hypocrite who chants the holy



Nectar of the Ocean of the Holy Name

name disdainfully. Thus, being on the stage of *nāmābhāsa*, he will never attain *prema*, pure love of God. Mahārāja Parīkṣit describes this materialistic mentality, which leads one around and around in materialistic activities, as follows:

One may know that sinful activity is injurious for him because he actually sees that a criminal is punished by the government and rebuked by people in general and because he hears from scriptures and learned scholars that one is thrown into hellish conditions in the next life for committing sinful acts. Nevertheless, in spite of such knowledge, one is forced to commit sins again and again, even after performing acts of atonement. Therefore, what is the value of such atonement?

(ŚB. 6.1.9)

For a materialistic person with the mentality to enjoy at all costs, all help comes too late, in spite of instructions from others, personal experiences, and a combination of both. This is illustrated by someone who is determined not to wake up and thus pretends to sleep—it is impossible to awaken him! Similarly, a person who wants to retain his materialistic mentality can only be liberated with great difficulty, and he will not be able to taste the nectar of the holy name. Therefore, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura renders an alternative definition of the tenth offense:

To not feel pleasure in chanting the holy name, even after having heard of the glories of *śrī harināma*.

Nevertheless, there is a remedy. In such a situation, one should associate with personalities who have accepted the holy name and have attained the platform of *śuddha-bhakti* (pure *bhakti*). They have given up all material attachments, they worship Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet in a humble state of mind and are always chanting His names. The offender should serve these persons with the intention to also forgo his attachments. By worshipping Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet in great devotion and fully taking shelter of the chanting of the holy name, he will gradually be able to focus on the holy name. Attraction will develop, and the egoistic conception of "I" and "mine" will disappear. In this way, he will cross the ocean of material ignorance.



By hearing the glories of the holy name, the last traces of false ego will vanish, and the symptoms of pure devotion will blossom in his heart. Finally, he will be able to taste pure love of Kṛṣṇa.

As long as, however, there is no real faith in the glories of the holy name, it is necessary to receive *sambandha-jñāna* and knowledge about the holy name from the spiritual master. This illustrates that, as in overcoming the other offenses, this offense is also dependent on the association of devotees who are on a high level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Now it becomes clear why the offense to blaspheme devotees is mentioned in the first place. All remedies for the other offenses strongly emphasize to approach devotees who do not commit these offenses but who on the contrary are situated in *śuddhānāma*, pure chanting of the holy name. In other words: because the devotees are the liberators from the abyss of the ten offenses, it is most important to respect them. An offense against their lotus feet is very severe, because if one has done so, he cannot adopt the remedy for the offenses against the holy name.



The Root of all Offenses

To be Inattentive While Chanting the Holy Name

(pramāda)

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states that inattention or distraction while chanting is the root of all offenses:

Distraction in chanting produces a type of illusion, causing serious offenses against the holy name that are very difficult to overcome. This illusion leads to craving for wealth, women, position, success and even cheating. When these attractions cover the heart, the neophyte gradually loses interest in chanting the holy name. One must make a constant effort to drive these thoughts away from the mind and diligently follow the rules of Vaiṣṇava etiquette. (*Harināma-cintāmaṇi*)

This offense is said to be the root of all other offenses and *anarthas*. It is called *pramāda* in Sanskrit; literally, it means “madness”, for it is improper to ask Kṛṣṇa to appear, on one hand, and then to ignore Him when He comes. This is why *pramāda* means “inattention” and “indifference” as well. Three kinds of inattention have to be examined:

***Audāsīnya*: Indifference, Lack of Attraction**

The ordinary person is attached to many things. Even while chanting, he feels attracted to them, thus remaining indifferent to the holy name. He may well chant sixteen rounds, but his heart is not engaged, and he does not feel a drop of taste. Do you know this from your own experience? One has taken a shower and attended the *ārati*—and what comes next? Of course the morning routine: the bead-bag is grasped. But while chanting, no taste, not the least ecstasy is produced. The task to chant sixteen rounds without interruption seems to be an insurmountable obstacle—just to listen, without thinking, planning or doing anything else. The reason is attachment to material things, which thwarts our attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

How to give up this offense? If one becomes inattentive and



apathetic while chanting, he should immediately approach Vaiṣṇavas who are free from material influence and chant with them. This helps to diminish one's attachment to material life. Inspired by the Vaiṣṇava's behavior, one desires to give up this frailty. Gradually the heart will develop attraction to the holy name, as one becomes eager to taste the nectar of the holy name.

It is very helpful to see how advanced devotees concentrate on chanting. Whoever saw Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting in pure love of God, became so touched in the heart that he wanted to chant in the same way. Advanced devotees recommend that we live and chant at a place where Kṛṣṇa performed his pastimes, or near a *tulasī* plant, or in the association of Vaiṣṇavas. Visiting holy places of pilgrimage, like Māyāpura or Vṛndāvana, is also important because by the spiritual atmosphere, these places provide more inspiration and strength for chanting.

Another remedy is to carefully chant alone in a locked room. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura even recommends that the inattentive chanter cover his eyes, ears and nose to keep away any distraction and to fully concentrate on the holy name. By this means the mind can be fixed entirely on the holy name, and soon all apathy will vanish, while attraction and taste are called forth. If you really have problems with chanting, then try it (while driving as a passenger on the highway, for example).

Jaḍya: Laziness

Laziness means to chant with a murky mind, or to stop chanting before finishing a round in order to attend to a so-called "important" activity. Another symptom is the strong urge to interrupt chanting for a rest. By this, the taste for chanting cannot develop.

The remedy is the association of Vaiṣṇavas who do not waste their time with useless talk or other material activities, but who constantly chant and remember the holy name. Since they are solely immersed in the nectarean ocean of the holy name, they have no other desires. One should follow in the footsteps of such rare devotees, until finally the desire arises to chant as they



are chanting. This enthusiasm, combined with the mercy of the devotees, helps to overcome the lazy mind.

In other words, one should associate with devotees who do not waste their time with *prajalpa*, material talking. (Always beware of the “*prajalpa* lounge” in the temple where the inattentive chanters gather).

Vikṣepa: Distraction

Distraction produces illusion, the cause of all other forms of inattentive chanting, like laziness, apathy or the lack of attraction. It also engenders various other offenses and impairs one from overcoming the attraction for wealth, women (or men), position, and material success, as well as the propensity of cheating.

To be absorbed in these items of attachment results in distraction: One cannot concentrate on anything else. While chanting, the holy name will not really be heard. The attention is rather caught by worldly topics—and the mind can only concentrate on one item at a time.

In order to avoid distraction and thus rectify this offense, one should follow the rules of Vaiṣṇava etiquette. This means, for example, to stop thinking of eating on Ekādasī, on appearance days and other important festivals, and instead to chant the whole day and night in the association of Vaiṣṇavas. Such Kṛṣṇa conscious festivals offer the devotee the best opportunity to chant the holy name more than usual and to become fully absorbed—in *kīrtana* as well as in *japa*.

During one of our sojourns in Vṛndāvana, we strictly observed *ekādaśī-vrata*. We chanted more than sixty-four rounds, fasted (even from water), and completely absorbed ourselves in *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*. By fasting just once on Ekādaśī in this way, and chanting, reading and spending the night with *bhajanās* and discussions about Kṛṣṇa, we were drawn away from the material world! It was an incredible experience which opened a completely new spiritual realm. Of course, to observe Ekādaśī this way can only be arranged when no strenuous service has to be performed on that day.



By conducting one's spiritual life in such a way, engaging in devotional activities and hearing from the scriptures in the association of the servants of the Lord, preferably at a holy place or in the temple, one becomes happy. Gradually, *bhakti* will increase and the mind will rejoice upon hearing topics about Lord Kṛṣṇa. The taste for lower material subjects will vanish and the heart will avoid the offense of distraction.

O King, it is therefore essential that every human being hears about, glorifies and remembers the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, always and everywhere.

(Śukadeva Gosvāmī, in *ŚB.* 2.2.36)

If one is distracted, he should pray for Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Compassionate Kṛṣṇa will help such a devotee without doubt.

What is the proper attitude to avoid distraction? One should give up the desire to increase the number of rounds for the mere sake of respect and honor and instead concentrate on the number of rounds which one can actually chant. In other words, one should concentrate on improving the quality of the chanting rather than on a great quantity of rounds for prestige.

One should constantly pray to the Lord that He may help us to chant distinctly and attentively. If the mind is fully fixed on Kṛṣṇa, everything is attainable. "Please, Kṛṣṇa, I do not chant well, I cannot concentrate. Today, my rascal mind just refuses to follow me. Please help me! Otherwise, there is no chance at all for such a bad chanter like me."

At the end of this section on the ten offenses to the chanting of the holy name, I would like to add a song from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. It can motivate us in a unique way to intensify our chanting, by reminding us that there is no time to lose to improve the chanting of the holy names.



Song: Hare Kṛṣṇa Nāma

The bird of my heart does not know what past sinful activities it has committed to cause this inability to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa properly.

O forest bird! I have kept something for you very carefully within the cottage of my heart—the holy name of Lord Hari, which is over-flowing with pure sweet honey. O bird, you could learn the chanting of this name if you were taught.

A bird is easily able to speak all names; why then does this bird of my heart refuse to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa? Oh, why does my heart not weep from chanting the holy names Hare Kṛṣṇa?

O bird! Come, let us go to the spiritual world, the land of true and everlasting beauty. It is the place where the imaginary man of my mind will never again come and go on the revolving circle of birth and death.

O bird! At the time of death, your body will simply be placed upon a funeral stretcher, lifted on the shoulders of four persons and carried to the cremation grounds.

Alas! The cremation fire will then enter your mouth and totally consume your tongue. There will be nothing you can do to save yourself, for at that time it is too late—you will be unable to speak any more.

Refrain: Oh, why does my heart not weep from chanting the holy names Hare Kṛṣṇa?

Conclusion

The injunction to avoid the ten offenses instructs us to strive for the sublime qualities and realizations which protect us from committing those offenses. Then, in such a positive frame of mind, we can guard against all the offenses. This means that the ten offenses to the chanting of the holy name can easily be given up if we:



Chanting on the Offensive Stage

1. Serve the holy Vaiṣṇavas, and not criticize them;
2. Worship Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Absolute Supreme Personality of Godhead;
3. Respect the spiritual master who initiates one into the holy name;
4. Glorify the scriptures which reveal the glories of the holy name;
5. Be convinced that the holy name is eternally established in pure transcendence;
6. Accept the explanation of the holy name, which is given by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the scriptures;
7. Root out the desire of sinful activities;
8. Give up ritualistic fruitive activities;
9. Reveal the glories of the holy name only to serious devotees;
10. Chant very diligently and fully surrender unto the holy name.



nāmābhāsa
Chanting on the Clearing Stage



1. A Historical Account

Many people are induced to chant without spiritual knowledge or practice—maybe by hearing others chant or by a fortunate accident. Take a look at the time when I came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I want to report from this time not for nostalgic reasons, but for giving a historic example of *nāmābhāsa*. One of the typical songs of that time inspired by “Indian Wisdom” was “Instant Karma” by John Lennon:

*Who in the heck d’you think you are
A super star
Well, alright you are
Well we all shine on
Like the moon and the stars and the sun
Well we all shine on
Everyone come on
Instant karma’s gonna get you
Gonna knock you off your feet
Better recognize your brothers
Everyone you meet
Why in the world are we here?
Surely not to live in pain and fear*

At that time, chanting was “in”. The *mahā-mantra* was in the third place on the music charts. Every open-minded young person chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa sometimes, and I also happily joined my contemporaries. Many popular songs from that time contained the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, as for example George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord” and John Lennon’s “Give Peace a Chance.” Meditation was mainly understood as mind-expansion, which was thought to be done, amongst hundreds of other processes, by the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. There, there was of course complete ignorance about the deep meaning of the holy name.

This is an example of *nāmābhāsa*: the holy name is chanted, but without clear knowledge. When the sun of the holy name is covered



Chanting on the Clearing Stage

by the clouds of ignorance and *anarthas* only a small fraction of light comes through. On this stage, one chants *nāmābhāsa*. Therefore, if the full light of spiritual ecstasy is filtered when we are chanting, it is because we are covered by ignorance.



2. Overcoming *anarthas*

Four Types of *anarthas*

By the influence of the external energy, the living being, although transcendental to the three modes of material nature, considers himself a product of matter. Hence, shackled by *māyā's* illusory energy, he is submitted to numerous material sufferings. In this deplorable situation, *anarthas* or material attachments develop.

Artha means 'value', and the prefix *an* means 'without'. Thus, *anartha* means 'that which has no value'. Material assets yield no benefit at all for the living entity, but as soon as he becomes influenced by the external energy, he unfortunately considers the different *anarthas* as valuable and becomes fully entangled by them.

It is important to remember that the spell of *anarthas* can only be broken by the strength of devotional service. All *anarthas* are nothing but different effects of *māyā*. *Māyā* however is like the darkness, and Kṛṣṇa is like the sun. Where Kṛṣṇa appears, there can be no darkness, *kṛṣṇa—surya-sama; maya haya andhakara*.

(Cc. *Madhya* 22.31)

The four types of *anarthas* are analyzed in the *Āmnāya-sūtra*:

1. Defects of the heart (*hṛdaya-daurbalya*), which are again subdivided into four types:

- a) Attachment to objects which have no relationship to Kṛṣṇa;
- b) The propensity to cheat and to find faults;
- c) Envy; and
- d) The desire for recognition.

2. Offenses (*aparādha*). There are also four different kinds of offenses:

- a) Offenses against the holy name. These offenses have strictly to be avoided if we want to re-awaken our pure love of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore we have dedicated a considerable part of this book to the ten offenses and how they can be avoided.
- b) Offenses against the form of the Lord. This means that while



worshipping the transcendental Deity of the Lord in the temple, one might commit offenses by disrespect or neglect; or one negates the existence of a personal form of the Lord, like the impersonalists.

- c) Offenses against the devotees of the Lord, and
- d) Offenses against other living entities, like violence or envy.

3. Thirst for material objects (*asat-trṣṇā*). The material desires can also be classified into four categories:

- a) Desires for delightful sense-objects;
- b) Desires for sense enjoyment as available on the heavenly planets;
- c) Desires to obtain mystic powers, and
- d) Desires to be liberated by merging into the impersonal Brahman.

4. Illusion about spiritual knowledge (*tattva-vibhrama*), which is again fourfold:

- a) Illusion, or ignorance, about one's own identity;
- b) Ignorance about the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead;
- c) Ignorance about the processes of *sādhana-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti*;
- d) Ignorance about the factors which are unfavorable for the development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We should never forget, however, that the potency of the holy name always remains the same, even if we are still covered by *anarthas*. *Pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-muktaḥ*. The holy name is *nitya-muktaḥ*, eternally liberated, and it is *pūrṇaḥ śuddhaḥ*, eternally pure. Not the holy name, but our appreciation for the holy name becomes contaminated and impedes the experience of its real nature. The sun always remains as the full beaming sun, even when clouds move before it. It is not that the sun undergoes difficulties—it is we, who are under the influence of the clouds.



Three Types of Transcendental Knowledge

The question is how the clouds of ignorance and *anarthas*, which move before the holy name, can be dispersed. For this, one requires transcendental knowledge, and therefore it is absolutely necessary to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. He instructs the faithful disciple in the three following important subjects of spiritual self realization: (See *Cc. Madhya* 20.122-148)

1. **Sambandha-jñāna.** This is the essential understanding about:
 - a) The spiritual position of the living being,
 - b) The spiritual position of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and
 - c) The position of the material world.

It describes exactly how these three topics are interrelated. The first and most important point is: We are not this body, we are not a biophysical computer. We are spirit souls, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda constantly emphasized this point; he used to say, “Unless people do not understand that they are not identical with their material body, all spiritual instructions remain irrelevant. They cannot understand them.” First of all, the spiritual master has to establish the fundament, the three fields of *sambandha-jñāna*, in the disciple, and when the disciple has understood them, the spiritual master leads him further on.

2. **Abhidheya.** By this term, the process, the art to perform devotional service, is indicated. The disciple is instructed how to properly practice the rules and regulations of *sādhana*. When the holy name is chanted with a strong foundation of spiritual knowledge (*sambandha-jñāna*) and good spiritual practice (*abhidheya*), it will reveal more and more of its power. Like the sun which slowly dissipates the clouds, the holy name will then disperse all our *anarthas*, like thirst for material objects or weakness in the heart.
3. **Prayojana.** When the disciple advances in practice (*abhidheya*), he will finally attain the goal of life: *prayojana*, pure love of God.



Chanting on the Clearing Stage

As long as the living entity is not firmly situated in *sambandha-jñāna*, he will continue to chant on the *nāmābhāsa* stage. If he, however, takes the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master who instructs him how to perform devotional service, then the cloud of *anarthas* gradually disappears and pure love of God can be awakened in his heart.



3. The Effects of *nāmābhāsa*

What happens to a person who chants on the clearing stage? Is he still contaminated? Is everything hopeless? Is his chanting worthless? No, absolutely not. Even while chanting merely *nāmābhāsa*, the following effects appear:

- 1. Faith.** To inspire faith is the first result of *nāmābhāsa* chanting. By this faith, one will fully accept devotional service in due course of time.
- 2. Extinction of sinful reactions.** Sinful reactions are destroyed even for the inhabitant of the hellish planets if he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa. By this, one attains liberation from the material world. A good example is Bali Mahārāja who was born in a family of demons and lived in their association, but who as a devotee was preaching among them. Even on the stage of chanting *nāmābhāsa* one can attain liberation from the material world, but note, no love of God.
- 3. Liberation from the effects of *Kali-yuga*.** Chanting *nāmābhāsa* overcomes the effects of *Kali-yuga*. Even though we are living in this age of quarrel and conflict, its influences can no longer affect us, although our chanting may not be on the highest stage.
- 4. Disappearance of fear and advent of peace.** Some people think that *śānti* (inner peace) is the highest object in life. That is not the case, for love of God is the supreme goal. Nevertheless, on the clearing stage worries disappear and peace fills our heart.
- 5. Protection from the influence of ghosts and adverse planets.** Even if not chanting on the *śuddha-nāma* stage, one is guarded against the sway of ghosts and similar phenomena.
- 6. Attaining the four goals of life (*puruṣārtha*).** The four goals of life offered by the Vedas—religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation—can be obtained by chanting on the *nāmābhāsa* stage.
- 7. Spiritual bliss.** Even by only chanting *nāmābhāsa*, bliss is granted and the living entity is offered eternal residence on the Vaikuṅṭha planets. Especially in *Kali-yuga*, there is no other way to attain these goals.



Briefly, everything is contained in the holy name. This is the reason why chanting *nāmābhāsa* is considered even more important than the study of the Vedas and visiting the holy places! Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that, because the holy name possesses all energies, by its power it is possible to attain the goals of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* even when chanting *nāmābhāsa*. “This chanting provides us with happiness in the material world. It is the only help for the helpless.”

The holy name is so momentous that it can transform animals into human beings and fulfill the goals of all human endeavors. That does not mean that *varṇāśrama-dharma* is insignificant; as an additional, external means it is certainly very beneficial. Śrīla Prabhupāda advocated the establishment of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, so to say, as the mounting of the street, to protect us from accidents or from going astray. We are interested though in *daivi-varṇāśrama*, the *varṇāśrama* inspired by God, where the spirit of the holy name is vibrantly practiced, and not the material *varṇāśrama-dharma* system, which is only a reflection of the real thing.



4. Divisions of *nāmābhāsa*

Unintentional Chanting

Chanting on the *nāmābhāsa* stage is characterized first by the deliberate endeavor to chant with full attention and to avoid offenses. However, there are four additional ways of chanting which are on an unintentional level. Due to the Lord's mercy, they nevertheless show a certain effect and are thus categorized among *nāmābhāsa*. This demonstrates the unlimited power of the holy name and the Lord's strong desire to elevate the conditioned souls and take them back home to His abode.

1. ***Sāṅketya* (indirect chanting).** This refers to people who chant with a material conception while implying something else. For example, passers-by may say, "Look, Maude, here again are the Hare Kṛṣṇa people, who are like colored spots in our town", or, "Really, those Kṛṣṇas should work." Ajāmila called the name of his son, Nārāyaṇa and thus attained liberation. He chanted the holy name but for a different reason. When a wife says to her husband, "Harry, please pass me the Rama margarine", she thinks of the margarine with the name Rama, but she is still chanting the holy name of Rāma. Certainly, this is unintentional chanting, but the holy name is so merciful that Kṛṣṇa appreciates it as pious activity.
2. ***Pārihāsyā* (chanting jokingly).** Once Kṛṣṇa, Bhīma and Arjuna, disguised as *brāhmanas* and came to Jarāsandha's court asking for charity. But Jarāsandha soon recognized that his guest was Kṛṣṇa himself, and he joked about Him. When seeing the devotees in the street, some passers-by also make a joke and say, "The Happy Haris are coming", thus chanting the name of Lord Hari. These are examples of *parihāsa*.
3. ***Stobha* (musical entertainment).** Even if one is singing the holy name on stage as a musical performance, his chanting is recognized by Kṛṣṇa.
4. ***Helana* (indifference or contempt).** This kind of *nāmābhāsa* is sometimes found when devotees are chanting inattentively



while performing other activities. It also means to exclaim the holy name as an act of derision. A striking example is Śiśupāla, who insulted Kṛṣṇa before the *rājasūya* sacrifice, “This Kṛṣṇa is a coward!” (Learned authorities, however, consider Śiśupāla’s reproaches as indirect glorification of Kṛṣṇa, because besides the intention of deriding Him, the Sanskrit words used by Śiśupāla can be also interpreted in a way that praises Kṛṣṇa.)

Śraddhā-nāmābhāsa (Faithful Chanting)

The cause of the four additional kinds of *nāmābhāsa* mentioned above is the lack of real faith in Kṛṣṇa (*śraddhā*). *Śraddhā-nāmābhāsa*, on the other hand, refers to faithful, yet not pure, chanting. This stage of chanting, although yet covered by *anarthas* (unwanted desires), establishes *sambandha-jñāna*. Attraction for the holy name develops, and if one steadily continues to chant, he attains the platform where his *anarthas* are nullified. Finally, he attains the stage of pure chanting.

Nāmābhāsa with Little Offenses

Even chanting with little offenses (*aparādhas*) is sometimes counted as *nāmābhāsa* and not *nāma-aparādha*. Only when the offenses are very severe, they completely extinguish the effects of chanting. As long as one is chanting on the *nāmābhāsa* stage, one can further progress on the path of spiritual advancement.

As already explained on page 112, there are four kinds of *aparādhas* which really have to be avoided by those who chant *nāmābhāsa*. These are offenses against the holy name, against Kṛṣṇa Himself, against His devotees, and against other living beings. It is very important for a devotee to behave gently even towards nondevotees.

Material attachments, the cause of all offenses, simply disappear by continuing to chant the holy name on the *nāmābhāsa* stage:

By continually chanting the holy name, the well-wisher of all, one becomes freed from offenses even against the holy name itself. (Quoted in *Śrī Bhajana-rahasya, Dvitiya-yāma-sādhana*.)



Distorted and Real *nāmābhāsa*

What has been said so far should encourage us to continue to chant with full faith, even if we are still on the level of *nāmābhāsa*. The process of chanting itself will purify us of the offenses and promote our spiritual advancement. In this regard, it is very important to recognize the motivation and mentality that is behind the particular offense against the holy name. Therefore, two further kinds of *nāmābhāsa* have to be distinguished:

1. *Pratibimba-ābhāsa* (distorted *nāmābhāsa*). *Pratibimba-ābhāsa* refers to people who have deeply rooted attachments, such as material success or liberation. Strongly determined to further pursue them, they take advantage of chanting the holy name for the attainment of their material goals. As mentioned earlier, one of the effects of chanting is to become peaceful and to lose anxieties and worries. To this end, they chant. They aspire to remain in material life but without worries and anxieties. Such people cannot be purified; they will remain on the stage of attachments.

The example of the sun reflected in water has been given. When the sun disperses the clouds and shines on a pool of water, a distorted sun is reflected. Similarly, the chanting of the holy name is distorted by being reflected in a material mentality. The best example are *yoga* groups that practice self-invented methods of chanting, mixing it with material psycho-practices, like for example “hyperventilation”. They abuse the holy name for bodybuilding. They try to force spiritual progress by their material power, but are not willing to give up their material attachments. Since the determination to stay in material life is the initial motive, there is no real advancement, even if one chants with attention.

2. *Chāyā-ābhāsa* (real *nāmābhāsa*). Real *nāmābhāsa* is performed out of ignorance or weakness in the heart. All *anarthas*, which are still left at this stage, will be rectified in due course of time by continuously chanting the holy name. Thus the decisive factor is our motive to chant. If we chant with the desire to turn towards Kṛṣṇa, instead of wanting to improve our material circumstances, then we chant *chāyā-ābhāsa* and are on the right path towards pure chanting.



We conclude this chapter with a song in which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura praises the glories of the holy name:

Śrī Nāmā-māhātmya

kṛṣṇa-nāma dhare koto bal

*viṣaya-vāsanānale, mora citta sadā jwale,
ravi-tapta maru-bhūmi-sam
karṇa-randhra-patha diyā, hṛdi mājhe praveśiyā,
variṣoya sudhā anupam*

*hṛdoya hoite bole, jihvāra agrete cale,
śabda-rūpe nāce anukṣan
kaṇṭhe mora bhaḅge swara, aṅga kāṅpe thara thara,
sthira hoite nā pāre caraṇ*

*cakṣe dhārā, dehe gharma, pulakita saba carma,
vivarna hoilo kalevara
mūrchita hoilo man, pralayera āgaman,
bhāve sarva-deha jara jara*

*kori' eto upadrava, citte varṣe sudhā-drava,
more ḍāre premera sāgare
kichu nā bujhite dilo, more to' bātula koilo,
mora citta-vitta saba hare*

*loinu āśroya jā'r, heno vyavahāra tā'r,
varnite nā pāri e sakal
kṛṣṇa-nāma icchā-moy, jāhe jāhe sukhī hoy,
sei mora sukhera sambal*

*premera kalikā nām, adbhuta rasera dhām,
heno bala karaye prakāś
īṣat vikaśī' punaḥ, dekhāy nija-rūpa-guna,
citta hari' loya kṛṣṇa-pāś*

*pūrna vikaśita hoiyā, braje more jāya loiyā,
dekhāy more swarūpa-vilās
more siddha-deha diyā, kṛṣṇa-pāśe rākhe giyā,
e dehera kore sarva-nāś*

*kṛṣṇa-nāma-cintāmaṇi, akhila rasera khani,
nitya-mukta śuddha-rasa-moy
nāmera bālāi jata, saba lo'ye hoi hata,
tabe mora sukhera udoy*



Nectarian Ocean of the Holy Name

1. What power does the name of Kṛṣṇa possess? My heart constantly burns in the fire of worldly desires, just like a desert scorched by the rays of the sun. The holy name, entering the core of my heart through the holes of my ears, showers unparalleled nectar upon my soul.

2. The holy name speaks from within my heart, moves unto the tip of my tongue, and constantly dances on it in the form of transcendental sound. My throat becomes choked up, my body shivers again and again, and my feet cannot remain still.

3. Rivers of tears flow from my eyes, perspiration completely soaks my body, all my skin thrills with rapture, my hairs stand on end, and my complexion turns pale and discolored. My mind grows faint, I begin to experience devastation, and my entire body is shattered in a flood of ecstatic emotions.

4. While causing such an ecstatic disturbance, the holy name showers liquid nectar on my heart and drowns me in the ocean of divine love of Godhead. He does not allow me to understand anything, for He has made me truly mad by having stolen away my mind and all my resources.

5. Such is the behavior of Him in whom I have taken shelter. I am not capable of describing all this. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is independent and thus acts on His own sweet will. In whatever way He becomes happy, that is also my way of happiness.

6. The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power Kṛṣṇa manifests that when His holy name starts to blossom a little further it then reveals His own divine forms and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa.

7. Blossoming fully, the flower of the holy name takes me to Vraja and reveals to me His own love-dalliance. This name gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Kṛṣṇa's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mine.

8. The name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental touchstone, a mine of all devotional mellows. It is eternally liberated and the embodiment of pure *rasa*. When all impediments to the pure chanting of the holy name are taken away and destroyed, then my happiness will know its true awakening.



śuddha-nāma
The Key to Pure Chanting



1. Overcoming the Stage of *Nāmābhāsa*

The process of advancement from the stage of *nāmābhāsa*, where offenses are still prevailing, to pure chanting is described by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the third verse of *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*. According to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Mahārāja, this verse is solely intended to teach us how to chant without offenses, by enumerating the qualities which have to be developed in order to be able to glorify the holy name incessantly.

After describing these qualities, it will be shown how by cultivating them we can avoid the ten offenses to the holy name.

Chanting *nāmābhāsa* is endowed with a particular quality: once the devotee has understood how to chant properly on this stage, his strong desire to chant purely will soon awake. Therefore in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Haridāsa Ṭhākura requests Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to explain the chanting of *nāmābhāsa*.

Firstly, Lord Caitanya points out that the holy name is identical with Kṛṣṇa and is equally powerful. It is because of his material covering and not because of the holy name, that a living entity cannot perceive the greatness and the beauty of the holy name.

Kṛṣṇa is the omnipotent spiritual sun, and the holy name which is identical with Him, disperses the darkness of *māyā* with equally powerful brilliance. In order to bestow mercy upon the conditioned souls, the sun of the holy name has arisen on the horizon of the material world. However, sometimes the vision of the conditioned soul is covered by the clouds of *anarthas* and the fog of ignorance, and they are unable to see the sun-like holy name. Although too big and too powerful to be covered by any kind of cloud or fog, the sun is still hidden from the living entity because of his obstructed vision.

Thus, ignorance and *anarthas* are the cause of our lack of taste in chanting. Ignorance refers to

1. The transcendental nature of the holy name,
2. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's position,
3. One's own spiritual nature, and
4. The qualities of material nature.



Anarthas are divided into:

1. The desire to attain things which are unreal and temporary (*asat-trṣṇā*),
2. Weakness of the heart (*hṛdaya-daurbalya*; like the inability to keep one's spiritual vows), and
3. The propensity to commit offenses (*aparādha*)

As long as one is chanting on this stage—*nāmābhāsa*—he may be purified and can even attain liberation, but *prema*, love of God, remains unattainable. Therefore, ignorance and *anarthas* have to be overcome.

In the beginning, the newcomer has to develop faith on the path of *bhakti* by observing the faith of other devotees. In this way he becomes impressed, and *śraddhā-ābhāsa*, a shadow or touch of faith, awakens in his heart. Then, after having taken shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and executing devotional service under his guidance, he becomes fixed in *sambandha-jñāna*. Step by step, the cloud of ignorance is dispersed and he chants the holy name with firm faith.

Simultaneously he has to work on his *anarthas* and consciously avoid offenses. This is possible by realizing the essence of Śrī Caitanya's instruction in the third verse of Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka. In fact, it is even recommended that one should always carry this verse like a necklace around one's neck. (In *Cc. Ādi 17.32*)



2. Śrī Caitanya's Instruction

This instruction reads as follows:

*tṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord. (*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3)

In this key verse to advancement in chanting, four qualities and one blessing are mentioned:

- *tṛṇād api sunīcena*—one who thinks himself lower than the grass;
- *taror iva sahiṣṇunā* —who is more tolerant than a tree;
- *amāninā* —who does not expect personal honor;
- *mānadena*—but who is always prepared to give all respect to others;
- *kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*—he can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.

Why are these qualities so important for the chanter? Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that someone who considers himself to be the supreme enjoyer can neither understand his own insignificant position, nor can he be patient. He is not interested in giving up his false sense of distinction, and is strongly disinclined, or even unable, to regard anyone else as equal.

Two Definitions of Humility

Śrīla Prabhupāda provides a suitable definition of humility for our better understanding:

Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others. The material conception of life makes us very eager to receive honor from others; but from the point of view of a man in perfect knowledge—who knows that he is not his body—anything, honor or dishonor,



pertaining to this body, is useless. One should not be hankering after this material deception. (*Bg.* 13, 8-12, p.)

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī describes true humility and its relationship to *kṛṣṇa-prema*—love of God—with these words:

Scholars define humility as when a person, even though possessing all good qualities, considers himself to be completely unqualified, worthless and unintelligent. Therefore, by his words, activities and intelligence, it is the duty of the *sādhaka* to conduct himself in such a way that he will become fixed in humility. An intelligent person should not do anything which is opposed to humility. Factual humility is the mature stage of *prema*. (*Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* 2.222-224)

Thus, the root of all offenses, which prevent us from incessantly chanting the holy name, is the enjoying disposition, caused by the false ego and resulting in the bodily conception of life. Impelled by this attitude, one turns away from serving Kṛṣṇa and regards the whole world as an instrument to satisfy his senses. At the same time, one is dragged into the subordination of the lower modes of ignorance and passion. By the contact with the mode of passion, one's original love of Kṛṣṇa is transformed into insatiable lust and then into anger and illusion, which are both symptoms of the modes of ignorance. (Explained by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bg.* 3.37.)

The etymology of the word *aparādha* is *rādhād arthād ārāadhanāt—apagatah*, which means, “being turned away from service”, or more exactly, “being turned away from the service for Rādhārāṇi and Her maid-servants”. This aversion leads to offenses, especially against devotees. Since the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness aims at becoming a servant of the servant of the servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one cannot follow this process as long as one wants to be the enjoyer of all one surveys.

The first step to realize the *trṇād-āpi* verse is therefore to practice detachment from the identification with the material body. As King Kulaśekhara prays:

This body's beauty is fleeting, and at last the body must succumb to death after its hundreds of joints have become



stiff with old age. So why, bewildered fool, are you asking for medication? Just take the elixir of Lord Kṛṣṇa's names, the one cure that never fails. (*Mukunda-mālā-stotra* 37)

By practicing detachment from the material conception of life, the devotee develops a natural attitude of humility and compassion for the conditioned souls captured in the cycle of birth and death. Free from envy, his heart is spotlessly pure. He has overcome the desire for honor and assumes an attitude of respect towards every living entity.

As soon as the holy name is revealed in the heart of the devotee, the qualities mentioned in the *tṛṇād-āpi* verse develop automatically. By realizing that he is an eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and that there is no necessity for material life, he becomes naturally disinclined to all that is material. He understands that gain and loss, birth and death, delight and pain, have nothing to do with his real spiritual life; they are nothing but after-effects of previous *karma*.

Tṛṇād āpi sunīcena

One Who Thinks Himself Lower Than the Grass

Why does the devotee pray to become more humble than the grass in the street? “Although grass is mere matter, still it has a natural and appropriate ego”, says Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “whereas my false ego, made of the gross and subtle bodies, is utterly illusory and presumptuous, and has nothing to do with my original spiritual self. Therefore it is most befitting for me to become humbler than a blade of grass.” As the grass in the street does not rise after being trodden down by the masses, in the same way the pure devotee considers himself the most fallen soul, and instead of responding to the aggression of his torturers who might degrade him out of envy, he even prays for their benefit. Indeed, he feels lower than the grass, which is at least useful in the service of the cow—by being transformed into delicious milk—whereas he thinks he performs no service at all.



Taror iva sahiṣṇunā

One Who is More Tolerant Than a Tree

The tree is reputed to be tolerant, because even the woodcutter who wants to cut it down receives its generous shadow and fruits. If heat scourges the tree, or torrents of rain pour down, it still provides shelter to others. Similarly, a pure devotee does not argue and oppose when being misunderstood and blasphemed. He does not claim anything for himself, but is always ready to give and to help others. Without considering the person, he feels deep compassion for each living entity, always meditating on how to help them to attain the highest goal—attraction for chanting the holy names of God.

Amāninā—One Who Does Not Expect Personal Honor

To be free from false prestige is the third quality of a devotee who chants without offenses. This means to have a pure heart, free of all bodily designations that are rooted in ignorance. Whether they relate to the gross or subtle sphere, or to mystic powers, wealth, beauty, high birth, strength, respect, or influence—all these designations are only attributes gathered by our false ego. They have nothing to do with our spiritual identity. Pride is the greatest danger in spiritual life and can cause falldown on every stage.

Mānadena—One Who Is Always Prepared to Give All Respect to Others

A pure devotee, however, even if he has “all reason” to become proud, will remain in a humble position. Instead of desiring to be praised, he recognizes himself as a servant of all other devotees and offers them obeisances and service. By looking upon all living entities as eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa, knowing Kṛṣṇa to be in their hearts as Paramātmā, he feels neither envy nor jealousy. He offers his obeisances to socially higher persons and serves advanced devotees with his body and soul.



Nectar an Ocean of the Holy Name

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura composed a beautiful song in which he prayed to his spiritual masters for the development of these four qualities (From *Śaraṇāgati*):

Gurudeva

1) *Gurudeva*, O spiritual master, please give this servant just one drop of mercy, and make me feel lower than a blade of grass. Give me all help. Give me the strength to stay equal-minded in all circumstances, and help me to become free from the desire to be worshipped.

2) O Lord and master! Invest me with the power to properly respect all living beings. Only then, by chanting the holy name in great ecstasy, all my offenses will cease.

3) O Lord and master! When will this person be blessed with your mercy? I am fallen, devoid of all strength and intelligence. Please make me your loving servant.

4) If I examine myself, I will not find anything valuable. Your mercy is all that I am made of. If you are not merciful to me, I can only weep, and I will not be able to maintain my life.

The Art of Humility

Real humility arises by developing the proper inner attitude. A helpful inspiration may be the following six verses spoken by Yamunācārya (From *Stotra-ratna*):

(1) O Hari! I have no faith in religious principles, and I have no knowledge of the soul. Furthermore, I have no devotion to Your lotus feet. I am utterly destitute, a rogue with no idea of the goal of life. In this way I always cheat myself. You, however, are the deliverer of the fallen, and I am an insignificant fallen soul. Therefore, You are the only goal of my life. Having achieved Your lotus feet I take shelter of You, for You are my eternal Lord, and I am Your servant.

(2) There is no sin in this world which I have not committed thousands of times. The result of those sinful activities is now beginning to fructify, and they are churning me in this material



ocean. O Mukunda! Seeing no other path, I am crying again and again before You. Punish me as You think fit, because You are the giver of punishment, and You are my Lord.

(3) O Ananta! O Hari! I have been drowning in this material ocean since time immemorial. I have been swimming and swimming, but I have not found the end of this great and fathomless material ocean. While drowning, I cried out in distress, "Help! someone rescue me!" At that time You came, and, as I understood Your lotus feet as the shore of this ocean, a seed of hope arose in my heart. O Hari, You are the most compassionate! In me You have certainly found the most appropriate recipient for Your mercy.

(4) By serving You constantly, one is freed from all material desires and is completely pacified. When shall I engage as Your permanent eternal servant and always feel joyful to have such a fitting master?

(5) O Hari, being evil-minded and seeing no other refuge, I have taken shelter of Your lotus feet. I have now come to know that You are my Lord. You are the Lord of the universe and I am Your eternal servant. When will that day come when I will realize myself as Your eternal servant? When will my material desires be completely destroyed so that I will spontaneously serve You to Your satisfaction?

(6) O Hari! I am an offender, and therefore I am always punishable. I have all bad qualities, and I am guilty of committing thousands and thousands of offenses.



3. Absorption into the Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name

For deeply absorbed chanting, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura advises as follows:

1. Association with saintly persons, especially with the spiritual master and advanced devotees.
2. Isolation from the disturbances of worldly life (externally as well as internally, by withdrawing the mind from disturbing thoughts.)
3. Determination and steady enthusiasm.

As already explained, continuous chanting of the holy name gradually awards the devotee with the realization that there is no difference between the holy name and Kṛṣṇa. First, Kṛṣṇa's form is revealed, then His qualities, and finally His transcendental pastimes. The *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* and its sequel called *Śrī Bhajana-rahasya* ("The secret of *bhajana*") describe five steps on the way to such high perfection of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. It is of great use to hear of them, for one who knows the goal will remain inspired even on troublesome stages of his journey. The five steps culminate in the full realization of the holy name:

1. Avoid the ten offenses. Try to chant steadily and to pronounce the holy name distinctly while meditating on the transcendental sound vibration.
2. As soon as your chanting is steady, clear and blissful, you will be able to meditate on the form of Śyāmasundara. Then start to select the very form of the holy name that appears in your purified vision. You can also look at the form of the Lord while sitting in front of the Deities and meditating on the holy name.

Lord Brahmā explains that the Lord appears in front of the devotees in the very form in which they meditate on Him:

○ my Lord, You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You. (ŚB. 3.9.11)



3. Having attained the stage where Kṛṣṇa's name and form blend into one you will naturally feel inclined to remember the transcendental qualities of the Lord. Thus, the holy name and Kṛṣṇa's qualities unite by constant chanting.
4. At this stage it is natural to remember certain pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. This meditation, called *lilā-smaraṇa*, gradually becomes one with the holy name and the form and qualities of the Lord. Now you can perceive the first beams of *nāma-rasa*. You will chant with great pleasure and see Kṛṣṇa surrounded by *gopas* and *gopīs* under a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* tree in *Yogapīṭha*.
5. By constant practice, *lilā-smaraṇa* increases up to the point when you start to meditate on Rādhā-Mādhava's *aṣṭa-kālika-lilā*. When this meditation is fully displayed, you will experience the pure taste of *nāma-rasa*.

In the preceding chapter we emphasized repeatedly how important it is to fix the mind fully on the chanting of the holy name. There are, so to say, three rules for chanting:

1. listen
2. listen
3. listen

The five steps seem to suggest something different: meditation while chanting. But there is no contradiction, because to the serious chanter, the Lord's pastimes will gradually be revealed by themselves. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was once asked a question in this connection, he answered as follows:

Regarding your first question, is it offensive to think of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes while chanting, I think you should know that it is not offensive, but rather it is required. One must try for the point when he simply hears Kṛṣṇa and immediately all of Kṛṣṇa, His pastimes, His form, His quality, are in his thoughts. So to always be immersed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa this is our process. When we are full in Kṛṣṇa then where can there be any chance for *māyā* in us? So this is our duty to remember Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. One who cannot remember Kṛṣṇa, let him always hear Hare Kṛṣṇa and when he has perfected this



art, then he will always remember Kṛṣṇa, His activities. His qualities, etc. (Letter from 4/12/68)

On a very advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, this meditation is called *mānasī-sevā*, offering service to the Lord in the mind. The Supreme Lord accepts such service with pleasure. An example of this is found in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, where Śrī Nṛsiṃhānanda Brahmācārī built in his mind a very nice road from Kuliyā to Vṛndāvana for Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

For a pure devotee, it is the same whether he materially constructs a path or constructs one within his mind. This is because the Supreme personality of Godhead, Janārdana, is *bhāva-grahī*, or appreciative of the sentiment. For Him a path made with actual jewels and a path made of mental jewels are the same. Though subtle, mind is also matter, so any path—indeed, anything for the service of the Lord, whether in gross matter or in subtle matter—is accepted equally by the Supreme personality of Godhead. The Lord accepts the attitude of His devotee and sees how much he is prepared to serve Him. The devotee is at liberty to serve the Lord either in gross matter or in subtle matter. (*Cc.Madhya* 1.161, p.)

Summing up, it has been shown that meditation on Kṛṣṇa arises from itself on an advanced level of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages this kind of meditation:

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* means keeping Kṛṣṇa always within your heart. This is not expensive at all. You haven't got to make a very exalted throne for Kṛṣṇa. You can imagine that "In my heart I have placed now a diamond throne, and Kṛṣṇa is sitting on it." That is accepted by Kṛṣṇa. Even within the mind you can simply think that "I have kept one diamond throne, a very costly throne, because Kṛṣṇa is coming. He will sit down here." That is not false. That is a fact.

So you create such situation within your heart. "Now Kṛṣṇa has seated. Let me wash His feet with Gaṅgā water, Yamunā water. Now I change His dress to a first-class costly garment.



Then I decorate Him with ornaments. Then I give Him for eating.” You can simply think of this. This is meditation. *Svāntaḥ-sthena gadābhṛtā* It is such a nice thing. Anywhere you can sit down and think that Kṛṣṇa is sitting in your heart and you are receiving Him in such a nice way. They are not false. They are also fact. It is so easy. (Lecture from 1/6/74)

When the Gosvāmīs were in Vṛṇḍāvana, they never said, “I have seen Kṛṣṇa.” Their prayers were like this, “*he rādhe! vraja-devīke! ca lalite! he nanda-sūno! Kutaḥ*—Where, Rādhārāṇī, where You are? Where are Your associates? Where You are, O son of Nanda Mahārāja, Kṛṣṇa? Where you are, all? Are you there under the Govardhana Hill or on the banks of the Yamunā? Where You are?”

Throughout the whole tract of Vṛṇḍāvana they were crying and searching after Them. So we have to follow the footprints of the Gosvāmīs, how to search out Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī—in Vṛṇḍāvana, or within our heart. That is the process of Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s *bhajana*: feeling of separation, *vipralambha-sevā*. Feel the separation. The more you feel separation from Kṛṣṇa, you should understand that you are advancing. Don’t try to see Kṛṣṇa artificially. Be advanced in separation, feeling, and then it will be perfect. That is the teachings of Lord Caitanya.

(Lecture from 18/09/69)



4. Conclusion

In order to test how far you have already realized the qualities mentioned in section two of this chapter, answer the following questions:

1. How eager am I to serve, or do I just want to be served?
2. How eager am I to respect others, or do I rather strive for being respected?
3. How much do I care for others, or do I mainly care for myself?
4. Am I glad upon seeing the advancements of others, or do I envy them?
5. Am I fully dependent on *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, or rather on my own arrangements?

These questions are meant to serve as a scale of humility that is mandatory for acquiring a spiritual vision. They also illustrate how the four qualities described in the third verse of Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka characterize the chanting of a pure devotee. Developing them is the best protection against the ten offenses, which isolate us from the potency of the holy name:

1. Since such a pure devotee considers himself the most fallen, he will never blaspheme other devotees, nor will he envy anyone. Rather, he serves all living beings and helps them go back to Kṛṣṇa.
2. He is never in danger to mistake the position of the demigods for that of Kṛṣṇa and thus adore them separately, for he knows that all living entities, including the demigods, are eternal servants of the Lord and cannot grant any blessings without His permission.
3. He will not act against the orders of his spiritual master because he is aware that he possesses neither the power nor the intelligence to go back to Kṛṣṇa independently of his *guru*.
4. Being aware of this absolute dependence, he studies the holy scriptures and the comments of the *ācāryas* with the humble attitude of a disciple.



5. As a result of chanting purely, he has actually experienced the potency of the holy name, and therefore never considers the glory of chanting to be an exaggeration.
6. Fixed in the knowledge of *nāma-tattva* he does not try to interpret the holy name.
7. Having given up the identification with the body, and thus the desire to become happy in the material world, he is never tempted to commit sins on the strength of the holy name.
8. Neither will he consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa a fruitive ritualistic activity, as he chants in a humble attitude of praying, “O Rādhā, O Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service!”
9. Being aware of the responsibility for the conditioned souls, and caring for their best interest, he will gradually try to elevate them with information on the holy name which is relevant to their level of advancement. He will try to engage them in hearing the holy name. If he happens to have the service as *guru*, he will not initiate someone who has no faith and who will commit offenses.
10. Moreover, because he has full faith in the holy name, he always endeavors to improve his chanting, by eradicating the weeds of *anarthas*, and by continuously surrendering with enthusiasm and faith.

By deliberating in this way on how to avoid the ten offenses, we should employ the third verse of the Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka as a key to rise from the stage of *nāmābhāsa* to pure chanting, thus attaining the spiritual kingdom. Without chanting on the level of *śuddha-nāma*, this destination can only be gained by extraordinarily rare divine intervention.



Tips to Improve One's Chanting



1. Practice in Chanting

Chanting the Pañca-tattva-mahā-mantra

The first practical tip is to chant the following *mantra* before chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*:

*(jaya) śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

This Pañca-tattva-mahā-mantra is greatly beneficial, because the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Advaita Ācārya Prabhu, Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita, Śrī Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, and all the other devotees of the Lord immediately purify and spiritually elevate the chanter. This *mantra* blesses one with the ability to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* without offenses, for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the most generous incarnation of God (*mahā-vadanya-avatāra*). He does not consider the offenses committed by a fallen soul. By chanting His Name one receives the full benefit of chanting the *mahā-mantra*.

When Lord Caitanya was spreading the holy name in Navadvīpa by chanting and dancing, He came to the quarters of some drunkards. Through His mercy, even the drunkards staggering out of the bars began to chant the holy name. Lord Caitanya is so special because He shows His mercy to the most fallen. He blesses them with the ability to start spiritual life, especially by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Therefore, we chant the Pañca-tattva-mahā-mantra before we chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

It is even said that in Kali-yuga, where so many offenses are committed, the Pañca-tattva-mahā-mantra is more important than the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Then why, one may wonder, don't we give up the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* altogether and chant only the Pañca-tattva-mahā-mantra? The answer is that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has instructed us through His personal example to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and we simply follow His order.



Chanting Everywhere

The question where and when to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa is answered by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is called *sanātana-dharma* or *bhāgavata-dharma*. *Sanātana* means “eternal, always and everywhere.” *Bhāgavata* means pertaining to Bhagavān, the Lord. The Lord is the master of all time and all space, and therefore the Lord's holy name must be heard, glorified and remembered everywhere in the world. That will bring about the desired peace and prosperity so eagerly awaited by the people of the world. (ŚB. 2.2.36, p.)

In other words, because Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere, one should glorify Him at every place and at all times. If somehow or other one meets a great personality like Śrīla Prabhupāda, one immediately and naturally offers prostrated obeisances and glorifies him: *nama om viṣṇu-pādāya* ... one does not simply continue with his activity, thereby ignoring Śrīla Prabhupāda! This would be an utterly improper behavior towards such a great personality. Now, since Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere, one is always together with Him at any place and time and thus one should constantly chant His glory. Therefore, the devotee always remembers Kṛṣṇa and chants His holy name. As Lord Caitanya spoke out:

Regardless of time or place, one who chants the holy name, even while eating or sleeping, attains all perfection.

(Cc. Antya 20.18)

Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated by his personal example how Kṛṣṇa can be glorified on all occasions. One who can constantly chant the holy names will never fall into material consciousness. Just imagine, to simply chant continuously, no matter where you are. I know it is very difficult, but you should try, if not loud then in your mind, and you will see how your life changes.

Of course, we should not chant while talking to someone or if by chanting we shock or annoy others. But we should simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa as soon as there is free time. While going to the car,



while starting the car, while driving on the highway, while taking a shower, or while accepting *prasādam*; whether in the underground, at home or in the office—we should always chant. There are no strict rules and regulations how to remember the holy name. We only have to chant

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Twenty-four hours a day—this is the instruction of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Then one is never in material consciousness and spares about hundred per cent of his difficulties.

Of course, we should preferably chant at a place free from distraction and disturbances. The advice to chant everywhere does not mean to chant one's rounds in the *brahmacārī-āśrama* or in the “*prajalpa lounge*” at the temple, where the inattentive chanters gather.

Chanting at All Times

One day Vallabha Bhaṭṭa said to Advaita Ācārya, “Every living entity is female (*prakṛti*) and considers Kṛṣṇa her husband (*pati*). It is the duty of a chaste wife, devoted to her husband, not to utter her husband’s name, but all of you chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. How can this be called a religious principle?”

Advaita Ācārya responded, “Before you is Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the personification of religious principles. You should ask Him, for He will give you the proper answer.”

Hearing this, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “My dear Vallabha Bhaṭṭa, you do not know religious principles. Actually, the first duty of a chaste woman is to carry out the order of her husband. The order of Kṛṣṇa is to chant His name incessantly. Therefore one who is chaste and adherent to the husband Kṛṣṇa must chant the Lord’s name, for she cannot deny the husband’s order. Following this religious principle, a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa always chants the holy name. As a result of this, he gets the fruit of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.”

(Cc. *Antya*, 7.103-108)



Śrīla Prabhupāda once wrote to Professor Staal:

By devotional service, by understanding well the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one can go to His abode and never come back again to this material condition. How is it possible? The answer is, simply by chanting His name constantly.

(The Science of Self-realization, Chapter 3)

Have you ever thought of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa constantly? Maybe sometimes when reading about it, but then it is forgotten again! Therefore we should engrave this advice deeply into our memory. The reason why chanting constantly appears so difficult is the lack of taste, as Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

A devotee should be very much careful to see whether his time is being spent unnecessarily. He should ask himself, “Am I now engaged in *māyā*'s service or Kṛṣṇa's service?” This is a symptom of an advanced devotee. *Nāma-gaṇe sadā ruciḥ*: such a devotee is never tired of chanting, singing, or dancing. The word *sadā* means “always”, and *ruci* means “taste”. A devotee always has a taste for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa: “Oh, very nice. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.” This is taste. Of course, this taste takes time to awaken, but when Rūpa Gosvāmī was chanting he was thinking, “I have only one tongue and two ears. What can I appreciate of chanting? If I could have millions of tongues and trillions of ears, then I could relish something by chanting and hearing.” Of course, we should not imitate him, but the devotees of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must at least be very careful to complete their sixteen rounds, their minimum amount of prescribed chanting. (The Teachings of Queen Kunti, Chapter 20)

This taste for chanting can be achieved simply by chanting more and more! Once Śrīla Prabhupāda proudly praised his disciples, “These devotees! They can chant constantly, twenty-four hours a day. They are completely satisfied with it.” Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to see such devotees.



Chanting in the Morning

“Morning is the best time to hold spiritual services”, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes. The time shortly before sunrise, called *brahma-muhūrta*, is the best time for chanting. It is recommended that a devotee rise very early and chant in a peaceful and concentrated atmosphere. If at all possible, the rounds should be finished before 10 o’clock a.m.

The morning hours are ruled by the mode of goodness, the afternoon and the early evening by the mode of passion, and the night by the mode of ignorance. One should chant his rounds during the time which is under the influence of goodness and avoid chanting later in the day; otherwise it will be difficult to concentrate and go swiftly ahead.

If due to sickness one cannot complete his rounds, then the rounds must be finished immediately the very next day. However, one who is well should never go to sleep without having completed his rounds.

Chanting at Least Sixteen Rounds

As a *sannyāsī*, Lord Caitanya wanted to travel on His own, free from the obligation of caring for another person. Devotees however, wanted Him to accept a servant as a companion on His journey. Finally, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu convinced Him with the following argument:

Since your two hands will always be engaged in chanting and counting the holy names, how will you be able to carry the waterpot and external garments? (*Cc. Madhya 7.37*)

In other words, the Lord needed both His hands for chanting and counting His rounds and was not able to carry anything. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the purport to the above verse:

From this verse it is clear that Caitanya Mahāprabhu was chanting the holy names a fixed number of times daily... In addition to other duties, He introduced this system ...



Caitanya Mahāprabhu used to count on His fingers. While one hand was engaged in chanting, the other hand kept the number of rounds. This is corroborated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and also in Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Stava-mālā*...

How many rounds should we chant at least? According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, his spiritual master Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura considered a person as fallen (*patita*) if he did not chant sixty-four rounds every day. Śrīla Prabhupāda soon realized that his Western disciples were not able to keep such a high standard and thus mercifully instructed that we chant a minimum of sixteen rounds daily. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda is called *patita-pāvana*, "the savior of the most fallen souls".

Therefore devotees in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu must chant at least sixteen rounds daily, and this is the number prescribed by the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. Sixteen rounds is about 28,000 names. There is no need to imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura [who chanted 300, 000, every day] or the other Gosvāmīs, but chanting the holy name a fixed number of times daily is essential for every devotee.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this in several cases:

If one cannot complete the fixed number of rounds he is assigned, he should be considered to be in a diseased condition of spiritual life. (Cc. Antya 11.23,p.)

Everyone should strictly follow the regulations of sixteen rounds daily. If one is busy for other Kṛṣṇa Consciousness activities and cannot fulfill the regular routine of chanting, he must compensate it the next day, curtailing his activities in the matter of sleeping or eating or any other sense gratificatory process. (Letter from 11/10/69)

The sixteen rounds is just a minimum I set for my disciples so they will chant at least that much. Actually chanting should always be going on. (Letter from 25/6/74)

On another occasion, Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

This chanting of sixteen rounds is absolutely necessary if one wants to remember Kṛṣṇa and not forget Him.

(Cc. *Madhya* 22.113, p.)



Among all the regulative principles given by the spiritual master, his order to chant at least sixteen rounds is the most important one. Once in London, a devotee only managed to chant fifteen rounds by the late evening, and then went to sleep because he was very tired. During the night he heard the bell ringing. He went downstairs, opened the door, and there was Śrīla Prabhupāda standing before him. "Have you chanted your sixteen rounds?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asked. Before the devotee could answer, he woke up, realizing that Śrīla Prabhupāda had appeared in a dream. Immediately he sat up in his bed and chanted the last round.

Chanting Loudly Enough to Hear Oneself

When Haridāsa Ṭhākura became very sick due to old age, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu addressed him as follows:

Now that you have become old you may reduce the number of rounds you chant daily. You are already liberated, and therefore you need not follow the regulative principles very strictly. (*Cc. Antya 11.24*)

In the purport to this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The first regulative principle is that one must chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* loudly enough so that he can hear himself and one must vow to chant a fixed number of rounds.

Chanting Should be Accompanied by Regulative Principles

For a few months the sons of Prajāpati Dakṣa drank only water and ate only air. Thus undergoing great austerities, they recited this *mantra*: "Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is always situated in His transcendental abode. Since He is the Supreme Person (*paramahansa*), let us offer our respectful obeisances unto Him." (*ŚB. 6.5.27-28*)

These verses may provide the impression that the chanting of the *mahā-mantra* or other Vedic *mantras* has to be accompanied by



severe austerities. However, in Kali-yuga it is impossible to perform the above-mentioned types of austerities. People cannot subsist merely on drinking water and eating air for many months. Such a process cannot be imitated. But at least one has to follow a certain form of renunciation in order to chant successfully.

At least the four regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be followed: no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no intoxication, and no gambling. Everyone can practice this *tapasya* (austerity) quite easily. Then the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa will become successful without delay.

Why these restrictions, which exist since ancient times? As we will see, there is a very interesting correlation between following these four principles and the four principles of *dharma* or religion. These four principles are self-evident. If we can rest our lives upon them, they will elevate us enormously—if we violate them, there will be degrading reactions:

1. **Dayā** (compassion) is destroyed by killing or meat-eating,
2. **Tapah** (restraint and austerity) are destroyed by intoxication,
3. **Satyam** (truthfulness) is destroyed by lying and gambling, and
4. **Śaucam** (cleanliness)—both external and internal—is destroyed by illicit sexual relationships.

Most probably not many readers will find it difficult to abide by the first three of the regulated principles, but even experienced devotees report that the sexual drive—either grossly or subtly (in the mind)—pushes vehemently for activity.

At the same time, every one knows that there is no lasting fulfillment possible. This push can be compared with an itching sensation, which demands scratching. Although there is temporary relief, the itching sensation will soon return with redoubled strength until blood will flow. What to do? The scriptures very clearly state that the conditioned soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment—but if there is no higher taste, it will remain addicted to those pleasures. If, however one experiences a higher taste he/she can easily forsake the lower taste. (refer to *Bg.* 2.59)

All material pleasures, including the sex pleasure do not supply



Nectar of the Holy Name

what the soul looks for. Material pleasures have a beginning and an end and are ultimately sources of misery. However, this can only be clearly understood by someone who has tasted the ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The holy name—when chanted seriously and without offenses—can quickly bring us to that ecstasy! One feels like Yamunācārya who described his meditation on Kṛṣṇa:

Since I have been engaged in the transcendental loving service of Kṛṣṇa, realizing ever-new pleasure in Him, whenever I think of sex pleasure I spit at the thought, and my lips curl with distaste. (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 2.5.72)

Chanting in Front of *tulasī*

In connection with the ten offenses and their rectification, it is recommended again and again to associate with pure Vaiṣṇavas. The holy *tulasī* is one such pure devotee of the Lord in the form of a plant. Therefore, chanting in front of *tulasī* is immensely powerful, as the personal example of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura shows:

Haridāsa Ṭhākura constructed a cottage in a solitary forest. There he planted a *tulasī* plant, and in front of the *tulasī* he would chant the holy name of the Lord 300,000 times daily. He chanted throughout the entire day and night. (*Cc.Antya* 3.100)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

Without difficulty one can sit down anywhere, especially on the bank of the Gaṅgā, Yamunā or any sacred river, devise a sitting place or cottage, plant a *tulasī*, and before the *tulasī* chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* undisturbed.

Of course, in places like Europe, there are no holy rivers like the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, only the river Rhine and the Thames, where fish are drifting bottom up! Thus we have to create such a holy atmosphere ourselves. One can plant *tulasī* and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in her presence without being disturbed. Śrīla Prabhupāda continues the above purport:

The process of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* with a vow before the *tulasī* plant has such great spiritual potency



Tips to Improve One's Chanting

that simply by doing this one can become spiritually strong. Therefore we request the members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement to follow Haridāsa Ṭhākura's example rigidly. Chanting sixteen rounds does not take much time, nor is offering respects to the *tulasī* plant difficult. The process has immense spiritual potency. One should not miss this opportunity.



2. The Inner Attitude Towards Chanting

Taste for Chanting Comes from Chanting

The sounds of the material and spiritual worlds are completely different. Spiritual sound vibration is nectarean and eternal, whereas the sound of the material world is hackneyed and temporary. The sound of the holy name

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

gradually increases the enthusiasm of the chanter. Even after chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, one will never feel tired, provided one chants purely. After pushing through one's conditioned nature—which otherwise chokes down the fire of enthusiasm like stinking wet blankets—one attains a level which finally can be called spiritual whereas the monotonous repetition of material words soon leads to exhaustion.

Once, some devotees asked how they could increase their desire to chant. Śrīla Prabhupāda answered:

By performing *saṅkīrtana*. Just like if a man drinks and if he drinks, drinks, then you become a drunkard. [The example amused the audience.] Drink more and you become a drunkard. Similarly, chant more and you become a perfect chanter. (Lecture from 11/2/75)

Weeding in the Garden of Chanting

While the neophyte chants the holy name of the Lord to cultivate the creeper of devotional service (*bhakti-latā*), weeds might also start to grow. They are classified as follows:

1. **Niṣiddhācāra:** Actions that are prohibited in the *śāstras* (scriptures) and which must be strictly avoided by a person who wants to attain perfection.
2. **Kuṭināṭī:** Diplomacy and duplicity, like the propensity to find faults or to pretend to be an important devotee. This behavior



satisfies neither the body nor the mind or the soul.

3. **Jīva-himsā:** Killing animals, but also envying other living entities. Śrīla Prabhupāda renders an additional meaning:

The word *jīva-himsā* actually means stopping the preaching of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Preaching work is described as *para-upakāra*, welfare activity for others. Those who are ignorant of the benefits of devotional service must be educated by preaching. If one stops preaching and simply sits down in a solitary place, he is engaging in material activity. (Cc. *Madhya* 12.135, p.)

4. **Lābha:** The desire for material gain.

5. **Pūjā:** Striving for popularity and admiration.

6. **Pratiṣṭhā:** The desire to become an important person in the material world, and other material desires as well, as Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

A neophyte devotee is certain to be attacked by other material desires as well—women and money. In this way the heart is again filled with dirty things and becomes harder and harder, like that of a materialist. Gradually one desires to become a reputed devotee or an *avatāra* (incarnation).

(Cc. *Madhya* 12.135, p.)

By summarizing the six weeds in the garden of life, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how to distinguish those weeds from the *bhakti-latā*:

These unwanted creepers simply present obstacles for the real creeper, the *bhakti-latā*. One should be very careful to avoid all these unwanted things. Sometimes these unwanted creepers look exactly like the *bhakti-latā* creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species when they are packed together with the *bhakti-latā* creeper, but in spite of this, the creepers are called *upaśākhā* (weed).

A pure devotee can distinguish between the *bhakti-latā* creeper and a mundane creeper, and he is very alert to distinguish them and keep them separate. (Cc. *Madhya* 19.159, p.)



Chanting in Humility

As mentioned above, most essential is the proper attitude towards the chanting of the holy name:

To chant the holy name always, one should be humbler than the grass in the street and devoid of all desire for personal honor, but one should offer others all respectful obeisances. A devotee engaged in chanting the holy name of the Lord should practice forbearance like that of a tree. Even if rebuked or chastised, he should not say anything to others to retaliate. For even if one cuts a tree, it never protests nor even if it is drying up and dying does it ask anyone for water.

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord. Raising my hands, I declare "Everyone please listen to me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance." One must strictly follow the principles given by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in this verse. If one simply follows in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya and the Gosvāmīs, certainly he will achieve the ultimate goal of life, the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (Cc. *Adi* 17.26-28 and 31-33)

In the purport to the above verse 32, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

When chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, in the beginning one may commit many offenses, which are called *nāmābhāsa* and *nāmaparādha*. In this stage there is no possibility of achieving perfect love of Kṛṣṇa by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Therefore one must chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* according to the principles of the above verse.

Chanting is very simple, but has to be practiced seriously and humbly. Therefore the author of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, advises everyone to keep the *trṇād api* verse always strung around the neck. Humility is the most essential attitude for proper chanting. If one chants like an arrogant fool, or



full of lust, there is no way to actually hear the holy name.

Chanting with Respect and Veneration

Devotees of the Personality of Godhead know that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of the King of Vraja, is the Absolute Truth. They do not discriminate between Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name, form, and pastimes. One who separates the Lord's absolute name, form, and qualities must be understood to be lacking in absolute knowledge. A pure devotee knows that when he chants the transcendental name "Kṛṣṇa", Śrī Kṛṣṇa is present as transcendental sound. He therefore chants with full respect and veneration. (*Cc.Ādi 2.11*, p.)

While sitting down for chanting, we should be aware that we receive Kṛṣṇa first on our tongue and then in our heart, and we should behave accordingly. This results in a practical attitude, because if one respects and venerates a person, he naturally wants to serve him. (Therefore the *japa-mālā* should never be put on the floor, nor taken to a dirty place like the toilet.)

Chanting with Dependence on Kṛṣṇa

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that one should chant in the attitude of a child who is fully dependent on the mercy of his mother.

This comparison is very suitable. A mother can recognize precisely the crying of her child. She does not come at every call; only when her baby cries with certain intensity, then she rushes to the child. Similarly our attitude when chanting is decisive whether Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself or not. An apathetic chanter who 'absolves' his rounds absent-mindedly and without real interest—rather automatically—will not be heard by Kṛṣṇa as much as a devotee who takes complete shelter of Kṛṣṇa while chanting.



3. About the Technique of Chanting

Counting japa

In the following passage from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how he instructs his disciples:

In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we are teaching our followers to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* continuously on beads. Even those who are not accustomed to this practice are advised to chant at least sixteen rounds on their beads so that they may be trained. Otherwise, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommended:

*tṛṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street. One should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

Sadā means “always.” Haridāsa Ṭhākura says, *nirantara nāma lao*: “Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra without stopping.”

(Cc.Antya 3.137, p.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that there are no limitations for the chanting of the holy name:

Even when you are walking, you can softly chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, or even when you are on the bus going to somewhere you can also chant. When you are working with your hands you can also chant and when you are resting or going to take rest you can also chant. Even in your toilet room while taking bath you can also chant. In this way there is no limitation or restriction for chanting this holy name of God, Kṛṣṇa, and His Energy, Harā. In doing this business there is no loss, but there is very great gain which is transcendental realization. (Letter from 22/4/70)



However, it is also recommended to chant a certain amount of rounds on beads—since this will help one's concentration greatly.

In order to count the number of holy names properly, one can make one's own meditation string, called *japa-mālā*, by stringing the beads (best from *tulasī* or *nīm* wood) on a cotton thread and tying a knot between each of them. If one is more inclined to use a readymade *japa-mālā*, one can obtain one from the nearest temple. There are 108 beads, plus one additional, slightly bigger one which marks the beginning and end of each round. It is called *Kṛṣṇa* or *Meru* and should not be crossed over when counting the *mantras*. Rather, one reverses the direction of counting after having finished each round. On one side, between the eighth and the ninth bead starting from the *Meru*-bead, a short plaited thread should be fastened to mark the first eight beads. They represent the eight main *gopīs*.

After having strung the beads, one can perform *mālā-saṁskāra*, a purifying ceremony, by washing the *japa-mālā* in *pañca-gavya*. This is a mixture of five products from the cow, namely milk, yogurt, ghee, cow dung and cow urine. Afterwards, the *mālā* should be offered to the Deities.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas hold the *mālā* between thumb and middle finger of the right hand. One should avoid touching the string with the left hand or with the right index finger. The *japa-mālā* and the right hand should be placed in the beadbag. One should prevent the *mālā* from slipping of the fingers and falling down, which is mostly the consequence of inattention or sleepiness.

On each bead, the Hare *Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is chanted completely, and then the fingers proceed to the next bead. In this way, one round consisting of 108 *mahā-mantras* is completed. Devotees of the International Society for *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness initiated by a bona fide spiritual master have made the vow to chant at least sixteen rounds daily on the *japa-mālā*.

Since chanting of the holy names offers direct association of the Lord, one should wear a clean and suitable dress. One should carry a *kañṭhi-mālā* around the neck and apply *vaiṣṇava-tilaka* on the body. The bead bag should be washed regularly.



The *japa-mālā* should always be treated respectfully and kept clean. The beads should not be touched with unclean hands, i.e. with hands which have not been washed after eating or after going to the toilet. If the *mālā* is accidentally not treated properly, it should be put respectfully to the forehead to ask for forgiveness.

Bodily Posture, Place and Time

Śrīla Prabhupāda diligently observed the posture of the devotees while they were chanting. On one occasion, when he was chanting *japa* with a group of devotees, he requested one of them to “sit properly.” We should sit with a straight back and crossed legs. It is also recommended to sit on an *āsana*, a slightly elevated seat, but one should not lie down while chanting.

We should chant in front of a Deity of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, in a temple of the Lord, in front of the holy *tulasī* plant or at a holy river like the Gaṅgā.

It is better to chant at a well-illuminated place. The favorable time for chanting is the morning. If at that time some other work has to be urgently attended to, then one should start chanting immediately after having finished the work. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Chanting *japa* should be done early in the morning with full concentration preferably during the *brahma-muhūrta* time. Concentrate fully on the sound vibration of the *mantra*, pronouncing each name distinctly, and gradually your speed in chanting will increase naturally. Do not worry so much about chanting fast, most important is the hearing. (Letter from 6/1/72)

Attentive Chanting

Try to withdraw your mind from the sense objects and concentrate exclusively on the sound of the *mantra*. Meditate on the meaning of the *mantra* and do not allow other thoughts or external influences to distract you. Through devoted concentration on the syllables of the holy name, you will realize step by step the form, the qualities and pastimes of God. Please read more on attentive chanting on page 132.



Clearly Pronouncing the Holy Name

Another advice from Śrīla Prabhupāda is to clearly pronounce the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*:

Chanting involves the activities of the upper and lower lips as well as the tongue. All three must be engaged in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. The words “Hare Kṛṣṇa” should be very distinctly pronounced and heard. Sometimes one mechanically produces a hissing sound instead of chanting with the proper pronunciation with the help of the lips and tongue. Chanting is very simple, but one must practice it seriously.

(Cc. Ādi 17.32, p.)

How fast should one chant? According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the rounds should be chanted “swiftly”, so that a constant flow of the holy name can flood the consciousness and stop the mental process of incessant accepting and rejecting. “Swiftly” means neither too slow—then the mind drifts away—nor too fast, because then the pronunciation becomes indistinct. If one chants properly, he needs around seven minutes for one round. This may vary more or less between individuals by one minute.

Neophytes especially often tend to chant as fast as possible. But in the beginning it is better to chant slowly and distinctly, instead of fast and unclearly. By constant practice, chanting will be swifter by itself. On the other hand, it is a sign of missing concentration and experience if one needs more than eight minutes. The slower chanter, however, should not consider the fast chanting of the experienced devotees as mechanical, emotionless recitation. They know the art.

Basically, chanting is very simple, but it must be seriously practiced. Also, we should not forget that to chant distinctly is an essential service to Kṛṣṇa, not something that steals our time we need for other services.

As long as the body is healthy, one should chant the holy name of the Lord loudly and distinctly. Then at the time of death, it is most likely that one would chant the holy name properly, with love and faith, and go back home, back to the spiritual world.



Proper Pronunciation

One should also try to overcome one's poor pronunciation that is due to cultural reasons. In some languages, the letter *r* does not exist. Therefore instead of Hare Rāma, one chants "Hale Lama." Some devotees tend to pronounce the *r* indistinctly. On the other hand, some like to chant "Krrṛṣṇa", producing the *r* deep in the throat. Both should be avoided.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda came with his first Western disciples to India, he was criticized by some *brāhmaṇas*. "Swamijī, your disciples cannot even pronounce the *mahā-mantra* properly." Prabhupāda replied, "Yes! Therefore, I have brought them to India: That they learn it from you."

Sanskrit pronunciation is exactly defined. Unlike the English language, where a certain letter can be pronounced in different ways (like the *a* in "have" and "hard"), the different letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are always pronounced in the same way. The consonants, for example, are divided into five groups, according to where the sound is produced in the mouth. There are sounds (1) uttered in the throat, (2) at the rear of the palate, (3) at the top of the palate, (4) at the teeth, and (5) with the lips. The different consonants are thus arranged in a systematical order, as illustrated on the next page. One who understands this system can easily learn the proper Sanskrit pronunciation.

We can see that all consonants in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* which are produced by the tongue—namely Ha-re, Kṛ-ṣṇa, Rā-ma—belong to the middle group: The tongue is slightly bent backwards and vibrates at the topmost part of the palate. The letter *ṛ* in Kṛṣṇa, although a vowel, is uttered in the same way—more clearly: the tongue produces the sound *r*, but it is pronounced like "ri".

The Western tongue is quite unaccustomed to these sounds, especially the *ra* and *ṛ*. They don't exist in any Western language. However, with a little practice they can be learnt. This has, besides proper pronunciation, a great advantage: The tongue does not move to and fro in the mouth while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa; it stays almost at one place (as illustrated by Image 3) and just vibrates

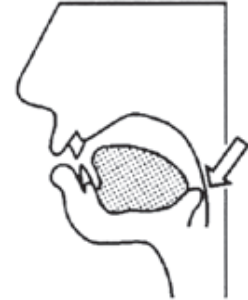


Tips to Improve One's Chanting

there. Thus, chanting is easier, with less effort and energy. The holy name appears more “swiftly”, as Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted. The *mantra* can flow in an undisturbed way, so to say.

(1)
In the throat.

ka kha ga
gha ña ha



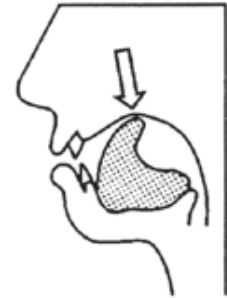
(2)
With the tongue
at the rear of
the palate.

ca cha ja jha
ña ya śa



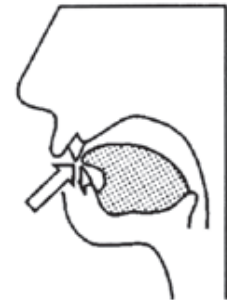
(3)
With the tongue
at the top of
the palate.

ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha
ṇa ra ṣa



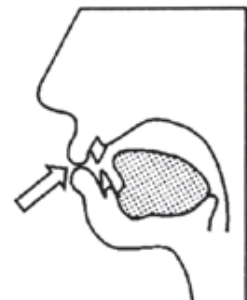
(4)
With the tongue at
the teeth.

ta tha da dha
na la sa



(5)
With the lips.

pa pha ba bha
ma va



The different pronunciation of the vowels **a** and **ā** is also important. The short **a** (in **Ha-re**, **Kṛ-ṣṇa** and **Rā-ma**) is closed, like in “**but**”. The long **ā** (in **Rā-ma**) is open, like in “**far**”. This contrast should be clearly heard.

The **e** in **Ha-re** is pronounced like in “**red**”, but longer (not “**ei**” like in “**they**”, as it is sometimes heard). The consonants **ha** and **ma** are spoken like in English (“**hut**” and “**mud**”).

If you go through all the letters of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, examining them by the above rules, you will quickly get acquainted with their pronunciation and your chanting will increase in quality.

The Proper Meter and Rhythm

One of the most important features in speaking Sanskrit *mantras* is the proper rhythm. Like the pronunciation, it is exactly defined, without any exceptions, and thus easy to learn. There are only two kinds of syllables: They are either short or long. Long syllables are twice as long than short ones.

Syllables are short if

1. They contain a short vowel, namely **a, i, u, ṛ**;
2. and if they are followed by only one consonant (or if they are at the end of a line).

Thus, the following syllables are short in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. They all have a short **a** and are followed by only one consonant:

- **Ha-re**;
- **Kṛ-ṣṇa**;
- **Rā-ma**.

All other syllables are long, that is if

1. They contain a long vowel, namely: **ā, ī, ū, ṛ, e, ai, o, au**;
2. or if they are followed by more than one consonant.

Thus, the following syllables are long in the *mahā-mantra*:

- **Ha-re**: long vowel **e**;
- **Kṛ-ṣṇa**: short vowel **ṛ**, but ensued by two consonants (**ṣ** and **ṇ**);
- **Rā-ma**: long vowel **ā**.



Tips to Improve One's Chanting

With this information, the *mahā-mantra* can be chanted in the proper meter (u is a short and — a long syllable):

Ha-re Kṛ- ṣṇa Ha-re Kṛ- ṣṇa Kṛ- ṣṇa Kṛ- ṣṇa Ha-re Ha-re
U — — U U — — U — U — U U — U —
Ha-re Rā- ma Ha-re Rā- ma Rā- ma Rā- ma Ha-re Ha-re

If, due to unfamiliarity with Sanskrit pronunciation you find this section a little difficult, please do not worry. You can learn the ideal pronunciation by obtaining a *japa* tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda's chanting.



4. Living With the Holy Name

Becoming a Servant of the Holy Name

One must come to the understanding that the holy name of the Lord and the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself are identical. One cannot reach this conclusion unless one is offenseless in chanting the holy name. By our material calculation we see a difference between the name and the substance, but in the spiritual world the Absolute is always absolute; the name, form, quality and pastimes of the Absolute are all as good as the Absolute Himself.

As such, one is understood to be an eternal servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead if he considers himself an eternal servant of the holy name and in this spirit distributes the holy name to the world. One who chants in that spirit, without offenses, is certainly elevated to the platform of understanding that the holy name and the Personality of Godhead are identical...

The holy name becomes manifest when one engages in the service of the holy name. This service in a submissive attitude begins with one's tongue. *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau*: One must engage his tongue in the service of the holy name. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on this principle. We try to engage all the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the service of the holy name. (Cc.Ādi 8.16, p.)

Here, Śrīla Prabhupāda underlines two ways how to serve the holy name: with the tongue by chanting, and by propagating it all over the world.

Results of Giving up Chanting

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, King Pṛthu prays to Lord Viṣṇu:

My dear highly glorified Lord, if one, in the association of pure devotees, hears even once the glories of Your activities, he does not, unless he is nothing but an animal, give up the association of devotees, for no intelligent person would be



so careless as to leave their association. The perfection of chanting and hearing about Your glories was accepted even by the goddess of fortune, who desired to hear of Your unlimited activities and transcendental glories. (ŚB. 4.20.26)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

Mahārāja Pṛthu maintains that the attraction of this chanting is so great that one cannot give up the process unless he is an animal. This is the case even if one comes in contact with this transcendental vibration by chance. Pṛthu Mahārāja is very emphatic in this connection—only an animal can give up the practice of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Those who are not animals, but actually intelligent, advanced, human, civilized men cannot give up this practice of continually chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The human being is the only life form which is endowed with the intelligence to understand the need for spiritual practice and has the required senses to engage in regulated devotional service.

Chanting at the Time of Death

There is an important prayer to Lord Viṣṇu by the priests in Mahārāja Nābhi's sacrificial arena:

Dear Lord, we may not be able to remember Your name, form, and qualities due to stumbling, hunger, falling down, yawning or being in a miserable condition at the time of death, when there is a high fever. We therefore pray unto You, O Lord, for You are very affectionate to Your devotees. Please help us to remember You and utter Your Holy names, attributes and activities, which can dispel all the reactions of our sinful lives. (ŚB. 5.3.12)

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport it is said:

The real success in life is *ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ*—remembering the holy name, attributes, activities, and form of the Lord at the time of death. Although we may be engaged in the Lord's



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devotional service in the temple, material conditions are so tough and inevitable that we may forget the Lord at the time of death due to a diseased condition or mental derangement. Therefore we should pray to the Lord to be able to remember His lotus feet without fail at the time of death, when we are in such a precarious condition.

To chant at the time of death, however, is very difficult, because one is extremely disturbed and cannot concentrate his thoughts deliberately—they just come like an uncontrollable stream. Very easily one might become so overwhelmed that he loses the power to speak. Therefore we have to prepare ourselves now, when the body is strong and the mind more or less well poised, and as long as there are no greater difficulties in our lives.

"What can be done", asks Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, "if one is on the brink of death?"—indicating that one should be prepared by then.

If we run into a difficult situation, for example, while driving a car, we should instantly chant the holy name. If suddenly a thought incompatible with devotional service enters the mind, one should immediately chant "Hare Kṛṣṇa". This should be practiced again and again. Then we are trained to chant the holy name even at the greatest danger—namely at the time of death.

One who chants the holy name in a helpless state, instantaneously attracts the blessings and the help of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If one succeeds in doing this at the time of death. Lord Kṛṣṇa will deliver him from the painful cycle of birth and death, by bringing him back to His own abode in the spiritual world. Hare Kṛṣṇa!



Frequent Questions Concerning Chanting



1. Nāma-tattva

The Meaning of the *mahā-mantra*

Question: Frequently it is explained that the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is a prayer to Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, “My dear energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your devotional service.” Do the scriptures or *ācāryas* reveal other meanings as well?

Answer: We can see that the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* has great spiritual power and profound meanings in itself, which are revealed to us only successively. Still, there are explanations, like the following one from *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*:

Oh Rādhē, having captured my mind, please free me from material bondage.

Oh Kṛṣṇa, please attract my mind by pulling it to You.

Oh Rādhē, capture my heart by showing me Your unsurpassed sweetness.

Oh Kṛṣṇa, please purify my mind with knowledge about devotional service given by Your pure devotee.

Oh Kṛṣṇa, give me steadiness to appreciate Your transcendental name,

Oh Kṛṣṇa, may I develop a taste for serving You.

Oh Rādhē, please make me qualified for Your service.

Oh Rādhē, please make me able to relish Your transcendental name, form, qualities and pastimes.

Oh Rādhē, please instruct me on how to serve You.

Oh Kṛṣṇa, let me hear of Your intimate pastimes with Your beloved.

Oh Rādhē, please reveal to me Your most cherished pastimes with Your beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



Frequent Questions Concerning Chanting

Oh Kṛṣṇa, please reveal to me Your most cherished pastimes with Your beloved Śrī Rādhā.

Oh Kṛṣṇa, engage me in remembering Your transcendental names, form, qualities and pastimes.

Oh Kṛṣṇa, please make me qualified for Your service.

Oh Rādhē, having accepted me as one of Your own servitors, please enjoy me as You like.

Oh Rādhē, please be pleased with me.



2. Improving the Chanting

Overcoming Indifference and Distraction

Question: While chanting the holy name, the devotees very often struggle with the *anarthas* of indifference and distraction. What remedies do the scriptures and the *ācāryas* suggest in order to overcome these two serious obstacles?

Answer: In order to overcome indifference to any activity, one firstly has to become aware of the significance of that activity. Hence, if we are negligent in executing our devotional service, we should remember the unique chance of coming into contact with Kṛṣṇa by chanting.

According to the *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, there are only two spiritual objects in this material world: first ourselves, the *jīva* souls, and then the holy name. Consequently, nothing better can be had in the material nature than the holy name, the Lord Himself in the form of transcendental sound vibration. Everything else is dull matter.

Someone who has indeed realized that he is a part of Kṛṣṇa, but is in an alien atmosphere in this material world, cannot stay indifferent towards the holy name, because he knows that the holy name—which is fully spiritual—connects him with his original spiritual home. By chanting attentively, he perceives a spiritual atmosphere which resembles the kingdom of God. Then he becomes aware that chanting actually means to arrive finally, after a long tiresome journey, at the spiritual realm to take shelter at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

Distraction is also a great obstacle in performing devotional service. It is the cause of the very offense from which all other offenses are brought forth, namely to chant the holy name without attention. Only by successfully overcoming all distraction, one will be able to chant with concentration and delight.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura offers a support to become free from distraction: One should sit regularly for some time in a quiet place where it is possible to fully concentrate on the holy name. In his house in Māyāpura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura constructed a small



Frequent Questions Concerning Chanting

room of 75 x 75 cm size, locked with a thick door. In this room he would chant peacefully and with full concentration. He advises everyone to find a similar place, which is quiet and where one can stay alone, fully absorbing the mind in the holy name. Then only can one enter the depth of chanting.

Chanting in the Association of Devotees

Question: On the other hand, it is said that the inability to focus the mind on chanting can be overcome by sitting near an advanced chanter. Isn't this a contradiction?

Answer: No. Of course, we need the association and the example of other devotees to develop the desire and the knowledge how to improve our chanting. Nevertheless, the fact is irrefutable that in the end we have to know on our own how to chant. For migratory birds it is certainly an inspiration to fly together with other birds in the same flock. Actually, each bird is fully dependent on the flock, but still, every single bird has to fly on its own and cannot take a rest on the back of another one. In the same way, we all have to become competent and learn by ourselves how to chant with full concentration. We all have to learn how to control the mind ourselves. No one can do this for us. We should, of course, seek inspiration by observing the example of others, but in the end, we must do the work ourselves.

In other words: both aspects are important. Sometimes we should chant in the association of well-trained devotees to become inspired, at other times we should go to a quiet place, in order to withdraw from all external distraction and put to test the quality of our chanting.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also advised that in order to overcome distraction, one should very distinctly pronounce the holy name and listen very carefully. This is of course a question of practice.

He still admits that it is very difficult for the conditioned living being to overcome the *anartha* of distraction on one's own strength.

Yet, by the mercy of the Lord it is possible. Therefore, it is



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essential to humbly and intensely pray for the Lord's mercy. This, he concludes, is the only possibility for the *jīva* to finally become liberated from distraction.

From these statements, it is obvious that to avoid distractions is an extremely difficult, yet unavoidable task. The stage of chanting with diversion can only be overcome by the sincere endeavor to follow the three recommended steps, namely:

1. To go now and then to a quiet, secluded place for chanting;
2. To chant the holy name distinctly and to listen well; and finally
3. To pray intensely for Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

In essence, we must endeavor seriously to avoid distraction, by surrendering completely unto the holy name. This is the only chance.

Turning the Mind Towards the Holy Name

Question: It is very difficult to control the functions of the mind— thinking, feeling and willing. Do we have to turn off these functions while chanting, or can the mind still be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service?

Answer: It is most important to concentrate the mind on one point, on one activity. Thus, instead of thinking, feeling and willing, the mind should simply be focused on the holy name while chanting. Then only the mind is engaged in the service of chanting. There are also some useful mechanical means:

1. Chant at a time free of disturbance—preferably early in the morning.
2. In order to calm down, breathe deeply before chanting.
3. The bodily position influences the mind. Therefore, chant sitting in an upright position.
4. Before chanting, surrender to the Lord in the mind. The following prayer is very much appropriate:

*kāyena vācā manasendriyair vā
buddhyātmanā vānuṣṛta-svabhāvāt
karoti yad yat sakalam parasmai
nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayet tat*



Frequent Questions Concerning Chanting

Whatever I have done with my body, said with my words, thought with my mind, perceived with my senses, or comprehended with my intelligence, I offer it to the Supreme Lord, Nārāyaṇa. (ŚB. 11.2.36)

5. Write down and look at the *mantra* from time to time.
6. Display pictures of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates, Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master.
7. Chant in the right association, best in the association of the spiritual master. This is even possible in a lonely place.

After a certain time of spiritual progress, Kṛṣṇa's different qualities will automatically reveal themselves in our mind when chanting. First the holy name of the Lord appears, then the form, then the qualities, and finally His *līlās*.

Appreciating the Holy Name

Question: What is the reason if one becomes repeatedly inattentive, in spite of having heard again and again about the necessity of attentive chanting?

Answer: The primary reason is forgetting to listen attentively at the moment of chanting. Therefore, one cannot fully appreciate the holy name. In order to avoid this, Śrīla Prabhupāda recommends to recite the following two verses before chanting—because they place us in the right frame of mind:

*nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-mālā-
dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-paṅkajānta
ayi mukta-kulair upāsyamānaṁ
paritas tvām hari-nāma saṁśrayāmi*

This is the first verse of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka*. It states that the tips of the toes of the lotus feet of the holy name are constantly worshipped by the glittering chain of jewels known as the *Upaniṣads*, and that the holy name is loved by all liberated souls. The second verse is spoken by King Parikṣit:

*nivṛtta-tarṣair upagīyamānād
bhāvauśadhāc chrotra-mano-'bhirāmāt*



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*ka uttamaśloka-guṇānuvādāt
pumān virajyeta vinā paśu-ghnāt*

Glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is performed in the *parampara* system; that is, it is conveyed from spiritual master to disciple. Such glorification is relished by those no longer interested in the false, temporary glorification of this cosmic manifestation. Descriptions of the Lord are the right medicine for the conditioned soul undergoing repeated birth and death. Therefore, who will cease hearing such glorification of the Lord except a butcher or one who is killing his own self?(ŚB. 10.1.4.)

In other words, only those persons who are no longer interested in their own praise or in the glorification of the material world can glorify the holy name.

These two verses draw our attention to the extraordinary nature of the holy name and help us to remain attentive while chanting.

I would like to offer a further means in this connection, which helped me personally again and again. I often say to myself that the Lord is present in three forms in the material world: as the Deity, as the holy name, and sometimes directly as an *avatāra*. Among these three forms, the holy name is the most merciful, and while chanting I have the possibility to associate with the Lord directly in this form. By meditating in this way, I cannot stay indifferent or inattentive while chanting, because after all I am aware that at this time, I am associating with Kṛṣṇa. This meditation helps me a great deal.

Ultimately each one of us has to find the most effective method for ourselves. In any case it is advisable to begin with a short meditation on chanting, for if one thoughtlessly jumps right into action, the mind will easily drift away due to not being fixed properly. But, if one has become aware of the importance of chanting, then it is easier to gain proper respect and undertake a greater effort to overcome inattention.



3. Avoiding Offenses

Living a Positive Spiritual Life

Question: How can offenses be avoided?

Answer: In order to become free from offenses, one should ultimately begin to lead a positive spiritual life. One who is always afraid of committing offenses, thus continuously meditating on them, will not really advance in chanting. The following story illustrates this point:

In a forest, a millipede could dance wonderfully. A toad that was observing his dancing became envious and decided to stop the millipede. However, she did not want to just come along and clumsily trample him down; so she conceived of a devious plan.

The toad wrote a letter to the millipede. "My dear millipede, you are certainly the best dancer in the entire forest, and in your dancing all the fine arts of the whole universe are reflected. I have, however, a question: when you are dancing, do you lift first the fifty-second foot and then shift to the other side with the fifty-sixth foot, or do you begin by softly rolling your two-hundredth foot and then go back to the hundred and fiftieth foot? How exactly do you perform your dance? That is my question. Yours sincerely, the toad from the bog."

The millipede read the letter carefully, and the next time when he came to the dancing place where all the forest animals had already gathered, he became embarrassed. Instead of just dancing as usual, he thought, "Do I start with the fifty-second foot, or do I roll slowly from the two-hundredth foot ahead? How do I exactly perform my dancing?"

As he was fully entangled in his thoughts, he could not dance anymore. He began to stagger and to stumble. "What is the matter?" asked the forest animals in amazement. The toad had attained her objective.

What actually was the matter is called "paralysis through analysis"—being paralyzed by thinking too much. One who is continuously absorbed in various thoughts, always living with the



fear to commit offenses, will not be able to chant properly. This principle, by the way, affects the entire life: To be always afraid of negative things, thus meditating on all kinds of possible mistakes, makes it very difficult to follow the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The injunction is: Think of Kṛṣṇa! Only that will bring us out of *māyā*!

Therefore, it is essential for every devotee to live a positive spiritual life, beyond the constant anxiety of how to avoid offenses. The best is to reverse the offenses and consider them in a positive light.

For instance: Instead of constantly thinking of how to avoid blaspheming Vaiṣṇavas, we should develop high appreciation for them and serve them. Instead of only theoretically accepting the holy name as identical with Kṛṣṇa and as the Supreme, we should always chant with great joy and devotion. Instead of meditating on not being able to follow the orders of the *guru*, we should recognize the *guru* as our best friend—and appreciate how nice it is to surrender our lives to him.

Referring to the fourth offense, it is not enough to just avoid defiling the Vedic scriptures. We should rather read the scriptures every day and try to absorb each transcendental word of the *śāstras* into our daily life. We should generally free ourselves from the concept of “sin”—and lead a saintly life instead.

Realizing Kṛṣṇa while Chanting

Question: I have heard that one who chants with offenses, only hears the syllables of the holy name externally, that the Lord does not enter personally in the form of His sound vibration. Is this true?

Answer: Yes. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura actually states: *nāmākṣara bahir haya nāma nāhi haya*¹. Simply reciting mechanically the syllables of the holy name does not really mean chanting the holy name. We need Kṛṣṇa’s mercy so that He will appear, being attracted to our sincere loving chanting. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes

.....
¹ Quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda in a room conversation from 25/2/77.



that it is only the mercy of the Lord that enables one to perform devotional service properly:

This process of devotional service is a great transcendental science and begins with the process of hearing and chanting the name, fame, glory, etc. of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Revival of the dormant affection or love of Godhead however does not depend on the mechanical system of hearing and chanting, but it solely and wholly depends on the causeless mercy of the Lord. When the Lord is fully satisfied with the sincere efforts of the devotee. He may endow him with His loving transcendental service. (*S.B.* 1.7.6, p.)

This means that only through the mercy of the Lord will the holy name actually appear on the tongue.

The Power of the Pañca-tattva *mahā-mantra*

Question: It is said that simply by chanting the Pañca-tattva *mahā-mantra* all offenses against the chanting of the holy name are nullified. How can this be understood?

Answer: It is indeed the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Pañca-tattva, that enables even the most fallen living entities in Kali-yuga to chant the holy name of the Lord, thereby overcoming offenses. Of course, one should not continue to commit new offenses as soon as the old ones have been forgiven.

This is evidently expressed by the story of Jagāi and Mādhāi. Before forgiving these two offenders and accepting them as His associates, Lord Caitanya made two conditions: first that they should constantly chant the holy name, and second that they should never commit offenses again. If somebody continues to commit offenses in spite of the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates the Pañca-tattva, he may chant for a long time without achieving the desired result, love of Kṛṣṇa.



4. The Holy Name is Transcendental

Question: What does it mean that the holy name is transcendental and should not be considered to be a material sound vibration?

Answer: This is explained in the *Padma Purāṇa*:

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benediction, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṇa's name is not contaminated by the material qualities, and there is no question of its being involved with *māyā*, Kṛṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never contaminated by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.

(Cc. Madhya 17.133)

The holy name is not a product of this material universe. As long as the *jīva*, the eternal spirit soul, is situated in his original form and position in the spiritual world, he is able to purely pronounce Kṛṣṇa's name. In his present situation, as *māyā*'s slave, equipped with gross material senses, he is not qualified to enunciate the pure name. But through the causeless mercy of the *hlādinī-sakti* represented by Śrīmatī Rādhārāni and the *samvit-śakti* represented by Lord Balarāma, the holy name begins automatically to reveal its pure form. Then, due to Kṛṣṇa's unlimited mercy, the pure name incarnates on the fertile ground of purified consciousness and dances on the devotee's tongue, which is enriched with love and devotion.

The form of the holy name is not of mundane nature. It is not merely a combination of letters or words. Its form is *sac-cid-ānanda*. This is the secret of the holy name.



5. The Perfection of Chanting

Question: Are there references from Śrīla Prabhupāda and his spiritual master that the chanting of the holy names is the most important activity in devotional service?

Answer: Yes. Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

Of all the regulative principles, the spiritual master's order to chant at least sixteen rounds is most essential.

(Cc. Madhya 22.113, p.)

The question about the most important of all processes of devotional service was also raised by Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, who asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

“Which item is most important in the execution of devotional service?” The Lord replied that the most important item was the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. Then the Lord cited the following verse:

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā.*

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way. (Cc. Madhya 6.241-242)

After listing the sixty-four items of devotional service, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions five of them which are especially important.¹ Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explained very convincingly how each one of these five potent processes actually points to the chanting of the holy name:

After careful consideration of the five [processes of devotional service mentioned by Rūpa Gosvāmī, it is clear that the best practice is *śrī nāma-bhajana*, service of God's holy names, which is the root of all these, and is glorified above all:

.....
¹ Refer to The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 6 and 13.



1. **Sādhu-saṅga:** associating with devotees is recommended to create a taste or inclination for *śrī nāma-bhajana*. This comes from associating with saints who are attached to chanting Kṛṣṇa's names with firm faith and who chant the names systematically.
2. **Bhāgavata-śravaṇa:** hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which itself declares *śrī nāma-bhajana* to be the highest virtue. In its beginning, middle [the story of Ajāmila in the sixth canto], and at the end the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* repeatedly stresses the efficacy of *śrī nāma-bhajana*.
3. **Mathurā-vāsa:** residing in a holy place like Mathurā. *Nāma-bhajana* is situated at the root of residence in Vṛndāvana or Śrīdhama Māyāpura. The *sādhus* living in or visiting these holy places are always engaged in *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.
4. **Śrī-mūrti-sevā:** the service of Kṛṣṇa's Deity, is always conducted with *mantras* full of God's names. The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī say that Deity service must be accompanied with chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* for it to be accepted.
5. **Nāma-saṅkīrtana** is directly the chanting of the holy names.

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states that of the nine ways of devotional service to get love of God, the foremost is *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. One who chants *nāma* without offenses surely achieves love of God. The *Bhakti-sandarbhā* says that no form of *bhakti* is, *mathurā-vāsa*, *sādhu-saṅga*, *srī-mūrti-sevā*, and *bhāgavata-śravaṇa* as listed above, is complete without Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* says that *saṅkīrtana* is the best and foremost of all spiritual practices for attaining Kṛṣṇa's mercy. If the other practices of *bhakti* are helpful to *saṅkīrtana*, they should then be accepted.



6. A Practical Support

Question: Are there any practical steps we could undertake which would enable us to advance to higher levels of chanting?

Answer: Many devotees in the past were successfully raising their meditation of the holy name to a higher level by obeying the following eight rules. These rules start with quite technical, or mechanical, arrangements and gradually lead to the point of controlling the thoughts and working on the inner attitude.

Someone who wants to reform his chanting may require a certain run-up. We can compare this to the flying techniques of an albatross which runs fifty meters on the beach before rising up in the air. Once having successfully soared up into the sky, the bird is able to remain high in the sky for days, without any need to move the wings. Similarly, anybody who observes the following rules will surely come to the point of having wonderful experiences with the holy name.

1. Preparation: make a resolution the day before. "Tomorrow, I will chant with full concentration!" Go to bed early.
2. Start very early the next morning. Chant at a place free of distraction, either in the association of devotees or at a location which offers you maximum solitude. If the mind starts to flicker, calm it down by prayer, or try some breathing exercises.

The most effective practice for those unacquainted with *prāṇāyāma* is to inhale and exhale deeply. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī recommends in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* that before chanting *Gāyatrī mantra* one should perform some *prāṇāyāma* exercises.

3. While chanting:
 - a) Chant your rounds fluently without interruption (control your speed in the beginning).
 - b) Take care of a clear, distinct pronunciation of the holy names.
 - c) Keep a straight, upright posture. It is better to sit upright while chanting—this posture is in the mode of goodness. To lie down would be in ignorance, and to walk is in the mode of passion.



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4. Concentrate the mind on the sound vibration.
5. Control the mind:
 - a) Draw it back when it drifts away.
 - b) Relieve it from the past by not delving on what happened the day before, or the week before, or the year before!
 - c) Abandon the planning of your daily schedule. (In case the shopping list or service schedule repeatedly turns up in the mind, one can shortly interrupt chanting and write down the points; then the mind will be calm again.)
6. Try to attain the state of mind recommended in the third verse of *Śrī Siksāstaka* (humility, tolerance, pridelessness, respect for all living beings). This attempt will succeed if you bear in mind that as the soul you are an insignificant minute part of the Lord.
7. Meditate on the meaning of the holy names while chanting, as it is revealed by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*.
8. Chant with a feeling of longing for Kṛṣṇa.

Some devotees read or recite the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers before chanting, in order to find the proper attitude. It is also helpful to chant all the rounds in succession, without interruption. Many devotees display pictures of their spiritual master and of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates, in order to chant in the best association.

These are some general rules. The important point is that each devotee finds out individually, what helps him the most to improve his chanting.



The Open Secret



1. Gaining the Proper Conception of the Holy Name

All holy scriptures, and all the great souls of the past and present, emphatically stress that the holy name is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Although outwardly a mere combination of letters, it is an especially merciful manifestation of Kṛṣṇa descending from the spiritual world. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that the holy name is our first encounter with Kṛṣṇa in this material world, and thus, like Kṛṣṇa, the holy name reserves the ultimate right to be revealed or not.

Impersonalists or materialists may chant the holy name as well, but since the Supreme Lord is not present in such chanting, their sound vibration, although carrying the syllables of the holy name, is devoid of power. Their chanting is imbued with the desire for liberation and for sense gratification. They consider the holy name to be material. These people may receive some secondary benefits from chanting, but since the holy name withholds Kṛṣṇa from them, they will never obtain the real treasure of spiritual life, namely *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is so important to have the proper conception of the chanting of the holy name. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in this connection:

They may chant, but they must understand that there is a way how the chanting process will be more effective. That they must know. Chanting is open. Anyone can chant, but they must know it, that “If I chant in the proper process, then it will be effective.” There is one word by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *nāmākṣara bahir haya nāma nāhi haya*: “Simply the alphabets are coming, but that is not *nāma* “. *Nāmākṣara*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, the alphabets, are coming out, but it is not the holy name.

(Room conversation on 25/2/77)

The “proper process” by which the holy name exhibits its full efficacy is to chant with the right understanding (*sambandha-jnāna*). What is the right understanding of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*? This is again explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda:



The word Harā is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are forms of addressing the Lord Himself. Both Kṛṣṇa and Rāma mean the supreme pleasure, and Hara is the supreme pleasure energy of the Lord, changed to Hare (Hah-ray) in the vocative. The supreme pleasure energy of the Lord helps us to reach the Lord.

These three words, namely Harā, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, are the transcendental seeds of the *mahā-mantra*. The chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His energy, to give protection to the conditioned soul. This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother's presence. Mother Harā helps the devotee achieve the Lord Father's grace, and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee who chants this *mantra*.

(The Topmost Yoga System, Chapter 6)

In a letter to a disciple, Śrīla Prabhupāda summed up the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in a way which he often used in his lectures. He wrote:

Oh Hare, Oh Rādhārāni! Oh Kṛṣṇa! Please engage me in
Your service so that I can get relief from the service of *māyā*.

(Letter from 8/7/69)

Chanting aims at nothing less than a revelation of the Supreme Person Himself. When the chanter has come to this understanding, he will establish in his life a golden throne for the holy name and worship it as the most precious and valuable jewel. Then there will be no space left for inattention and offenses.

This esoteric point makes the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* an open secret. It is open in the sense of being accessible to everyone—but a proper understanding is absolutely necessary to reach love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. With a false understanding and false motivation one will not obtain the highest benefit of chanting. As a medicated capsule exerts its effect only if filled with the proper medicine, chanting can be effective only with the proper understanding.

The holy name, like Kṛṣṇa, reveals Himself according to the desires of His devotees. In this connection, Lord Brahmā prays to Kṛṣṇa:



Nectar of the Ocean of the Holy Name

You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You. (*ŚB.* 3.9.11)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

The statement here that the Lord manifests Himself before the devotee in the form in which the devotee likes to worship Him indicates that the Lord becomes subordinate to the desire of the devotee—so much so that He manifests His particular form as the devotee demands. This demand of the devotee is satisfied by the Lord because He is pliable in terms of the transcendental loving service of the devotee. This is also confirmed in *Bhagavad-gīta*: *ye yathā mām prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham.* (*Bg.* 4.11)

This can mean that a materialist, who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa with a material understanding, gets his material desires fulfilled.

According to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the impersonalists' chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa will vanish in the impersonal *brahmān* effulgence, which emanates from the transcendental body of the Supreme Lord. Their chanting is not pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, but painful—so it gets absorbed before it reaches the Lord.

If someone is serious to get love of Godhead and return to the original spiritual world, Goloka Vṛndāvana, he must chant with the right understanding:

Without knowing its meaning, one will not attain the goal intended by chanting that specific mantra. (*Yajnavalkya-saṁhitā*)

Thus, chanting depends on proper understanding and intention. Otherwise one will chant with the lips but not with the heart, and the holy name does not really appear. However, one should not be discouraged by these statements. Even while not on the highest level, the holy name still will gradually reveal its transcendental strength if chanted with the correct understanding.

The holy name is compared to a wonderful flower. At the beginning, it is present as a mere bud, but then gradually, and steadily, it develops to its full-blossomed stage. Just as a bud transforms into an attractive flower with fascinating petals, the



sweet Śyāmasundara form of Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana will be revealed to the serious chanter. When the bud starts to open, the chanter will be captivated by the sixty-four transcendental qualities of Kṛṣṇa, which emerge from the blossoming flower of the holy name like an irresistible fragrance. Finally, when the holy name has fully blossomed, Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes will be revealed to the chanter.



2. The Proper Attitude: Meeting in Separation

Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation of love of God, taught us how to meet Kṛṣṇa through strong feelings of separation (*vipralambha*). This attitude is a prerequisite for coming into contact with Kṛṣṇa. If we can chant the holy name with such understanding, we will meet Kṛṣṇa in the *mahā-mantra*. Therefore, as Śrīla Prabhupada explains, it is the task of the spiritual master to instruct his disciples how to obtain a platform on which they can feel deep longing for Kṛṣṇa while performing devotional service.

This is possible if the devotee, by regularly hearing about Kṛṣṇa, develops the strong desire to surrender to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Such a mood is expressed in the prayer of Princess Rukmiṇī:

My dear Kṛṣṇa, O infallible and most beautiful one, any human being who happens to hear about Your transcendental form and pastimes immediately absorbs through his ears Your name, fame and qualities; thus all his material pangs subside, and he fixes Your form in his heart. Through such transcendental love for You, he always sees You within himself; and by this process all his desires are fulfilled. (ŚB. 10.52.37)

In this world if two persons have to live in separation, they will shed tears of despair. However, since Kṛṣṇa is not a living being of this world, He is not limited by space and time and therefore appears in the heart of a devotee who feels separation from Him.

If a devotee just thinks intensely about Kṛṣṇa, He will manifest. The Six Gosvāmīs give a good example of these advanced feelings in separation. Although most of them came from aristocratic families, they accepted the dress of simple mendicants and led the renounced life of ascetics in Vṛndāvana. There, in the holy land of Kṛṣṇa's appearance, they were writing books about devotional service. Since they were spiritually very advanced, they were constantly diving in the waves of the nectarean ocean of the holy name. Śrīla Prabhupāda used their example to explain that this sincere longing for Kṛṣṇa, causing the devotee to even cry for Him, is the price for entering the kingdom of God.



In other words: Spiritual life is not an automatic process. It is not like in a motor vehicle factory, where at the end of the assembly line a fully fabricated car comes out. But if someone seriously tries to serve Kṛṣṇa, then this longing for Kṛṣṇa manifests quite naturally—which means, almost automatically. The holy name appears out of its own desire on the tongue of a devotee who enthusiastically performs devotional service and whose senses are purified by devotion to Kṛṣṇa. In one lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how to cry for Kṛṣṇa:

So we are addressing, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa: “O the energy of the Lord, O the Lord, please accept me.” That’s all. “Please accept me.” We have no other prayer. “Please accept me.” Lord Caitanya taught that we should simply cry, and we shall simply pray for accepting us. That’s all. So this vibration is simply a cry for addressing the Supreme Lord, requesting Him, “Please accept me. Please accept me.” (Lecture from 19/11/69)

By commenting on Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s own feelings of separation, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Those under the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu can understand that His mode of worship of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa in separation is the real worship of the Lord. When the feelings of separation become very intense, one attains the stage of meeting Śrī Kṛṣṇa. So-called devotees like the *sahajiyās* cheaply imagine they are meeting Kṛṣṇa in *Vṛndāvana*. Such thinking may be useful, but actually meeting Kṛṣṇa is possible through the attitude of separation taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. (Cc. Ādi 4.108, p.)

Although it may seem paradoxical, but if the feelings of separation become very intense, Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself while chanting the holy name. This stage should not be imitated—it develops naturally when a devotee feels that the whole world has become meaningless without Kṛṣṇa. To express it in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words:



Nect ar ean Ocean of the Holy Name

Caitanya Mahāprabhu, He's *sannyāsī*, He has no necessity. Why He's crying for Govinda? He has given up the whole world, became *sannyāsī*. And why He's crying for Govinda? That is real necessity. *Govinda-virahaṇa me*. Govinda necessity. The necessity is Govinda, and He is not alone. There's again life, again *Vṛndāvana*, again *gopīs*, again dancing, again eating, again everything. That is real necessity.

(Morning walk in Honolulu, 28/5/76)



3. An Autobiographical Report

Examples from the life of saints and great spiritual masters can be a wonderful inspiration to our chanting. The following account by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who wrote down his own experiences when chanting the holy name, is meant to encourage the reader to find a new approach to the practice of chanting. May this report help everyone to chant with increased intensity!

My heart is just like a desert, hot with the rays of the sun. This is my internal mental condition. The desire for temporary, material things cannot satisfy me because by nature they are death producing. And not one or two, but thousands of such death-producing desires have taken shelter in my mind. So, my subconscious region is always burning. This is my condition. But somehow, by the grace of the *sādhu* and my *guru*, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa with its infinite prospect has entered through the holes of my ears and reached the plane of my heart. And there, with some peculiar hope, with infinite, auspicious possibilities, it touched my heart with a new kind of nectar.

New hope is aroused by that sound. Then by force it comes from the heart towards the tongue. Not by the endeavor of my tongue I am producing that sound—no. What came from the heart of a saint through my ear, entered my heart, and that forcibly appeared on my tongue, and began to dance.

That is the holy name proper. It descends from above. It cannot be produced by the material tongue. It's source is above. And through an agent of the Absolute it comes through the ear to the heart. From the heart it gathers some sympathy, then the holy name of Kṛṣṇa forcibly appears upon the tongue and begins to dance. With great force that sweet sound comes to the tip of the tongue and begins dancing.

The real effects of the divine name have been described here. If it is a real and living name the voice will be choked up. There will be shivering in the body, the legs will be unable to stand, and sometimes tears will flow in a current on the body.



Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name

One's hair will stand on end, and sometimes the body will change color. The material mind and consciousness will fade away, and we may fall in a swoon. The whole body and mind will appear as if it is being attacked, shivering, and influenced in many ways.

Apparently it may seem that so many troubles are created in the body and mind, but the real heart is overflowing with a particular kind of strange, sweet juice. Sometimes the devotee thinks, "I am swimming in an ocean of nectar. My whole existence is submerged in an ocean of nectarean *rasa*. I am beside myself and cannot understand where I am. What is this? What is surrounding me? Am I going mad? Where is my past experience, my seriousness, my gravity... where are they?

I have been completely converted by a foreign element. I am a doll in the hands of a great force which is so affectionate to me. I cannot ascertain how it is possible that by my faith I have entered this great, unknown environment. And at last I find that I am captivated. My entire being, within and without, has been captured and controlled by an especially sweet force. It is beyond description. I came to take shelter of Him and accept Him as my guardian. But now at His hands, I am being dealt with in such a merciless and oppressive way.

Still, I feel everything is very pleasing beyond my experience. I cannot resist anymore. I am fully captured. So let my faith go anywhere because I cannot escape. I am captive in the hand of a sweet loving friend. All my independence is gone, and I have no other choice but surrender.

I find that He is an autocrat. He does whatever He wants. Since it is not possible for me to resist, I must surrender. No, I will cooperate and do whatever He wants. Meanwhile, I find that the holy name is like a blossoming flower emanating wonderful sweet streams. The holy name contains so many sweet variegated forms of current within Him. In different ways He is wonderfully expressing Himself. Sometimes He shows a peculiar type of color and form, and then disappears.



So many charming aspects are revealed within, as He forces me to surrender at the base of that altar. He shows Himself in His full-fledged form as He leads me to *Vṛndāvana* to witness His *vraja-līlā* with Rādhā. I find myself in the midst of His uniquely sweet and loving abode. He says, 'You see! I have so many wonderful things and this is your home. I am not imagination but concrete reality. You will find that this environment is very sweet and favorable, and you should live here.'

I see that He is exchanging a variety of loving *rasas* with His many devotees. And I find that a spiritual body has emerged from my previous one, and that I have a permanent place here in His service. Such a new life I find here that all considerations of my past life and experience has vanished. What He says is true; my real life is here, and my previous material life was a waste."

Now I find that chanting the holy name gives me a new hope, a new prospect, and new encouragement. The name supplies whatever we want. All our internal hankerings will be fulfilled if we chant the name. The holy name is eternal, full of ecstasy, and it is the purest of the pure.

I find I have been completely converted, and now my innermost hankering is this: Let whatever is against this sweet name vanish forever from the world. Everyone should come here. I am ready to sacrifice my life to finish any opposition, so that everyone can easily, peacefully, and fearlessly enjoy this absolute, sweet and blissful life.



Épilogue



The Future of the *saṅkīrtana* Movement

We are living in a time that demands unity of mankind and religions, in order to eliminate discord and misunderstandings. This is exactly the unique contribution of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. It elevates people from most differing backgrounds to a common spiritual platform where they are indeed united. The singing of the holy names is the perfect means to bring people together because:

1. It is open to everyone. External differences like age, race, sex, opinions etc. are of no importance.
2. No further remedies or paraphernalia are necessary.
3. It can be practiced at any time.
4. It can be practiced at any place.
5. No ritualistic rules are to be observed.

In 1885, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura published an article with the following prophesy in his monthly magazine *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*¹:

Lord Caitanya did not appear just to liberate a few people in India. His main goal was rather to redeem the living entities of all countries in the whole universe and to preach the eternal religion. Lord Caitanya says in *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, “My name will be chanted in every town, in every country, and in every village.”

There is no doubt that this prophecy will become fulfilled. Nowadays there are many religious communities that cultivate in its purest and most mature form the goal to praise the glories of the Lord. All over the world there is a strong spiritual need, and it seems as if a pure undefiled religion will soon blossom and become the essence of all religions. Which is this religion? In the West as well as in Asia it is seen that the great religions are merely quarreling with each other. Such religions will not

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¹ Unfortunately, the original article of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is misplaced. Therefore we had to render the German translation back into English. This goes at the expense of literal accuracy, but the message of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is too important to be omitted.



be able to survive in the long run. Many religions, which imply biased, contrary credos will be split up in due course of time. Only after these contradicting dogmas have been eliminated, will all religions can become united.

Kīrtana, the praising of the holy names of the Lord, has the potency to fulfill the part of a future world “church”, since it elevates all kinds of men, regardless of their social descent, and leads them towards the supreme form of spiritual culture. This “church” will spread all over the world and replace sectarian churches that exclude outsiders.

What are the fundamental teachings by which the eternal religion should be characterized? They may be summarized in three points:

1. There is only one God for all people. He is the almighty source of all knowledge. He is free of any limit, and He is the reservoir of all good qualities.
2. All living entities are tiny conscious parts and parcels of this one God. Their eternal activity is to serve Him.
3. To chant the glory of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and to foster the brotherhood of all living entities—that is pure religion.

By accepting these three points, the established world religions will be freed from their peculiar contradictions, and all sectarian consciousness will disappear. Then people of all countries, classes and religious beliefs will be united in brotherly coexistence—united in *nāma-saṅkīrtana*!

Historically seen we are living in a time of big changes and uprisings. From the material point of view, there is not much positive to report. But according to an old prophesy, Śrī Caitanya’s appearance introduced a period of ten thousand years in which the conditions of the golden age will prevail. This is described by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared, He ushered in the era for the *saṅkīrtana* movement. It is also said that for



ten thousand years this era will continue. This means that simply by accepting the *saṅkīrtana* movement and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, the fallen souls of this Kali-yuga will be delivered ... The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to make every person fit for survival. Indeed, it is meant to stop the struggle for existence. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* give definite directions on how to stop the struggle for existence and how to survive in eternal life. The *saṅkīrtana* movement, therefore, is a great opportunity. Simply by hearing *Bhagavad-gītā* and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, one becomes completely purified. Thus the struggle for existence ceases, and one goes back home, back to Godhead. (ŚB. 8.5.23, p.)

In his prediction, Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to the *Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa* which reports a conversation between Mother Gaṅgā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At the end of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes on the earth, Mother Gaṅgā appeared in Dvārakā. Speaking on behalf of all the sacred rivers, Gaṅgā-devī expressed her fears at the advent of the Age of Quarrel and the imminent departure of the Lord to the spiritual world.

Mother Gaṅgā said, "O Lord, we can see that Your pastimes are about to end, and people are becoming more and more materialistic. You have been very merciful to us. After You leave, however, all the sinful people of Kali-yuga will bathe in our waters, and we will become overwhelmed with sinful reactions."

Smiling, the Lord replied, "Be patient. After five thousand years My *mantra-upāsaka* [worshipper of the holy name] will appear in this world and spread the chanting of My holy name everywhere. Not only in Bhārata-varṣa but also all over the world the people will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. By this chanting the whole world will become *eka-varṇa*, one designation, namely, *hari-bhaktas*, devotees of Lord Hari. And because the devotees of Lord Hari are so pure, anyone who contacts them will become purified from sinful reactions.



These pure devotees will visit Bhārata-varṣa and purify you of sinful reactions by bathing in your sacred waters. This period of worldwide chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa will continue for ten thousand years." (*Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa*)

It is now up to us to fulfill this prophesy, by perfecting our individual chanting, and by carrying the holy name, as its humble servants, to all parts of the world. Then the material world, the energy separated from Kṛṣṇa, will be reunited with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and be transformed into Vaikuṅṭha— a world without anxiety.

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*



Appendix



1. About the Author

Śacīnandana Swami was born in 1954 and has been a monk in the *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* tradition since 1971. He is an initiated disciple of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda and a member of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON). This spiritual organization was founded by Śrīla Prabhupada in order to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness accessible to people all over the world. As a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śacīnandana Swami is practicing his spiritual life in the line of disciplic succession (the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāya*) which, unbroken for thousands of years, teaches the eternal message about the loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In 1989, Śacīnandana Swami entered the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*). He was also appointed as initiating spiritual master in ISKCON. Since then, he has been traveling as a preacher to guide and inspire people on the spiritual path. Through his seminars and public programs, he has become a well-known representative of Vedic culture and philosophy.

During regular pilgrimages to the holy places in India, which he often uses for concentrating solely on the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, he developed a deeper personal access to the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. The desire to share his experiences with others was a natural consequence and has resulted in this publication.



2. Śrī Harināmamṛta-śloka-mālā-śatāṣṭaka

A Garland of 108 Nectarean Verses on the Holy Name

The following is a collection of one hundred and eight important verses from the Vaiṣṇava scriptures about the holy name and related topics. Reading them, meditating on them, and learning some of them by heart is a wonderful means to improve one's appreciation and attachment for the chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name. Therefore we have arranged them as a "garland of prayers" in a conclusive way, decorated with concise explanations.

It is a good practice to study the original Sanskrit verses as well, in order to gain a better understanding of them and thus be able to dive fully into the nectar of its message. Therefore, we have added word-by-word translations for all ślokas which are not found in *Bhagavad-gīta*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. All verses without word-by-word translation are provided with their reference.

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka

About these eight instructions from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed His disciples to write books on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a task which those who follow Him have continued to carry out down to the present day. The elaboration and exposition on the philosophy taught by Lord Caitanya are in fact the most voluminous, exacting, and consistent—due to the unbreakable system of disciplic succession—of any religious culture in the world. Yet Lord Caitanya, who in His youth was widely renowned as a scholar Himself, left us only eight verses called *Śikṣāṣṭaka*.

(Lecture from 28/12/68)

These eight verses provide us with the most concise and clear understanding of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings, the essence of which is the chanting of the holy name.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has explained the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* verses in



his book *Śrī Bhajana-rahasya*, the sequel of *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*. He relates them to the gradual progression of *bhakti* from the first stages of *śraddhā* up to the topmost platform of pure *prema*, as described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

(1-2) *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.4.15-16

*ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā
tato 'nārtha-nivṛttiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ
athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyudañcati
sādhakānām ayaṁ premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ*

In the beginning, one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization (*śraddhā*). This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated (*sādhu-saṅga*). In the next stage one is initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service (*bhajana-kriyā*). By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes freed from all material attachment (*anārtha-nivṛtti*), attains steadiness in self-realization (*niṣṭhā*), and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*ruci*). This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*āsakti*), which is matured in *bhāva*, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love of God is called *prema*, the highest perfectional stage of life.

The first *śloka* of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, by explaining the seven specific transcendental features of the holy name, enables one to acquire deep faith in the holy name, born from profound understanding and realization of its supreme qualities. Hence, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura links this verse to the first stage of devotion, *śraddhā*:

(3) *Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhāva-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-śrīapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*



Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step.

The next three stages, *sādhu-saṅga*, *bhajana-kriyā*, and *anartha-nivṛtti*, are addressed by the second *śloka* of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Here the importance of avoiding the ten offenses while chanting the holy name is stressed. This, as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains, is the most important regulative principle of *bhajana-kriyā*, because only then the holy name can display its potency to extinguish the *anarthas* and to awaken attachment in the heart of the chanter:

(4) *Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka* 2

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam idrśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as “Kṛṣṇa” and “Govinda,” by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them. My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting.

A devotee who is free from unwanted material desires (*anartha-nivṛtti*), attains the stage of *niṣṭha*, where he performs devotional service with steady, firm faith. Then he develops the illuminating quality of humility, which is perfectly described by the four symptoms explained in the third *śloka*:



(5) Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka 3

*tṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā māna-dena kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.

We have elaborately discussed these qualities in the section about pure chanting, starting on page 126. In His contemplation on this verse, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu points out:

(6) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.26

*ei-mata hañā yei kṛṣṇa-nāma laya
śrī-kṛṣṇa-carāṇe tānra prema upajaya*

If one chants the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa in this manner, he will certainly awaken his dormant love for Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.

This *tṛṇād api* verse is so important that it should be the permanent guide for all Vaiṣṇavas, as Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī emphatically exclaims:

(7) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 17.32

*ūrdhva-bāhu kari’ kahoṇ, śuna, sarva-loka
nāma-sūtre gāṇthi’ para kaṇṭhe ei śloka*

Raising my hands, I declare, “Everyone please hear me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance.”

By acquiring deep faith in the holy name, one quickly obtains the stage of *ruci*, steady taste for chanting. The symptoms of *ruci* are that one loses all desire for personal aggrandizement and becomes situated on the platform of unalloyed devotion, as depicted in the fourth *śloka*:



(8) **Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka 4**

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmaniśvare
bhāvatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi*

O Lord of the universe, I do not desire material wealth, materialistic followers, a beautiful wife or fruitive activities described in flowery language. All I want, life after life, is unmotivated devotional service to You.

On the stage of *ruci*, one's attachment is mainly nourished by the different aspects and paraphernalia of devotional service, like hearing, chanting, preaching, worshipping the Deity etc. However, by humbly continuing his *bhajana*, the devotee's affection will be drawn more and more towards Kṛṣṇa in person. This is the stage of *āsakti* or *kṛṣṇa-āsakti*. Such a devotee recognizes his fallen condition and eagerly awaits the causeless mercy of the Lord. He considers himself to be the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa:

(9) **Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka 5**

*ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaram
patitam mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūli-sadṛśam vicintaya*

O My Lord, O Kṛṣṇa, son of Mahārāja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of My own fruitive acts I have fallen into this horrible ocean of nescience. Now please be causelessly merciful to Me. Consider Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet.

The next stage is described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī as follows:

When devotional service is situated on the transcendental platform of pure goodness [*śuddha-sattva*], it is like a ray of the sunlight of love for Kṛṣṇa. At such a time, devotional service causes the heart to be softened by various tastes, and it is called *bhāva* [emotion]. (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.1)



These transcendental emotions bring about ecstatic bodily transformations, called *sāttvika-vibhāvas*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu describes such a person:

(10) Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka 6

*nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā
pulkair nicitam vapuḥ kadā
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati*

My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name?

When *bhāva* softens the heart completely, becomes endowed with a great feeling of possessiveness in relation to the Lord and becomes very much condensed and intensified, it is called *prema*, pure love of Godhead. The internal symptom of such devotion is that one worships Kṛṣṇa in the mood of separation (*vipralambha*). This love in separation is represented in perfection by the *gopīs* of Vrndāvana, headed by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. It is illustrated by the seventh *śloka*:

(11) Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka 7

*yugāyitam nimeṣeṇa cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam
sūnyāyitam jagat sarvaṁ govinda-virahaṇa me*

My Lord Govinda, because of separation from You, I consider even a moment a great millennium. Tears flow from My eyes like torrents of rain, and I see the entire world as void.

Finally, the devotee in *prema-bhakti*, being fully aware of his particular eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, firmly embraces the Lord within his heart and thus experiences *sambhoga*, union with Kṛṣṇa by obtaining His direct association. Then he makes himself fully dependent on Kṛṣṇa's own sweet will and prays, following in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, but never desiring direct enjoyment of Kṛṣṇa:



(12) *Śrī-Śikṣāṣṭaka* 8

*āśliṣya vā pāda-ratām pinaṣṭu mām
adarśanān marma-hatām karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampāṭo
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ*

Let Kṛṣṇa tightly embrace this maidservant who has fallen at His lotus feet, or let Him trample Me or break My heart by never being visible to Me. He is a debauchee, after all, and can do whatever He likes, but He is still no one other than the worshipable Lord of My heart.

In summary, we can meditate on the eight *ślokas* of *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka* as an illustration to the gradual development of *bhakti* as it is described in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

- The first verse establishes *śraddhā*, faith in the holy name, by enumerating its seven transcendental qualities.
- The second verse describes the progress from *sādhu-saṅga* and *bhajana-kriyā* to *anartha-nivṛtti*, by pointing out the great spiritual potency of the holy name as the best means of *sādhana*, and by stressing the importance of becoming free from *anarthas* by avoiding the ten offenses against the holy name.
- The third verse illustrates the mood of deep humility of a devotee who has attained the stage of *nistha*, steady faith.
- The fourth verse expresses the attitude of a devotee on the stage of *ruci*, who forgets about his material desires and develops unalloyed devotion to Kṛṣṇa.
- The fifth verse depicts the prayer of a devotee who is endowed with *āsakti*, deep affection for Kṛṣṇa, and hankers for nothing than His association.
- The sixth verse shows the ecstatic symptoms of a devotee who has obtained *bhāva*, ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.
- The seventh verse expresses the feeling of separation (*vipralambha*) of a devotee who has ultimately attained the supreme stage of *prema*, pure love of God.
- The eighth verse is the prayer of such a devotee in *prema-bhakti*



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who has fully realized his eternal, individual relationship with Kṛṣṇa and experiences *sambhoga*, direct association with the Lord.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura concludes these descriptions in his *Bhajana-rahasya* with the following request:

O brother, the holy name never loses potency either at the stage of practice or perfection. Therefore, chant the holy name and consider it your sole objective. Do not consider any other means of *sādhana*.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka

This prayer from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī glorifies *śrī harināma prabhu*, the most merciful personality of the holy name, who has descended into the material world in order to rescue and enliven all living entities. Rūpa Gosvāmī starts by prostrating himself unto the lotus feet of *śrī harināma*. He declares that, since the holy name is worshipped even by the Vedas in person, it is most appropriate to take full shelter of him:

(13) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 1

*nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-mālā-
dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-paṅkajānta
ayi mukta-kulair upāsyamānaṁ
paritas tvāṁ hari-nāma saṁśrayāmi*

nikhila—of all; *śruti*—of the *Upaniṣads*; *mauli*—the crown jewel; *ratna-mālā*—of the jewel necklace; *dyuti*—brilliant; *nīrājita*—being worshipped (in a ceremony); *pāda-paṅkaja*—of Your lotus feet; *anta*—the tip of the toes; *ayi*—oh *harināma*; *mukta-kulaiḥ*—of all liberated personalities; *upa-āsyamānaṁ*—being praised and worshipped; *paritaḥ*—completely, all around; *tvāṁ*—by You; *harināma*—oh *harināma*; *saṁśrayāmi*—I take shelter.

Oh *śrī harināma*! The entire galaxy of *Upaniṣads*, which are like a necklace of most precious gems, are serving the toenails of Your lotus feet with their brilliance. In such a way, the Vedic scriptures are constantly glorifying Your lotus feet. Great *yogīs*, sages and liberated transcendentalists are engaging in worshipping You. Therefore I fully surrender unto You and humbly pray for Your shelter.

Not only do the sages worship *śrī harināma*, but they also constantly chant Kṛṣṇa’s name, because he appeared to please everyone in the material world. Thus, besides relieving one from sinful reactions, chanting the holy name also gives supreme pleasure:



(14) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 2

*jaya nāma-dheya muni-vṛnda-geya he
jana-rañjanāya paramākṣarākṛte
tvam anādarād api manāg udīritam
nikhilogra-tāpa-paṭalim vilumpasi*

jaya—all glory unto You; *nāma-dheya*—oh holy name; *muni-vṛnda*—by all sages; *geya*—You are chanted; *he*—oh!; *jana*—the living entities who are born in the material world; *rañjanāya*—in order to please; *parama*—of the supreme form; *a-kṣara*—of syllables (“that what can not be separated”); *ākṛte*—You have accepted the form; *tvam*—You; *an-ādarāt*—without respect and attention; *api*—although; *manāk*—only; *udīritam*—You are pronounced; *nikhila*—of all; *ugra*—of the severe; *tāpa*—of the sufferings; *paṭalim*—the entirety; *vilumpasi*—You destroy.

Oh śrī harināma, who is chanted by all sages! For the pleasure of the living entities, You have assumed the form of the supreme transcendental syllables. If a person chants Your name even once, and derisively, too, even then You completely destroy the monstrous mountain of his sinful reactions. Therefore, oh holy name, all glories unto You!

It might be argued that hardly anyone is able to chant purely enough so that the holy name manifests in full splendor. But Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī does not agree. Even a glimmer of the holy name can free a person from material existence:

(15) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 3

*yad-ābhāso 'py udyan kavalita-bhava-dhvānta-vibhavo
dṛśām tattvāndhānām api diśati bhakti-praṇayiṇim
janas tasyodāttam jagati bhagavān-nāma-taraṇe
kṛtī te nirvaktum ka iha mahimānam prabhavati*

yat—of You; *ābhāsaḥ*—a glimmer; *api*—just; *ud-yan*—rising; *kavalita*—devouring; *bhāva*—of the material world; *dhvānta*—of the darkness; *vibhavaḥ*—the influence; *dṛśām*—the eye, vision; *tattva*—of the truth; *andhānām*—of those who are blind; *api*—also;



diśati—he reveals; *bhakti*—devotional service; *praṇayanīm*—(the vision) which leads to, enables; *janaḥ*—someone; *tasya*—his; *ud-āttam*—the exalted (glory); *jagati*—in this world; *bhagavat-nāma*—of the holy name of the Lord; *tarane*—O sun; *krtī*—a learned or pious person; *te*—Your; *nir-vaktum*—to describe; *kaḥ*—who?; *iha*—in this world; *mahimānam*—the glories; *prabhavati*—is able.

Oh illuminating sun of Kṛṣṇa’s name! If any person by his chanting can even obtain a mere shadow of Your splendour, then You dissipate the gloom of nescience that drags him into the darkness of the material world. You reward even the blind fools who are bereft of any spiritual knowledge with the vision that enables them to take up devotional service. Therefore, Oh śrī harināma, who in this world is able to properly describe Your glories?

Bhakti-pranayīm means that such a fortunate soul is able to recognize devotional service as the supreme goal of life. This is the actual indescribable glory of chanting on the *nāmābhāsa* stage.

Another doubt might arise: that other spiritual processes can extinguish the fire of *ugra-tāpa* (as described in the second *śloka*) as well. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī clearly rejects such an opinion. No other process, not even the realization of one’s eternal spiritual nature through impersonal *brahman* meditation, has that tremendous power to *completely* eradicate all sinful reactions. This is only possible by the holy name; and to substantiate his statement, he quotes the Vedas:

(16) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 4

*yad-brahma-sākṣāt-kṛti-niṣṭhayāpi
vināśam āyāti vinā na bhogaiḥ
apaiti nāma sphuraṇena tat te
prāabdha-karmeti virauti vedaḥ*

yat—which (the destruction); *brahma*—of the *brahman* effulgence; *sākṣāt-kṛti*—by realization, direct perception; *nisthayā*—by steady; *api*—although, also; *vināśam*—destruction (of the reactions); *āyāti*—takes place; *vinā*—without; *na*—not; *bhogaiḥ*—perceiving



happiness and distress (on the reactions); *apaiti*—flies; *nāma*—of the holy name; *sphuraṇena*—by being manifested; *tat*—these (reactions); *te*—of Your (name); *prārabdha-karma*—the reactions on past fruitive activities which are already manifested; *iti*—thus; *virauti*—speak; *vedaḥ*—the Vedas.

The Vedas say: “A person may obtain the direct perception of the *brahman* effulgence by steadfast, sincere and long-lasting continuous meditation. However, he will not be able to completely eradicate the results of his *prārabdha-karma* (reactions on his fruitive activities, which have already begun to fructify). They have to be experienced by material enjoyment or suffering. Yet, as soon as a small particle of Your merciful glare starts to reveal its effect, the entire constellation of *prārabdha-karma* is annihilated.

The words *virauti vedaḥ* are significant. *Rauti* means “to call out, to roar”, and *vi* means “very much”. This means that the Vedas very emphatically call out their verdict. And *vedaḥ*, which is in the singular number, expresses that all the Vedas together join in this statement—it is not the mere opinion of some of them.

However, as Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains, the burning of sinful reactions and the liberation of material existence are only by-products of *harināma*—the actual result is the attainment of deep love of God. Therefore, in order to inaugurate *rati*, affection for the holy name, Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes some of the numberless sweet names of Kṛṣṇa:

(17) *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka* 5

agha-damana-yaśodā-nandanau nanda-sūno
kamala-nayana-gopī-candra-vṛndāvanendrāḥ
praṇata-karuṇa-kṛṣṇāv ity aneka-svarūpe
tvayi mama ratir uccair vardhatām nāma-dheya

agha-damana—the subduer of the Agha demon; *yaśodā-nandanau*—and the son of Yaśoda; *nanda-sūnaḥ*—the son of Nanda; *kamala-nayana*—the lotus-eyed; *gopī-candra*—the moon of the *gopīs*; *vṛndāvana-indrāḥ*—and the Lord of Vṛndāvana;



praṇata—to the surrendered souls; *karuṇa*—the merciful; *kṛṣṇau*—and Kṛṣṇa; *iti*—thus; *aneka*—many (not-one); *svarūpe*—You have forms; *tvayi*—unto You; *mama*—my; *ratih*—attachment, affection; *uccaiḥ*—strong; *vardhatām*—may it increase; *nāma-dheya*—oh holy name.

Oh śrī harināma! You manifest in many forms, like Aghadamana (the subduer of the Agha demon), Yaśodānandana (the son of Yaśodā), Nandasūna (the son of Nanda Mahārāja), Kamalanayana (the lotus-eyed), Gopīcandra (the moon of the gopīs), Vṛndāvanendra (the Lord of Vṛndāvana), Praṇatakaruṇa (the compassionate master of the surrendered souls), and Kṛṣṇa. Oh holy name, let my attachment for You increase more and more.

Now Rūpa Gosvāmī speaks of the two *svarūpas*, or forms in which Kṛṣṇa appears in the material world, namely His personal form—as the Deity—and His holy name. Generally, the personal form is considered more important than someone’s name, but in Kṛṣṇa’s case His name is more important. The reason is given in the next *śloka*:

(18) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 6

*vācyaṁ vācakam ity udeti bhavato nāma svarūpa-dvayaṁ
pūrvasmāt param eva hanta karuṇaṁ tatrāpi jānīmahe
yas tasmin vihītāparādha-nivahaḥ prāṇī samantād bhaved
āsyenedam upāśya so ‘pi hi cadānandāmbudhau majjat*

vācyaṁ—the form (the subject which is addressed); *vācakam*—the sound vibration (which is expressed through words); *iti*—thus; *udeti*—He appears, manifests Himself; *bhāvatah*—Your; *nāma*—name; *svarūpa*—as form; *dvayaṁ*—as dual; *pūrvasmāt*—than the previously mentioned; *param*—higher; *eva*—certainly; *hanta*—alas!; *karuṇam*—compassion; *tatra*—in it (the sound vibration); *api*—also; *jānīmahe*—we know; *yah*—who; *tasmin*—against it (the form); *vihita*—having committed; *aparādha*—of offenses; *nivahaḥ*—a multitude; *prāṇī*—a living entity; *samantād*—completely; *bhaved*—becomes; *āsyena*—with the mouth;



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idam—this (the sound vibration); *upāśya*—worshipping; *saḥ*—he; *api*—even; *hi*—certainly; *ānanda*—of transcendental happiness; *ambudhau*—in the ocean; *majjat*—he will dive.

Oh holy name! You appear in two forms: *vācyaṁ*, the Deity form of the Supreme Lord, and *vācakam*, Your transcendental name. Of these two, we consider the form of the holy syllables to be infinitely more compassionate than the form of the Deity. Because if a person having taken shelter of the Deity form commits *aparādha*, the only recourse he has is to become the servant of the holy name and chant incessantly Kṛṣṇa, Govinda and so on. By your immeasurable transcendental potency, all his offenses disappear and he experiences uninterrupted joy—submerged in an ocean of ecstasy.

In other words, because the chanting of the holy name has the power to nullify offenses against the Deity, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī considers chanting to be the most effective means of *sādhana*.

The next verse reveals the realizations of a devotee who has attained the platform of *śuddha-nāma* and sees the form of Śyāmasundara before his eyes:

(19) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 7

sūditāśrita-janārti-rāśaye
ramya cid-ghana-sukha-svarūpiṇe
nāma gokula-mahatsavāya te
kṛṣṇa pūrṇa-vapuṣe namo namaḥ

sūdita—You, who destroys; *āśrita*—who take shelter at You; *jana*—of Your devotees; *ārti*—of all sufferings; *rāśaye*—the completeness; *ramya*—Oh beautiful one; *cid-ghana*—of pure intelligence; *sukha*—of transcendental pleasure; *sva-rūpiṇe*—Your form; *nāma*—Your name; *gokula-mahā-utsavāya*—who prepares a great festival for the inhabitants of Gokula; *te*—unto You; *kṛṣṇa*—oh Kṛṣṇa; *pūrṇa-vapuṣe*—whose body is complete, transcendental; *namaḥ namaḥ*—obeisances.



Oh holy name! You destroy the entirety of the sufferings of Your surrendered devotees. You are eternally manifest in the transcendental form of intensified bliss. To the residents of Gokula, You are the source of an unending festival of joy and divine pleasure, and You are always saturated in Your magnificent glory and sweetness. I offer my repeated obeisances unto Your lotus feet.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī concludes by praying for the supreme benediction which is obtainable from *śrī harināma prabhu*: that the holy name may appear in his pure form by dancing on the tongue of the chanter:

(20) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka 8

nārada-viṇojjivana
sudhormi-niryāsa-mādhurī-pūra
tvam kṛṣṇa-nāma kāmam
sphura me rasane rasena sadā

nārada—of Nārada Muni; *viṇā*—of the *viṇā*; *ut-jivana*—You are the life-giving elixir; *sudhā*—of the nectar; *urmi*—of the waves in the ocean; *nir-yāsa*—the essence; *mādhuri*—the sweetness; *pūra*—filling, increasing; *tvam*—You; *kṛṣṇa-nāma*—oh holy name of Kṛṣṇa; *kāmam*—according to Your desire; *sphura*—please appear; me—my; *rasane*—on the tongue; *rasena*—with affection for the Lord; *sadā*—eternal.

Oh Kṛṣṇa’s name! You are the life force of Śrī Nārada’s *viṇā* and You are constantly increasing the sweetness of the delightful waves in the ocean of nectar. Out of Your causeless mercy kindly appear on my tongue incessantly and bestow me with unalloyed affection to the Lord.

Nārada Muni is a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa who constantly travels throughout the universe and sings the glories of Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by his string instrument called *viṇā*. Thus the words *nārada-vinojjivana* express that the chanting of the holy name is the sum and substance of glorifying the Lord. It gives life to all other processes of *bhakti-yoga*.



Bhakti Starts with Chanting

This principle is confirmed in the Vedic scriptures and applied by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Although Lord Caitanya's teachings provide the topmost platform of the confidential science of *bhakti-rasa* they were yet reserved to His personal associates who are eternally liberated souls. To the devotees in general and to the common people He gave only *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy name, and through this process, he inundated them with love of Godhead. This becomes evident from His teachings to Sanātana Gosvāmī:

(21) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.71

*tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana*

Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead.

On another occasion, Caitanya Mahāprabhu was approached by His dear devotee Satyarāja Khān who asked, "My dear Lord, being a householder and a materialistic man, I do not know the process of advancing in spiritual life. I therefore submit myself unto Your lotus feet and request You to give me orders." The Lord answered:

(22) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.104

*prabhu kahena, — 'kṛṣṇa-sevā', 'vaiṣṇava-sevana'
'nirantara kara kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana'*

Without cessation continue chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Whenever possible, serve Him and His devotees, the Vaiṣṇavas.

Satyarāja then asked how he could recognize a Vaiṣṇava, and Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied that whoever chants the holy name of Kṛṣṇa just once is a Vaiṣṇava. He said that such a person is worshipable as the topmost human being, because:



(23) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.107

*eka kṛṣṇa-nāme kare sarva-pāpa kṣaya
nava-vidhā bhakti pūrṇa nāma haite haya*

Simply by chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa once, a person is relieved from all the reactions of a sinful life. One can complete the nine processes of devotional service simply by chanting the holy name.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī therefore underlines that the other seven processes, such as *arcana*, *vandana*, *dāsyā* and *sakhya*, should be executed, but they must be preceded and followed by *kīrtana*, the chanting of the holy name.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself has very often stressed that of all the instructions of the spiritual master, the advice to chant at least sixteen rounds daily without offenses is the most important one, and to substantiate his point, he used to quote the following verse:

(24) Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.234

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

ataḥ—therefore; *śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma-ādi*—Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name, form, qualities, pastimes and so on; *na*—not; *bhaved*—can be; *grāhyam*—perceived; *indriyaiḥ*—by the gross material senses; *seva-unmukhe*—to one engaged in His service; *hi*—certainly; *jihvā-ādau*—(that service) beginning with the tongue; *svayam*—personally; *eva*—indeed; *sphurati*—become manifest; *adaḥ*—those (*nāma-ādi*).

No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, quality and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa through his materially contaminated senses. Only when one becomes spiritually saturated by transcendental service to the Lord, which starts with the tongue, are the transcendental name, form, quality and pastimes of the Lord revealed to him.



Nectar an Ocean of the Holy Name

Jihvā ādau means that the service to Kṛṣṇa starts with the tongue (*jihvā*), i.e. with chanting the holy name and with accepting Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*.

Yamarāja, the Lord of death, made a similar point while instructing his servants, the Yamadūtas, who were bewildered about the essence of religion:

(25) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.22

*etāvān eva loke 'smin puṁsāṁ dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ
bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ*

Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society.



The Holy Name Liberates from All Sins

The previous verse is recounted in connection with the liberation of Ajāmila. Being a pious *brāhmaṇa* in his boyhood, Ajāmila later fell down from the path of religion and became a criminal who committed the most abominable and infamous deeds. However, on his deathbed he remembered his youngest son Nārāyaṇa and affectionately called out his name. This was counted as chanting *nāmābhāsa*. Consequently, when the Yamadūtas appeared to drag him to hell, he was rescued by the Viṣṇudūtas, the servants of Śrī Viṣṇu, who brought him to Vaikuṅṭha. As a reason, they explained to the astonished Yamadūtas:

(26) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.7

*ayaṁ hi kṛta-nirveśo
janma-koṭy-aṁhasām api
yad vyājahāra vivaśo
nāma svasty-ayanam hareḥ*

Ajāmila has already atoned for all his sinful actions. Indeed, he has atoned not only for sins performed in one life but for those performed in millions of lives, for in a helpless condition he chanted the holy name of Nārāyaṇa. Even though he did not chant purely, he chanted without offense, and therefore he is now pure and eligible for liberation.

The word *vivaśaḥ* is significant: Ajāmila chanted in a helpless condition, and therefore his chanting was offenseless. This important advice has been already addressed in the chapter about the inner attitude on chanting and is also stressed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

Without receiving the mercy of the holy name, one will be unable to remove his *anarthas* despite repeated attempts. However, if one cries sincerely at the lotus feet of the name, then within a few days all *anarthas* will vanish.

(Śrī Bhajana-rahasya, Dvitiya-yāma-sādhana)



In his commentary to the above verse, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura quotes the following *śloka*:

(27) *Garuḍa Purāṇa*

*avaśenāpi yan-nāmni
kīrtite sarva-pātakaiḥ
pumān vimucyate sadyaḥ
simha-trastair mṛgair iva*

avaśena—in a helpless condition; *api*—even; *yan-nāmni*—His (the Lord’s) name; *kīrtite*—if it is chanted; *sarva*—of all; *pātakaiḥ*—of the sinful reactions; *pumān*—a man; *vimucyate*—he is completely freed; *sadyaḥ*—at the very moment; *simha*—of a lion; *trastaiḥ*—who are fearful; *mṛgaiḥ*—forest animals; *iva*—(the sins are) like.

If one chants the holy name of the Lord, even in a helpless condition or without desiring to do so, all the reactions of his sinful life depart, just as when a lion roars, all the small animals flee in fear.

Here the word *avaśena* is used, “in a helpless condition”.

A similar statement is given in the beginning of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, when the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya addressed Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī as follows:

(28) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.14

*āpannaḥ saṁsṛtiṁ ghorāṁ
yan-nāma vivaśo gr̥ṇan
tataḥ sadyo vimucyeta
yad bibheti svayaṁ bhayam*

Living beings who are entangled in the complicated meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, which is feared by fear personified.

Note again the word *vivaśaḥ*

Another significant term in *ŚB* 6.2.7 quoted above is *janma-koṭi-amhasām*, “the sins of millions of births are extinguished”.



Koṭi is the highest number counted in the Vedic system, which is ten million. One might ask, how many sinful reactions one single holy name is really able to eradicate? In answering, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura quotes another verse:

(29) *Bṛhad-Viṣṇu Purāṇa*

*nāmno hi yāvatī śaktiḥ
pāpa-nirharaṇe hareḥ
tāvat kartum na śaknoti
pātakam pātakī naraḥ*

nāmnaḥ—by one single holy name; *hi*—indeed; *yāvatī*—as soon as (it is chanted); *śaktiḥ*—the potency; *pāpa*—of the sins; *nirharaṇe*—the extinguishing; *hareḥ*—(the name) of Śrī Hari; *tāvat*—then (it so happens); *kartum*—to commit; *na*—never; *śaknoti*—he is able; *pātakam*—sins (which cause one’s falldown); *pātakī*—a sinful; *naraḥ*—a man.

Simply by chanting one holy name of Hari, a sinful man can counteract the reactions to more sins than he is able to commit.

In other words, there is no way of calculating the potency of the holy name against the weight of one’s sinful reactions, because the latter are material, whereas the holy name is spiritual. Consequently, even one name of Kṛṣṇa outweighs an unlimited stock of *karma*! Nothing in this material world can be as auspicious as the holy name. Śrīla Prabhupāda, departing from the relative perspective and looking from the absolute perspective, explains in this connection:

The conception that there are things auspicious and inauspicious in the material world is more or less a mental concoction because there is nothing auspicious in the material world. Everything is inauspicious because the very material nature is inauspicious. We simply imagine it to be auspicious. Real auspiciousness depends on activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in full devotion and service. (*Bg.* 10.3, p.)



The Viṣṇudūtas continue to speak on *nāmābhāsa* by explaining the four kinds of unconscious chanting which are described on page 118:

(30) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.14

*sāṅketyaṁ pārihāsyam vā stobhaṁ helanam eva vā
vaikuṅṭha-nāma-grahaṇam aśeṣāgha-haram viduḥ*

One who chants the holy name of the Lord is immediately freed from the reactions of unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly to indicate something else (*sāṅketya*), jokingly (*pārihāsyā*), for musical entertainment (*stobha*), or even neglectfully (*helana*). This is accepted by all the learned scholars of the scriptures.

In the above mentioned discussion with Satyarāja Khān, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declares that chanting is even powerful enough to give liberation to a person who is not initiated:

(31) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

*dikṣā-puraścaryā-vidhi apekṣā nā kare
jihvā-sparsē ā-caṇḍāla sabāre uddhāre*

One does not have to undergo initiation or execute the activities required before initiation. One simply has to vibrate the holy name with his lips. Thus even a *caṇḍāla*, a man in the lowest class can be delivered.

This is a noteworthy statement, because the scriptures say that without being properly initiated, one's devotional activities are useless and do not save one from falling again into the lower species of material life. In the purport to the above verse, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda proves that the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is so powerful that it does not depend on official initiation. It simply requires to be accompanied by the performance of *pañcarātra-vidhi*, the worship of the Deity.

When Śukadeva Gosvāmī told the story of Ajāmila to Parīkṣit Mahārāja, he consequently concluded by saying:



(32) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.31

*tasmāt saṅkīrtanaṁ viṣṇor jagan-maṅgalam aṁhasām
mahatām api kauravya viddhy aikāntika-niṣkṛtam*

My dear King, the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is able to uproot even the reactions of the greatest sins. Therefore the chanting of the *saṅkīrtana* movement is the most auspicious activity in the entire universe. Please try to understand this so that others will take it seriously.

Aikāntika-niṣkṛtam means that *saṅkīrtana* is the ultimate means of atonement for all sins, even if they are *mahatām api*, very great. This is so because transcendence enters the material realm through the sound element (*śabda*).

In this regard, the *Vedānta-sūtra*, which provides the Absolute truth in concise aphorisms, points out:

(33) *Vedānta-sūtra* 4.4.22

om anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt

anāvṛttiḥ—non-return (to a material body); *śabdāt*—by transcendental sound vibration.

By sound vibration, one becomes liberated.

This very scientific subject is explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

It is stated also in the *Vedānta-sūtra* that sound is the origin of all objects of material possession and that by sound one can also dissolve this material existence. *Anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt* means “liberation by sound.” The entire material manifestation began from sound, and sound can also end material entanglement, if it has a particular potency. The particular sound capable of doing this is the transcendental vibration Hare Kṛṣṇa. (*ŚB.* 3.26.32, p.)



The Sublime Glories of the Holy Name

The capacity of the holy name in relation to the material energy is only a side-effect of its supreme spiritual nature. Its actual glory is the potency to bring the soul in contact with Kṛṣṇa Himself, because the holy name is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa:

(34) Padma Purāṇa

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṇa's name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with *māyā*. Kṛṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.

In his *Durgama-saṅgamaṇī* commentary to this verse, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī elaborates on the fact that Kṛṣṇa appears in two nondifferent forms:

The Supreme Absolute Truth is one reality whose form is eternal, fully cognizant, and ecstatic. That Absolute reality who is the origin of all *rasa* (transcendental mellows) appears in two forms, as Kṛṣṇa Himself and as the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. These two forms are nondifferent manifestations of the same eternal reality—Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a nice example of how to understand the absolute nature of Kṛṣṇa's name:

There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa's body and His soul. Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously both soul and body. The distinction between body and soul applies to conditioned souls. The body of the conditioned soul is different from the soul, and



the conditioned soul's name is different from his body. One may be named Mr. John, but if we call for Mr. John, Mr. John may never actually appear. However, if we utter the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is immediately present on our tongue. In the *Padma Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa says, *mad-bhaktā yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada*: "O Nārada, I am present wherever My devotees are chanting." When the devotees chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare—Lord Kṛṣṇa is immediately present. (*Cc. Madhya* 17.132, p.)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu quoted the above verse from the *Padma Purāṇa* when He was asked by a *brāhmaṇa* why the Māyāvādīs cannot chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. The Lord explained that Māyāvādīs are offenders of Kṛṣṇa and therefore don't utter His name, which is nondifferent from Himself. He explained the above verse as follows:

(35) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.134

ataeva kṛṣṇera 'nāma', 'deha', 'vilāsa'
prākṛtendriya-grāhya nahe, haya sva-prakāśa

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa, His body and His pastimes cannot be understood by the blunt material senses. They are manifested independently.

Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly stressed this point in his purports: that Kṛṣṇa, His name, and so on appear by dint of the spiritual potency of the Lord, not through the material energy. Therefore the holy name is the direct way to achieve transcendental knowledge:

(36) Garuḍa Purāṇa

yad icchasi param jñānam jñānād yad paramam padam
tadādareṇa rājendra kuru govinda-kīrtanam

yat—if; *icchasi*—you desire; *param*—the highest; *jñānam*—knowledge; *jñānāt*—by such knowledge; *yat*—if (you want to attain); *paramam*—the supreme; *padam*—abode; *tadā*—then;



ādareṇa—with firm faith; *rāja-indra*—o best of Kings; *kuru*—perform; *govinda-kīrtanam*—chanting the names of Śrī Govinda.

O best of Kings, if you want to achieve the highest knowledge by which you may attain the supreme abode, then perform Govinda kīrtanam with firm faith.

All in all, there is no spiritual process as exalted and glorious than the chanting of the holy name. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī therefore states that *harināma-saṅkīrtana* surpasses even worship and meditation:

(37) Brhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta 1.9

*jayati jayati nāmānanda-rūpaṁ murārer
viramita-nija-dharma-dhyāna-pūjādi-yatnam
katham api sakṛd āttam mukti-dam prāṇinām yat
paramam amṛtam ekam jīvanam bhūṣaṇam me*

jayati jayati—praised, praised be; *nāma*—of the holy name; *ānanda*—the blissful; *rūpaṁ*—the form; *mura-areḥ*—of Kṛṣṇa, the killer of the Mura demon; *viramita*—who has abandoned; *nija*—the own; *dharma*—religious duties; *dhyāna*—meditation; *pūjā*—worship; *ādi*—and so on; *yatnam*—(the holy name) causes; *katham api*—just; *sakṛd*—once; *āttam*—being pronounced; *mukti-dam*—(the holy name) awards liberation; *prāṇinām*—towards the living entities; *yat*—who; *paramam*—the supreme; *amṛtam*—nectar; *ekam*—the very, only; *jīvanam*—life; *bhūṣaṇam*—treasure; *me*—my.

All glories, to the all-blissful holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure.

The holy name is the highest nectar and the most valuable wealth of the transcendentalist. Even the Vedas engage wholeheartedly in chanting the name and glories of the Supreme Lord:



(38) Hari-vaṁśa

*vede rāmāyaṇe caiva purāṇe bhārate tathā
ādāv ante ca madhye ca hariḥ sarvatra gīyate*

vede—in the Vedas; *rāmāyaṇe*—in the *Rāmāyaṇa*; *ca eva*—as well; *purāṇe*—in the *Purāṇas*; *bhārate*—in the *Mahābhārata*; *tathā*—also; *ādau*— in the beginning; *ante*—in the end; *ca*—and; *madhye*—in the middle; *ca*— also; *hariḥ*—the name and glories of Śrī Hari; *sarvatra*—everywhere; *gīyate*—is chanted.

Throughout the Vedas, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Purāṇas*, and the *Mahābhārata*, from beginning to end, and everywhere in between, only the name and the glories of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, are chanted.

When Parikṣit Mahārāja, who was preparing for his impending death, met with Śukadeva Gosvāmī he asked, “What should I do at this critical hour? What should I hear, Whom should I worship, or Whom should I remember now?” In return, Śukadeva Gosvāmī related his own experience of hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He said that, although he was already situated in transcendence, still he was captured by the beauty of the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa’s names, qualities and pastimes, as soon as his father Vyāsadeva started to recite *ślokas* from the *Bhāgavatam*. Then he recounted the following verse:

(39) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.1.11

*etan nirvidyamānānām icchatām akuto-bhayam
yoginām nṛpa nirṇītaṁ harer nāmānukīrtanam*

O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge.



The Holy Name is Beyond Rules and Regulations

This is another aspect of the holy name's transcendental power. *Karma*, or material activities, are very complex and intricate, as Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Therefore, all activities of charity, penance and sacrifice are controlled in the Vedic system by strict rules and regulations regarding place and time. The holy name, however, is different. This is explained by Śukrācārya, the head priest of the demoniac *daityas*. After Bali Mahārāja had completed his sacrificial rituals. Lord Vāmana asked Śukrācārya to enumerate and correct the king's faults and discrepancies. The *ācārya*, who is one of the greatest experts of *karma-kāṇḍa* activities, answered:

(40) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.23.16

*mantratas tantrataś chidraṁ deśa-kālārha-vastutaḥ
sarvaṁ karoti niśchidraṁ anusaṅkīrtanaṁ tava*

There may be discrepancies in pronouncing the mantras and observing the regulative principles, and, moreover, there may be discrepancies in regard to time, place, person and paraphernalia. But when Your Lordship's holy name is chanted, everything becomes faultless.

The holy name, being purely spiritual, it is not influenced by the network of material karma. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī denotes in his *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, the "working manual" of all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas:

(41-42) Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 11.412-413

*na deśa niyamo rājan na kāla niyamas tathā
vidyate nātra sandeho viṣṇor-nāmānu-kīrtane
kālo'sti dāne yajñe ca snāne kālo'sti saj jape
viṣṇu-saṅkīrtane kālo nāstyatra pṛthivītale*

na—no; *deśa*—concerning the place; *niyamaḥ*—rule; *rājan*—oh king; *na*—no; *kāla*—concerning time; *niyamaḥ*—rule; *tathā*—as well; *vidyate*—there is; *na*—not; *atra*—in this regard; *sandehaḥ*—doubt; *viṣṇoḥ*—of Lord Viṣṇu; *nāma*—of the names; *anu-kīrtane*—referring the chanting; *kālaḥ*—special time and place; *asti*—there



is; *dāne*—for giving charity; *yajñe*—for performing sacrifice; *ca*—and; *snāne*—for taking bath; *kālaḥ*— special time and place; *asti*—there is; *sat-jape*—for chanting *mantras* (like *om tat sat*); *viṣṇu-saṅkirtane*—for the chanting of the holy names of Viṣṇu; *kālaḥ*— special time and place; *na*—never; *asti*—there is; *atra*— here; *pṛthivī-tale*— on earth.

Oh King, there are no rules whatsoever governing the time and place wherein the holy name of Viṣṇu can be chanted. Of this, there can be no doubt. Charity and sacrifice are governed by various rules regarding time and place, as are the taking of one’s bath and the silent uttering of different mantras. However, the holy name of Viṣṇu can be chanted at any time and place on earth.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī asserts that there are no restrictions for the holy name even regarding proper cleanliness. He quotes a conversation between Nārada Muni and his disciple Mṛgāri, a previously cruel, godless hunter who was converted by the sage into a great devotee:

(43) Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 11.408

*na deśa-niyamas tasmin na kāla-niyamas tathā
nocchiṣṭādau niṣedho ‘sti śrī-harer nāmni lubdhaka*

na—no; *deśa*—concerning the place; *niyamah*—rule; *tasmin*—for it (the holy name); *na*—no; *kāla*—concerning time; *niyamah*—rule; *tathā*—as well; *na*—not; *ucchista*—concerning impurity because one has not washed his hands and mouth after meal; *ādau*—starting with, and so on; *niṣedhaḥ*—prohibition; *asti*—there is; *śrī-hareh*— of Lord Śrī Hari; *namni*— for the name; *lubdhaka*—Oh hunter.

Oh hunter, there are no restrictions on when or where the holy name of Śrī Hari may be chanted and no prohibitions regarding the uncleanness of the mouth from which the holy name comes forth.

Nārada Muni himself recounted to Śrīla Vyāsadeva how he gave up all considerations regarding external rules and regulations once he had received the holy name:



(44) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.26

*nāmāny anantasya hata-trapaḥ paṭhan
guhyāni bhadrāṇi kṛtāni ca smaran
gām paryaṭams tuṣṭa-manā gata-sprhaḥ
kālaṁ pratikṣan vimado vimatsaraḥ*

Thus I began chanting the holy name and fame of the Lord by repeated recitation, ignoring all the formalities of the material world. Such chanting and remembering of the transcendental pastimes of the Lord are benedictory. So doing, I traveled all over the earth, fully satisfied, humble and unenvious.



Kṛṣṇa's Name is Most Powerful

Of all the names of the Lord, His original name, Kṛṣṇa, is the most powerful and the sweetest. In fact, one name of Kṛṣṇa equals three names of Rāma and three thousand names of Viṣṇu:

(45) *Bṛhad-Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra* 72.335

*rāma rāmeti rāmeti rame rāme manorame
sahasra-nāmabhis tulyaṁ rāma-nāma varānane*

I chant the holy name of Rāma, Rāma, Rāma and thus enjoy this beautiful sound. This holy name of Rāmacandra is equal to one thousand holy names of Lord Viṣṇu.

(46) *Brahmānanda Purāṇa*

*sahasra-nāmnām puṇyānām trir āvṛtṭyā tu yat phalam
ekāvṛtṭyā tu kṛṣṇasya nāmaikaṁ tat prayacchati*

The pious results derived from chanting the thousand holy names of Viṣṇu three times can be attained by only one repetition of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

A nice explanation why Kṛṣṇa's name is sweeter than all other names of the Lord is given in the

(47) *Mahābhārata, Udyoga-parva* 71.4

*kṛṣir bhū-vācakaḥ śabdo ṇaś ca nirvṛti-vācakaḥ
tayoṛ aikyaṁ paraṁ brahma kṛṣṇa ity abhidhīyate*

The word “kṛṣ” is the attractive feature of the Lord's existence, and “ṇa” means spiritual pleasure. When the verb “kṛṣ” is added to the affix “ṇa,” it becomes “Kṛṣṇa,” which indicates the Absolute Truth.

Kṛṣṇa is the all-attractive original Personality of Godhead, whose sweetness and beauty are unmatched even by His countless expansions and incarnations. His name shares the same supreme position:



(48) Skanda Purāṇa, Prabhāsa-khaṇḍa

*madhura-madhuram-etan maṅgalaṁ maṅgalānām
sakala-nigama-vallī-sat-phalaṁ cit-svarūpaṁ
sakṛd api pari-gītaṁ śraddhayā helayā vā
bhṛgu-vara nara-mātraṁ tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma*

madhura—of the sweet; *madhuram*—the sweetest; *etat*—this (name of Kṛṣṇa); *maṅgalaṁ*—the auspicious; *maṅgalānām*—of all auspiciousness; *sakala*—of all; *nigama*—Vedic scriptures; *vallī*—of the creeper; *phalam*—the fruit; *cit*—of all transcendental knowledge; *svarūpaṁ*—the embodiment; *sakṛt*—once; *api*—even; *pari-gītaṁ*—chanted; *śraddhāya*—with faith; *helayā*—with negligence; *vā*—or; *bhṛgu-vara*—O best of the Bhṛgus; *nara-mātraṁ*—all human mankind; *tārayet*—it delivers; *kṛṣṇa-nāma*—the name of Kṛṣṇa.

The holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the eternally ripened fruit on the desire tree of the Vedic scriptures, sweeter than the sweetest, most auspicious amongst all auspiciousness, the sum and substance of all spiritual knowledge. Oh best of the Bhṛgus, Kṛṣṇa’s name awards liberation to all human mankind if chanted even once without offense—be it with faith or with negligence.



The Holy Name is the *yuga-dharma*

In the Twelfth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī describes how in Kali-yuga the religious principles gradually decrease and irreligion becomes predominant, providing abominable conditions for all living beings. Still, there is one outstanding feature which makes Kali-yuga praiseworthy:

(49) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.51

*kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ
kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅgaḥ paraṁ vrajet*

My dear King, although Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom.

Because the chanting of the holy name is the *yuga-dharma*, the appropriate religious process for this age, it is as effective as the *dharmas* of the preceding *yugas*:

(50) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.52

*kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇuṁ tretāyāṁ yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyāṁ kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt*

Whatever result was obtained in the other ages by their respective *yuga-dharmas*, or religious processes—namely meditating on Viṣṇu in Satya-yuga, performing sacrifices in Tretā-yuga and worshipping the Deity of the Lord in Dvāpara-yuga—can be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Thus, the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is the *yuga-dharma* of the age of Kali.

A spiritually intelligent person will therefore, as Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains, accept no other penance in this age when he has done something wrong, other than the chanting of the holy name:



(51) Skanda Purāṇa, Cāturmāsya-māhātmya

*tathā caivottamaṁ loke tapaḥ śrī-hari-kīrtanam
kalau yuge viśeṣeṇa viṣṇu-prītyai samācaret*

tathā ca—in this way; *eva*—certainly; *uttamam*—the highest, most perfect; *loke*—in this world; *tapaḥ*—penance; *śrī-hari-kīrtanam*—the chanting of the name of Lord Hari; *kalau yuge*—in the age of Kali; *viśeṣeṇa*—especially; *viṣṇu*—of Śrī Viṣṇu; *prītyai*—for the satisfaction; *samācaret*—should be performed.

In this way the most perfect penance to be executed in this world is the chanting of the name of Lord Śrī Hari. Especially in the age of Kali, one can satisfy the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu by performing *saṅkīrtana*.

When the great saint Śrī Karabhājana Muni explained the different symptoms and incarnations of the four *yugas* to King Nimi, he even stated that the Kali-yuga is the best of all ages and is indeed worshipable:

(52) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.36

*kalim sabhājayanty āryā guṇa jñāḥ sāra-bhāgiṇaḥ
yatra saṅkīrtanenaiva sarva-svārtho 'bhilabhyate*

Those who are actually advanced in knowledge are able to appreciate the essential value of this age of Kali. Such enlightened persons worship Kali-yuga because in this fallen age all perfection of life can easily be achieved by the performance of *saṅkīrtana*.

Karabhājana Muni gives a confidential reason for his statement. He says that Kṛṣṇa appears in this age in a form which is easily worshiped by *saṅkīrtana*, and thus the congregational chanting of the holy name is the perfect means for spiritual perfection in Kali-yuga.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī establishes in his *Krama-sandarbhā* commentary that this incarnation is no one else than Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as described by Karabhājana Muni in the following, famous verse:



(53) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.32

*kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*

In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions.

If we thus analyze the situation of Kali-yuga, comparing its evil effects with the great benefit of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, then we can easily come to the following conclusion:

(54) *Bṛhan-Nāradiya Purāṇa* 3.8.126

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

In this Age of Kali there is no other means, no other means, no other means for self-realization than chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name of Lord Hari.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu elaborated on this verse as follows: The use of the word *kevala*—only—excludes all other processes, such as cultivation of knowledge, practice of mystic yoga, and performance of austerities and fruitive activities. This verse, He said, clearly states that anyone who accepts any other path cannot be delivered. This is the reason for the triple repetition “nothing else, nothing else, nothing else,” which emphasizes the real process of self-realization. Then He said:

(55) *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 17.22

*kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra
nāma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistāra*

In this Age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, is the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simply by chanting the holy name, one associates with the Lord directly. Anyone who does this is certainly delivered.



At another time, when He was asked by the great Māyāvādī leader Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī why He was chanting the holy name instead of studying the Vedānta philosophy, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, taking the role of an ordinary conditioned soul, replied, “My spiritual master called Me a fool and thus considered Me unqualified to study Vedānta philosophy. Instead, he advised Me to always chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Then he said to Me:

(56) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.74

*nāma vinu kali-kāle nāhi āra dharma
sarva-mantra-sāra nāma, ei śāstra-marma*

In this Age of Kali there is no religious principle other than the chanting of the holy name, which is the essence of all Vedic hymns. This is the purport of all scriptures.

“Since I received this order from my spiritual master”, Caitanya Mahāprabhu continued, “I always chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and while doing so, I lose myself, and thus I laugh, cry, dance and sing just like a madman.”

The *Ananta-saṁhitā* describes how many great sages have accepted the *mahā-mantra* as their life and soul and have thus attained perfection:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. This *mantra* consisting of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables is the *mahā-mantra* in the age of Kali by which all living beings can be delivered. One should never abandon chanting this *mahā-mantra* and take to other so-called purificatory processes which are practiced by rascals. Nor should one engage in chanting other metrical compositions of the name of Kṛṣṇa that are against the pure conclusions of the scriptures, or are filled with *rasābhāsa*.

Lord Brahmā, the original *guru*, once said to his sons and disciples, “The *śrutis*, especially the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad*, have declared this *mantra* to be the best means of deliverance in the age of Kali”. Having heard this advice, Brahmā’s sons and disciples, headed by Śrī Nārada Muni, all accepted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and,



having meditated on it, attained perfection.

The verse mentioned by Lord Brahmā is well-known:

(57) Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare
iti ṣoḍaśakam nāmnām kali-kalmaṣa-nāśanam
nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu dṛśyate*

iti—these; *ṣoḍaśa-kam*—consisting of sixteen syllables; *nāmnām*—of the holy name; *kali*—the age of Kali; *kalmaṣa*—sins; *nāśanam*—counteracting, destroying; *na*—not; *ataḥ*—in this regard; *paratara*—a better; *upāyaḥ*—method; *sarva*—in all; *vedeṣu*—in the Vedas; *dṛśyate*—can be found.

After searching through all the Vedic literature one cannot find a method of religion more sublime for this age than the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.¹

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¹ Quoted in Cc. Adi 3.40, p. and 7.76, p.



Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad

The Prediction of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's Appearance

In his prayers to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja states:

In this way, my Lord, You appear in various incarnations. According to the age, O my Lord, You protect the principles of religion. In the age of Kali, however, You do not assert Yourself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore You are known as Triyuga, or the Lord who appears in three *yugas*.

(ŚB. 7.9.38)

Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not reveal His divine nature to the public. He is known as *channa-avatāra*, or hidden incarnation. Still His appearance is predicted in the scriptures. There is a lot of evidence that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the hidden *yuga-avatāra* for the age of Kali. A very striking one is found in the *Atharva Veda*, one of the four original Vedas. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has excerpted the following texts, known as *Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad*:

(58) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 1

*atha pippalādaḥ samit-pāṇir bhagavantam brahmāṇam upasanno
bhagavan me śubham kim atra cakṣasveti*

atha—then; *pippalādaḥ*—the sage Pippalāda; *samit*—firewood; *pāṇiḥ*—carrying in the hand; *bhagavantam*—the very powerful; *brāhmaṇam*—Lord Brahmā; *upa-sannaḥ*—having approached; *bhagavan*—oh Lord; *me*—my; *śubham*—(life of) auspiciousness; *kim*—what (do I have to do); *atra*—in this regard; *cakṣasva*—please describe; *iti*—thus speaking.

Carrying firewood in his hands, Pippalāda humbly approached his father, Lord Brahmā, and asked: “O my Lord, please tell me how I may attain an auspicious life.”

Samit-pāṇiḥ means that the *brahmacārī* disciple approaches the *guru* after having rendered a humble, personal service unto him, by collecting firewood required for sacrifice.

Because Lord Brahmā could see the humble attitude of his son, he rendered substantial advice unto him:



(59) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 2

sa hovāca,

bhūya eva tapasā brahmacaryeṇa śaśvad ramaśva mano vaśeti.

saḥ—Lord Brahmā; *ha*—then; *uvāca*—replied; *bhūyaḥ*—greatly; *eva*—indeed; *tapasā*—by austerity; *brahmācaryeṇa*—by celibacy; *śaśvad*—continually; *ramasva*—enjoy, be satisfied; *manaḥ*—your mind; *vaśa*—control; *iti*—thus speaking.

Lord Brahmā replied: “Be satisfied by remaining always celibate, and perform austerities. Carefully control the activities of the mind. In this way you will attain an auspicious life.”

(60) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 3

sa tathā bhūtvā bhūya enam upasadyāha

bhagavan kalau pāpāc channāḥ prajāḥ katham mucyerann iti

saḥ—Pippalāda; *tathā*—in that way (like Brahmā had told him); *bhūtvā*—having become; *bhūyaḥ*—again; *enam*—him (Brahmā); *upa-sadya*—approaching; *āha*—he said; *bhagavan*—oh Lord; *kalau*—in Kali-yuga; *pāpāt*—by sinful activities; *channāḥ*—who are covered; *prajāḥ*—the living entities; *katham*—how; *mucyeran*—may become liberated; *iti*—so speaking.

Pippalāda followed these instructions, and after having become pure in his own heart and mind, he again approached his father and asked: “O my Lord, please tell me how the sinful living entities in the Kali-yuga may be delivered.”

We should note that the *Atharva Veda* was composed by Śrīla Vyāsadeva at the dawn of Kali-yuga. Thus, Pippalāda certainly could foresee the miserable conditions of the living entities in this age. However, as expressed by the words *tathā bhūtvā*, he himself had become purified by strictly following the advice of his father and *guru*. Therefore he is asking not for his personal gain but for the benefit of the population of Kali-yuga. This is the symptom of a great personality.



(61) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 4

ko vā devatā ko vā mantra bhūhīti.

*kaḥ—*who; *vā—*or; *devatā—*their worshipable Deity; *mantraḥ—*their *mantra*; *brūhi—*please tell me; *iti—*thus asking.

“Who should be the object of their worship, and what mantra should they chant in order to become delivered? Kindly inform me.”

Because his son approached him as a very humble and obedient disciple, Brahmā enlightened him with the confidential truth of the worshipable Deity of Kali-yuga and the *mantra* conveyed by Him:

(62) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 5

sa hovāca. rahasyam te vadiṣyāmi.

jāhnavī-tīre navadvīpe golokākhye dhāmni govindo dvi-bhujo gauraḥ sarvātmā mahā-puruṣo mahātmā mahā-yogī tri-guṇātītaḥ sattva-rūpo bhaktim loke kāśyati.

tad ete ślokā bhavanti.

*sah—*Lord Brahmā; *ha—*then; *uvāca—*replied; *rahasyam—*a secret; *te—*to you; *vadiṣyāmi—*I will speak; *jāhnavī—*of the Ganga; *tīre—*on the shore; *navadvīpe—*at Navadvīpa; *goloka-ākhye—*which is known as Goloka Vṛndāvana; *dhāmni—*in the transcendental abode; *govindaḥ—*Lord Govinda; *dvi-bhujaḥ—*with two arms; *gauraḥ—*and with a golden complexion; *sarva-ātmā—*the soul of all that exists, the all-pervading; *mahā-puruṣaḥ—*Lord Mahāprabhu, the supreme enjoyer; *mahā-ātmā—*the Supersoul; *mahā-yogī—*in the form of a great devotee; *tri-guṇa-atītaḥ—*beyond the influence of the three modes of material nature; *sattva-rūpaḥ—*whose form is spiritual; *bhaktim—*pure devotional service; *loke—*in this world; *kāśyati—*He will manifest; *iti—*so speaking; *tat—*in this regard; *ete—*these; *ślokaḥ—*verses; *bhavanti—*there are.

Lord Brahma replied: “Listen carefully, for I shall give you a very confidential description of what will happen in the Kali-yuga. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda, the supreme enjoyer, whose form is transcendental, who is beyond



the touch of the three modes of material nature, and who is the all-pervading Supersoul residing in the hearts of all living entities, will descend again in the age of Kali. Assuming a two-armed form of golden complexion, He will appear as a great devotee in His abode of Goloka Vṛndāvana, which will be manifested on the bank of the Ganges at Navadvīpa. He will disseminate pure devotional service throughout the world. The following verses are describing Him.”

Brahmā very precisely describes Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s appearance. He discloses His birthplace (Navadvīpa at the Gaṅgā), His form (a golden, two-armed form). His disguise (as a devotee) and His activities (spreading *bhakti*). Furthermore, he reveals that Navadvīpa is nondifferent from the transcendental abode of Vṛndāvana, and that Lord Caitanya is no one else than Kṛṣṇa in person, not an expansion or manifestation of His plenary portions.

In order to confirm the last point, Brahmā quotes the following verses:

(63) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 6

*eko devaḥ sarva-rūpī mahātmā
gaurō rakta-śyāmala-śveta-rūpaḥ
caitanya-ātmā sa vai caitanya-śaktir
bhaktākāro bhakti-do bhakti-vedyaḥ*

ekaḥ—one; *devaḥ*—Supreme Personality of Godhead; *sarva-rūpī*—who appears in innumerable transcendental forms; *maha-atmā*—the Supreme Lord; *gaurāḥ*—with a golden complexion; *rakta*—red; *śyāmala*—black; *śvetaḥ*—white; *rūpaḥ*—with forms; *caitanya-ātmā*—Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *saḥ*—He; *vai*—certainly; *caitanya-śaktiḥ*—the master of all transcendental potencies; *bhakta*—of a devotee; *ākāraḥ*—in the form; *bhakti-daḥ*—granting devotional service; *bhakti*—by devotional service; *vedyaḥ*—knowable.

The one Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the master of all spiritual potencies, and who can be known only by devotional service, appears in innumerable transcendental forms. He has



appeared with red, black, and white complexions, and He shall also appear in the golden form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He shall assume the role of a perfect devotee, and He shall teach the conditioned souls the path of pure devotional service.

Now the name of the *yuga-avatāra* of the present age is revealed: Lord Caitanya.

(64) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 7

*namo vedānta-vedyāya kṛṣṇāya paramātmāne
sarva-caitanya-rūpāya caitanyāya namo namaḥ*

namaḥ—I offer my respectful obeisances; *vedānta*—by the Vedānta philosophy; *vedyāya*—who is known; *kṛṣṇāya*—unto Lord Kṛṣṇa; *paramātmāne*—who appears as the Supersoul; *sarva-caitya-rūpāya*—who is full of all transcendental potencies; *caitanyāya*—unto Lord Caitanya; *namaḥ namaḥ*—repeated obeisances.

I repeatedly offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the all-pervading Personality of Godhead, who is understood by the study of Vedānta philosophy. He is the master of all transcendental potencies, and He appears as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Vedānta means *Vedānta-sūtra*, and the original commentary of the *Vedānta-sūtra* is the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Thus, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* can be understood perfectly through studying the *Bhāgavatam*.

(65) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 8

*vedānta-vedyaṁ puruṣaṁ purāṇaṁ
caitanyātmānaṁ viśva-yoniṁ mahantam
tam eva viditvāti-mṛtyum eti
nānyaḥ panthā vidyate 'yanāya*

vedānta—by the *Vedānta* philosophy; *vedyāya*—who is known; *puruṣam*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *purāṇaṁ*—the oldest; *caitanya-ātmānam*—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *viśva*—of the material world; *yonim*—the primeval cause; *mahantam*—the great; *tam*—Him; *eva*—certainly; *viditvā*—having understood;



ati—beyond; *mṛtyum*—death; *eti*—one goes; *na*—not; *anyaḥ*—another; *panthāḥ*—path; *vidyate*—exists; *ayanāya*—for liberation.

One who understands that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known by the study of Vedānta philosophy, who is the original cause of the universe, and who is the oldest, the original person, crosses beyond this world of birth and death. There is no other way to achieve liberation.

The repetitions in these verses indicate that Lord Brahmā has quoted them from different scriptures in order to substantiate his statements. Hence, we can conclude that there are many more passages in the Vedas that predict Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s appearance.

Now, Lord Brahmā starts to answer Pippalāda’s second question: Which *mantra* is the proper shelter for the inhabitants of Kali-yuga?

(66) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 9

sva-nāma-mūla-mantreṇa sarvaṁ hlādayati vibhuḥ

sva—of His own; *nāma*—holy names; *mūla-mantreṇa*—by the primary *mantra*; *sarvaṁ*—the entire world; *hlādayati*—He will fill with transcendental bliss; *vibhuḥ*—the Supreme Lord.

This all-powerful Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, will fill the entire universe with transcendental bliss by the chanting of His own holy names.

Mūla-mantra is the root or primary *mantra*, composed of the primary names of Kṛṣṇa. This *mantra* is the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

Lord Brahmā points out that Lord Caitanya gives much more than just liberation: He is *vibhu*, the master of all spiritual energies. Consequently, by His *svarūpa-śakti* the Lord is able to impart transcendental bliss and knowledge upon the whole universe:



(67) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 10

dve śaktī parame tasya hlādinī samvid eva ca iti

dve—two; *śakti*—potencies; *parame*—transcendental; *tasya*—of Him; *hlādinī*—the potency of transcendental bliss; *samvit*—the potency of transcendental knowledge; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—and; *iti*—thus called.

In this way the Supreme Lord manifests two of His transcendental potencies: His *hlādinī śakti* (the potency of transcendental bliss) and *samvit śakti* (the potency of transcendental knowledge).

Of the unlimited potencies of the Lord which are present in His name, the two mentioned above are especially manifested in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. They provide the chanter with transcendental happiness and confidential devotional realizations.

Now, Lord Brahmā very scientifically reveals the actual identity of that specific *mantra*:

(68) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 11

sa eva mūla-mantram japati harir iti kṛṣṇa iti rāma iti

saḥ—the Lord; *eva*—indeed; *mūla-mantram*—the *mahā-mantra*; *japati*—He will chant; *hariḥ*—Hari; *iti*—thus; *kṛṣṇaḥ*—Kṛṣṇa; *iti*—thus; *rāmaḥ*—Rāma; *iti*—thus.

The Supreme Lord will chant a mantra consisting of the names of Hari, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma.

The word *japayati* indicates chanting *japa* on beads.

(69) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 12

harati hṛdaya-granthim vāsanā-rūpam iti hariḥ

kṛṣiḥ smarāṇe tac ca ṇas tad-ubhaya-melanam iti kṛṣṇaḥ

ramayati sarvam iti rāma ānanda-rūpaḥ

atra śloko bhavati

harati—removes; *hṛdaya*—within the heart; *granthim*—the knot; *vāsanā-rūpam*—which is based on material desires; *iti*—thus (is the meaning of); *hariḥ*—the name Hari; *kṛṣiḥ*—attraction; *smarāṇe*—



within the mind; *tat*—that; *ca*—also; *nah*—transcendental pleasure; *tat*—of those; *ubhaya*—both syllables; *melanam*—the meeting, combination; *iti*—thus (is the meaning of); *kṛṣṇah*—the name Kṛṣṇa; *ramāyāti*—delights; *sarvam*—everyone; *iti*—thus (is the meaning of); *rāmah*—the name Rāma; *ānanda*—of transcendental bliss; *rūpah*—the form; *atra*—in this way; *ślokaḥ*—the verse (of the *mahā-mantra*); *bhāvati*—is composed.

These three names may be explained as follows: “Hari” is He who unties the knot (*harati*) of material desire in the hearts of the living entities. “Kṛṣṇa” is composed of two syllables “*kṛṣ*” and “*ṇa*.” “*Kṛṣ*” represents the Lord who attracts the minds of all living entities,” and “*ṇa*” applies to the supreme transcendental pleasure. “Rāma” is He who delights (*ramāyāti*) all living entities; it also addresses the Lord who is full of transcendental bliss. The *mahā-mantra* consists of a repetition of these names of the Supreme Lord.

After having established the form and confidential meaning of the *mahā-mantra*, Lord Brahmā praises its unique position among all *mantras*:

(70) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 13

mantra guhyaḥ paramo bhakti-vedyaḥ

mantra—this *mantra*; *guhyaḥ*—is confidential; *paramaḥ*—the best; *bhakti*—by devotional service; *vedyaḥ*—it can be known.

This *mantra* is the best of all *mantras*, and although it is very confidential, it can still be understood by the practice of devotional service unto the Supreme Lord.

Bhakti-vedyaḥ: As Kṛṣṇa can be understood only by devotional service, the *mahā-mantra*, which is nondifferent from Him, is not accessible by any other method.

Only by dint of *bhakti*, the *mahā-mantra* will disclose its sublime qualities (as indicated by the words *saṁvid eva* in verse 10). Thus it is *guhyam*, hidden. This is vividly confirmed in the next verse:



(71) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 14

*nāmāny aṣṭāv aṣṭa ca śobhanāni, tāni nityam ye japanti dhīrās
te vai māyām atitaranti nānyaḥ paramam mantram parama-
rahasyam nityam āvartayati*

nāmāni—these names; *aṣṭau aṣṭa*—sixteen (eight and eight); *ca*—and; *śobhanāni*—splendid; *tāni*—these; *nityam*—continually; *ye*—those who; *japanti*—chant (as *japa*); *dhīrāḥ*—those sincerely endeavoring to make progress in spiritual life; *te*—they; *vai*—certainly; *māyām*—the influence of the material energy; *atitaranti*—they cross beyond; *na*—not; *anyaḥ*—another; *paramam mantram*—a better *mantra*; *parama*—to higher; *rahasyam*—confidential knowledge; *nityam*—ever; *āvartayati*—(the *mantra*) will lead to.

Those who seriously desire to make progress in spiritual life continually chant these sixteen splendid names of Kṛṣṇa, and in this way they cross beyond the bondage of continued material existence. No other *mantra* can compare to it, and never will any *mantra* be able to bestow the same degree of confidential knowledge as is revealed by the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

Now, as the number of names are disclosed, the identity of the *mūla-mantra* is unmistakably defined: consisting of sixteen names altogether, it is composed of the names of Hari, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Only the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* fits to this description. Again note the word *japanti*, “chanted as *japa*”.

Finally, Lord Brahmā explains *caitanya-tattva*, the transcendental truth of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and confirms it by quoting from the scriptures:

(72) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 15

*caitanya eva saṅkarṣaṇo vāsudevaḥ parameṣṭhī rudraḥ śakro
bṛhaspatiḥ sarve devāḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni sthāvarāṇi carāṇi ca yat
kiñcit sad-asat-kāraṇam sarvam tad atra ślokāḥ.*

caitanyaḥ—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *eva*—certainly; *saṅkarṣaṇaḥ*—Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa; *vāsudevaḥ*—Lord Vāsudeva; *parameṣṭhī*—Brahmā; *rudraḥ*—Śiva; *śakraḥ*—Indra; *bṛhaspatiḥ*—Bṛhaspati;



sarve—all; *devāḥ*—demigods; *sarvāṇi*—all; *bhūtāni*—living entities; *sthāvarāṇi*—unmoving; *carāṇi*—moving; *ca*—and; *yat kiñcit*—what so ever; *sat*—of all that is eternal; *asat*—and of all that is temporary; *kāraṇam*—the original cause; *sarvam*—everything; *tat atra*—in this regard; *ślokāḥ*—there are the following verses.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead who appears as Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa and Lord Vāsudeva. He is the original father of Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, Brhaspati, all the demigods, and all moving and non-moving living entities. He is the original cause of all that is temporary and all that is eternal. Nothing exists separately from Him, and therefore He is everything. He is described in the following verses.

Lord Brahmā's enumeration is so comprehensive that it is clear that Lord Caitanya is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. Still, to make it even more clear, Brahmā repeats: *caitanya eva sarvam*, Lord Caitanya is everything. Thus it is established beyond any doubt that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is even the cause of His expansions, such as Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa.

(73-75) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 16-18

*yat kiñcid asad bhunkte kṣaram tat kāryam ucyate
sat kāraṇam param jivās tad akṣaram itiritam
kṣarākṣarābhyām paramaḥ sa eva puruṣottamaḥ
caitanyākhyam param tattvam sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

yat—that which; *kiñcit*—anything; *asat*—material; *bhunkte*—enjoys; *kṣaram*—the material world; *tat*—that; *kāryam*—the manifested effect; *ucyate*—it is called; *sat*—transcendental; *kāraṇam*—the cause; *param*—supreme; *jivāḥ*—consisting of the living entities; *tat*—that; *akṣaram*—eternal; *iti*—thus; *iritam*—it is described; *kṣara-kṣarābhyām*—the temporary and the eternal; *paramam*—above; *saḥ*—He; *eva*—indeed; *puruṣa-uttamaḥ*—the Supreme Person; *caitanya ākhyam*—named Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *param*—the supreme; *tattvam*—truth; *sarva*—of all; *kāraṇa*—causes; *kāraṇam*—the cause.



There are two *tattvas* or truths in this creation. The material world, which is enjoyed by the living entities, is the temporary, manifested effect, whereas the living entity is the eternal, transcendental cause of this world, thus being superior to matter. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, however, is superior to both cause and effect, above the temporary material energy and the eternal living beings. This Supreme Person, the cause of all causes, is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is the *param tattva*, or Highest Truth.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (Bg. 15.16-18.), Kṛṣṇa explains the words *kṣara* and *akṣara* as follows: The living entities in the spiritual world (*akṣara*) are superior to those in the material world (*kṣara*), but above both is the supreme *purusa*, the Lord Himself, who is therefore called Puruṣottama.

This Supreme Lord is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and thus the *caitanya-tattva*, the truth about Lord Caitanya, is philosophically established. How to realize this truth is explained by Brahmā in the last verse:

(76) Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad 19

ya enam rasayati bhajati dhyāyati sa pāpmānaṁ tarati, sa pūto bhavati, sa tattvaṁ jānāti, sa tarati śokam, gatiḥ tasyāte nānyasyeti.

yaḥ—one who; *enam*—Him; *rasayati*—loves; *bhajati*—worships; *dhyāyati*—meditates upon; *saḥ*—he; *pāpmānam*—sins; *tarati*—he crosses over; *pūtaḥ*—pure; *bhavati*—he becomes; *tattvam*—the Absolute Truth; *jānāti*—he understands; *tarati*—he overcomes; *śokam*—lamentation; *gatiḥ*—the supreme goal; *tasya*—for him; *āste*—it is attained; *na*—not; *anyasya*—for anyone else; *iti*—thus (it is said).

One who worships Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Lord with love and devotion and always remembers Him becomes free from all sins and completely purified. Easily understanding the truth about the Personality of Godhead and becoming free from all material lamentation, such a devotee attains the supreme goal of life, which is unattainable by those who are averse to Caitanya Mahāprabhu.



It is remarkable that the prediction of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's appearance is inseparably connected with the manifestation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. As Lord Caitanya confirmed: *kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra*, Kṛṣṇa appears in Kali-yuga in the form of His holy name. This fact is illustrated by the following description of how Lord Caitanya chanted the holy name:

(77) **Śrī Caitanya-aṣṭaka 5**

*hare kṛṣṇety uccaiḥ sphurita-rasano nāma-gaṇanā-
kṛta-granthi-śreṇī-subhaga-kaṭi-sūtrojjvala-karaḥ
viśālākṣo dīrghārgala-yugala-khelāñcita-bhujah
sa caitanyah kim me punar api dṛśor yāsyati padam*

hare kṛṣṇa iti—the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*; *uccaiḥ*—loudly; *sphurita*— which danced; *rasanaḥ*—on His tongue; *nāma*—the names; *gaṇanā*—counting; *kṛta*—which was equipped with; *granthi*—of knots; *śreṇī*—with rows; *subhaga*—with beautiful; *kaṭi*—at His hip; *sūtra*—on the string; *ujjala*—the radiant; *karaḥ*—His hand; *viśāla*—wide, large; *akṣah*—who has eyes; *dīrgha*—long, mighty; *argala*—who are like bolts (of a door); *yugala*—the pair; *khelā*—arched; *añcita*—moving; *bhujah*—whose arms; *saḥ*—He; *caitanyah*—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *kim*—when?; *me*—my; *punar api*—again; *dṛśoh*—of my eyes; *yāsyati*—He will come; *padam*; —to the lotus.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu loudly chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, which dances upon His tongue, as His radiant lotus hand counts the name by fingering the beads on the beautifully knotted counting string tied to his waist. His wide, dazzling eyes stretch to His ears and His long arms, which resemble mighty bolts, are raised like an arch. When will Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu again appear before the lotus of my eyes?



Kṛṣṇa and His Devotees

The Lord is present where His holy name is chanted:

(78) Padma Purāṇa

*nāhaṁ tiṣṭhāmi vaikuṅṭhe yoginām hṛdayeṣu vā
tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada mad-bhaktāḥ yatra gāyanti*

na—not; *aham*—I; *tiṣṭhāmi*—stay; *vaikuṅṭhe*—in Vaikuntha; *yoginām*—of the yogis; *hṛdayeṣu*—in the hearts; *vā*—or; *mat-bhaktāḥ*—My devotees; *yatra*—where; *gāyanti*—they chant about Me; *tatra*—there; *tiṣṭhāmi*—I stay; Nārada—O Nārada Muni.

My dear Nārada, actually I do not reside in My abode, Vaikuṅṭha, nor do I reside within the hearts of the yogīs, but I reside in that place where My pure devotees chant My holy name and discuss My form, pastimes and qualities.

The following is a moving testimony of how much Kṛṣṇa loves a person who chants His name:

(79) Ādi Purāṇa

*śraddhāya helayā nāma raṅanti mama jantavaḥ
teṣām nāma sadā pārtha vartate hṛdaye mama*

śraddhāya—with faith; *helayā*—with negligence; *nāma*—the holy name; *raṅanti*—they loudly exclaim; *mama*—My; *jantavaḥ*—the living entities; *teṣām*—their; *nāma*—name; *sadā*—forever; *pārtha*—O son of Pṛthā (Arjuna); *vartate*—remains; *hṛdaye*—in the heart; *mama*—My.

O Arjuna, listen attentively! When the living entity chants My name, whether out of devotion or indifference, then his name will remain forever in My heart. I will never forget such a soul.

Therefore, a pure devotee always chants the name of Kṛṣṇa, as confirmed by the Lord Himself:

(80) Bhagavad-gīta 9.14

*satataṁ kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ
namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā nitya-yuktā upāsate*



Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.

Because Kṛṣṇa appears in the hearts of such devotees and establishes their mutual relation, they experience supreme transcendental pleasure. This is confirmed by Gajendra, the King of elephants, in his prayers to the Lord:

(81) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.3.20

*ekāntino yasya na kañcanārthaṁ
vāñchanti ye vai bhagavat-prapannāḥ
aty-adbhutaṁ tac-caritaṁ sumaṅgalaṁ
gāyanta ānanda-samudra-magnāḥ*

Unalloyed devotees, who have no desire other than to serve the Lord, worship Him in full surrender and always hear and chant about His activities, which are most wonderful and auspicious. Thus they always merge in an ocean of transcendental bliss. Such devotees never ask the Lord for any benediction.

Devahūtī, the mother of the divine incarnation Śrī Kapiladeva, came to a similar conclusion. Deeply affected by the realization that the Supreme Personality of Godhead had taken birth in her womb just to relieve her from material ignorance, she addressed her son as follows:

(82) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.7

*aho bata śva-paco 'to gariyān
yaj-jihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyam
tepus tapas te juhuvuḥ sasnur āryā
brahmānūcur nāma gṛṇanti ye te*

Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if born in the families of dog-eaters, such persons are worshipable. Persons who chant the holy name of Your Lordship must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Āryans.



To be chanting the holy name of Your Lordship, they must have bathed at holy places of pilgrimage, studied the Vedas and fulfilled everything required.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī renders an even stronger statement:

(83) Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 11.454

*yena janma-śataiḥ pūrvamvāsudevaḥ samārcitaḥ
tan-mukhe hari-nāmānisadā tiṣṭhanti bhārata*

yena—by whom; *janma*—of births; *śataiḥ*—throughout hundreds; *pūrvam*—previously; *vāsudevaḥ*—Lord Vasudeva, Kṛṣṇa; *samārcitaḥ*—was worshipped; *tan-mukhe*—on his mouth; *hari-nāmāni*—the holy names of Lord Hari; *sadā*—eternally; *tiṣṭhanti*—they remain; *bhārata*—oh descendant of Bharata.

Oh descendant of Bharata, one who has previously worshipped Lord Vāsudeva in hundreds of lifetimes can now chant the holy name eternally.

In other words, someone who can chant Kṛṣṇa’s name constantly should be regarded as a devotee who has performed devotional service for many, many lifetimes.

The next verse describes how such great souls realize the pleasure-giving potency of the holy name:

(84) Padma Purāna

*tebhyo namo ‘stu bhava-vāri-dhi-jīrṇa-panka
samagna-mokṣaṇa-vicakṣaṇa-pādukebhyaḥ
kṛṣṇeti varṇa-yugalaṁ śravaṇena yeṣāṁ
ānandathur bhavati nartitaroma-vṛndaḥ*

tebhyaḥ—unto such devotees; *namo astu*—I bow down; *bhava*—of repeated birth and death; *vāri-dhi*—in the ocean; *jīrṇa*—of old age; *panka*—in the mud; *sam-magna*—who are immersed in; *mokṣaṇa*—liberating; *vicakṣaṇa*—who are experienced, expert in; *pādukebhyaḥ*—unto the impressions of their lotus feet; *kṛṣṇa iti*—named “Kṛṣṇa”; *varṇa-yugalam*—the pair of syllables; *śravaṇena*—by hearing; *yeṣāṁ*—of such devotees; *ānandathuḥ*—they experience



transcendental bliss; *bhavati*—it happens; *narttita*—dancing; *roma-vṛndaḥ*—of all their hairs.

The devotees of the Lord are filled with transcendental ecstasy upon hearing the name of Kṛṣṇa, which makes their hairs dance upright. I bow down in great joy to the impressions of their lotus feet, which are expert in releasing the poor conditioned souls who are drowning in the ocean of birth and death, stuck in the mud of old age and disease.

A devotee at this stage of chanting will soon develop *bhāva*, ecstatic love, as described by the sage Śrī Kavi to King Nimi:

(85) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.40

*evam-vrataḥ sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā
jātānurāgo druta-citta ucchaiḥ
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmāda-van nṛtyati loka-bāhyaḥ*

By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the stage of love of Godhead. Then the devotee is fixed in his vow as an eternal servant of the Lord, and he gradually becomes very much attached to a particular name and form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As his heart melts with ecstatic love, he laughs very loudly, cries, or shouts. Sometimes he sings and dances like a madman, for he is indifferent to public opinion.

In this connection, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states that a transcendentalist possesses only one real treasure—his intense longing for spiritual elevation. Therefore it is most essential for every devotee to keep this longing desire alive, and to substantiate this point, he quotes a verse from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

(86) Padyāvalī 14

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ
krīyatām yadi kuto 'pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalaṁ
janma-koṭi-sukṛtair na labhyate*



Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—that is, intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.

King Kulaśekhara, the great Ālvār saint, has expressed this intense desire in a verse which Śrīla Prabhupāda loved very much. He often quoted it and sang it as *bhajana*:

(87) Mukunda-mālā-stotra 33

*kṛṣṇa tvadīya-pada-paṅkaja-pañjarāntam
adyaiva me viśatu mānasa-rāja-haṁsaḥ
prāṇa-prayāṇa-samaye kapha-vāta-pittaiḥ
kaṅṭhāvarodhana-vidhau smaraṇam kutas te*

kṛṣṇa—oh Lord Kṛṣṇa; *tvadīya*—of Your; *pada*—feet; *paṅkaja*—of the lotus; *pañjara*—the network; *antam*—the edge; *adya*—now, at that moment; *eva*—certainly; *me*—my; *viśatu*—may enter; *mānasa*—of my mind; *rāja*—the royal; *haṁsaḥ*—the swan; *prāṇa-prayāṇa*—of death; *samaye*—at the time; *kapha*—with mucus; *vāta*—with air; *pittaiḥ*—and with bile; *kaṅṭha*—the throat; *avarodhana-vidhau*—when it is choked; *smaraṇam*—remembrance; *kutaḥ*—how it is possible; *te*—of You.

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, at this moment let the royal swan of my mind enter the tangled stems of the lotus of Your feet. How will it be possible for me to remember You at the time of death, when my throat will be choked up with mucus, bile, and air?

King Kulaśekhara was so eager to absorb his mind in Kṛṣṇa that he wanted to meet with death immediately, because he worried how he should possibly chant the holy name in an old, diseased body.



Avoiding offenses

Only when a devotee chants without offenses can the eagerness for the nectar of the holy name become manifest in the chanter's heart.

The following verse was quoted by Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura when he was asked by Lord Caitanya how the Yavanas, the fallen people of the age of Kali, could be rescued from the sufferings of material bondage:

(88) *Padma Purāna, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.24*

*nāmaikam yasya vāci smaraṇa-patha-gataṁ śrotra-mūlam gataṁ vā
śuddham vāśuddha-varṇam vyavahita-rahitaṁ tārayaty eva satyam
tac ced deha-draviṇa-janatā-lobha-pāṣaṇḍa-madhye
nikṣiptam syān na phala-janakam śīghram evātra vipra*

If a devotee once utters the holy name of the Lord, or if it penetrates his mind or enters his ear, which is the channel of aural reception, that holy name will certainly deliver him from material bondage, whether vibrated properly or improperly, with correct or incorrect grammar, and properly joined or vibrated in separate parts. O brāhmaṇa, the potency of the holy name is therefore certainly great. However, if one uses the vibration of the holy name for the benefit of the material body, for material wealth and followers, or under the influence of greed or atheism—in other words, if one utters the name with offenses—such chanting will not produce the desired result very soon. Therefore one should diligently avoid offenses in chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says: *nāmākṣara bahir haya, nāma nahi haya*, merely reciting the external syllables of the holy name does not mean that one is actually chanting the holy name.

The symptoms of one who chants with offenses are given by Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī:



(89) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.24

*tad aśma-sāraṁ hṛdayaṁ batedaṁ
yad gr̥hyamāṇair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ
na vikriyetātha yadā vikāro
netre jalaṁ gātra-ruheṣu harṣaḥ*

Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one's chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change when ecstasy takes place, tears fill the eyes and the hairs stand on end.

In His teachings to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya compares devotional service with a creeper (*bhakti-lata*). Offenses against the holy name are like dangerous weeds, because they counteract and obstruct the life-giving medicine for the devotional creeper. Amongst them, Lord Caitanya explains the first offense to be most severe:

(90-91) Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.156-157

*yadi vaiṣṇava-aparādha uṭhe hātī mātā
upāḍe vā chiṇḍe, tāra śukhi' yāya pātā
tāte mālī yatna kari' kare āvaraṇa
aparādha-hastīra yaiche nā haya udgama*

If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper are dried up. The gardener must defend the creeper by fencing it all around so that the powerful elephant of offenses may not enter.

Kṛṣṇa loves His devotees so much that He does not tolerate any incorrect behavior or attitude against them. Therefore, the *Skanda Purāṇa* gives a high standard regarding offenses against Vaiṣṇavas:



(92) **Skanda Purāṇa**

*hanti nindati vai dveṣṭi vaiṣṇavān nābhinandati
krudhyate yāti no harṣam darśane patanāni ṣaṭ*

hanti—to kill; *nindati*—to blaspheme; *vai*—also; *dveṣṭhi*—to envy; *vaiṣṇavāt*—before a Vaiṣṇava; *na*—not; *abhi-nandati*—to welcome, offer obeisances; *krudhyate*—to become angry; *yāti*—becoming; *no*—not; *harṣam*—joyful; *darśane*—upon seeing (a Vaiṣṇava); *patanāni*—offenses (which make one fall down); *ṣaṭ*—six.

There are six kinds of offenses against Vaisnavas which make one fall down: (1) to kill a Vaiṣṇava, (2) to blaspheme Vaiṣṇavas, (3) to become envious on them, (4) failing to offer obeisances to a Vaiṣṇava upon seeing him, (5) to become angry on a Vaiṣṇava, and (6) to not become joyful upon seeing a Vaiṣṇava.

What is the chance to overcome *nāma-aparādhas* when they are so strictly counted? The answer is that the process of chanting itself is the means to overcome the offenses against the holy name:

(93) **Padma Purāṇa**

*nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmāny eva haranty agham
aviśrānti-prayuktāni tāny evārtha-karāṇi ca*

nāma-aparādha—offenses against the holy name; *yuktānām*—of those who commit; *nāmāni*—the holy names; *eva*—certainly; *haranti*—they remove; *agham*—sins, offenses; *aviśrānti*—incessantly; *prayuktāni*—if they are pronounced; *tāni*—they; *eva*—indeed; *artha*—this purpose (to remove the offenses), *karāṇi*—they perform; *ca*—also.

Even if in the beginning one chants the holy name with offenses, one will become free from such offenses by chanting again and again.

Still we should be very much familiar with the ten offenses, in order to recognize and avoid them, and therefore they are listed in detail in the following section.



The Ten Offenses against the Chanting of the Holy Name

(94) *Padma Purāṇa, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.15*

*satām nindā nāmaḥ paramam aparādham vitanute
yataḥ khyātim yātam katham u sahate tad vigarihām
śivasya śrī-viṣṇor ya iha guṇa-nāmādi sakalam
dhiyā bhinnam paśyet sa khalu hari-nāmāhita-karaḥ*

satām—of great saintly persons; *nindā*—blasphemy; *nāmaḥ*—to the holy name; *paramam*—the worst; *aparādham*—offense; *vitanute*—calls forth, is; *yataḥ*—of it (the holy name); *khyātim*—(they spread) the fame; *yātam*—(the activity) which has been committed by this; *katham u*—how at all?; *sahate*—can it be tolerated; *tad-vigarihām*—such blasphemous activity.

1. Blaspheme of the great saintly persons who are engaged in preaching the glories of the holy name of the Lord is the worst offense at the lotus feet of the Lord and will never be tolerated by the holy name.

śivasya—of Śiva; *śrī-viṣṇoḥ*—of Śrī Viṣṇu; *yaḥ*—who; *iha*—here in this material world; *guṇa*—the qualities; *nāma*—the name; *ādi*—and so on; *sakalam*—all together; *dhiyā*—with the conception (to think); *bhinnam*—separate; *paśyet*—he may see; *saḥ*—he; *khalu*—indeed; *hari-nāma*—to the holy name; *a-hita-karaḥ*—acting with offenses.

2. In this material world the holy name of Viṣṇu is all-auspicious. Viṣṇu’s name, form, qualities, and pastimes are all transcendental, absolute knowledge. Therefore, if one tries to separate the Absolute Personality of Godhead from His holy name or His transcendental form, qualities, and pastimes, thinking them to be material, that is offensive. Similarly, to think that the names of demigods such as Lord Śiva to be as good as the names of Lord Viṣṇu is also blasphemous.



(95) **Padma Purāṇa, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.16**

*guroṛ avajñā śruti-śāstra-nindanam
tathārtha-vādo hari-nāmni kalpanam
nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir
na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ*

guroḥ—towards the guru; *avajñā*—disrespect.

3. It is an offense to be disrespectful towards the spiritual master and thus to not follow his instructions.

śruti—of the *Upaniṣads*; *śāstra*—of the Vedas; *nindanam*—blasphemy.

4. To blaspheme the Vedic literature, like the Purāṇas, the Upaniṣads or the four original Vedas, is also an offense.

tathā—as well; *artha-vādaḥ*—to interpret its purpose.

5. Someone who gives an interpretation on the holy name also commits an offense.

hari-nāmni—in reference to the holy name; *kalpanam*—to consider the descriptions to be inaginary or exaggerated.

6. The same applies to someone who considers the glories of the holy name to be imagination or exaggeration.

nāmnaḥ—of the holy name; *balād*—on the strength; *yasya*—for someone who; *hi*—indeed; *pāpa*—of sin; *buddhiḥ*—having a conception; *na*—never; *vidyate*—there is; *tasya*—for him; *yamair*—even by austerity and penance; *hi*—certainly; *śuddhiḥ*—purification.

7. To think that since the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra can counteract all sinful reactions one may therefore go on with all sinful activities and then at the same time chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to neutralize them is the greatest offense at the lotus feet of harināma. One who thinks in this way cannot be purified even by the most severe forms of penance and austerity.



(96) Padma Purāṇa, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.17

*dharma-vrata-tyāga-hutādi-sarva-
śubha-kriyā-sāmyam api pramādaḥ
aśraddadhāne vimukhe 'py aśṛṇvati
yaś copadeśaḥ śiva-nāmāparādhaḥ*

dharma—religious performance or pious deeds; *vrata*—vows of penance and austerity; *huta*—*agnihotra-yajñas* or sacrificial offerings; *ādi*—etc.; *sarva*—all; *śubhā*—auspicious; *kriyā*—activities (described in the *karma-kāṇḍa* section of the Vedas); *sāmyam*—who considers to be equal (with the holy name); *api*—also; *pramādaḥ*—carelessness, inattention.

8. It is a great offense to consider the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra to be equal to the performance of religious ceremonies, following austere vows, practicing renunciation and fire sacrifices which are all materialistic auspicious activities. It is also an offense to be careless or inattentive while chanting the holy name.

aśraddadhāne—to the faithless; *vimukhe*—and reluctant; *api*—even; *aśṛṇvati*—who is unwilling to hear; *yaḥ*—one who; *ca*—and; *upadeśaḥ*— (gives) instruction; *śiva-nāma*—about the auspicious glories of the holy name; *aparādhaḥ*—he commits an offense.

9. It is an offense to preach the glories of the holy name to those who will not hear, to those who are atheistic and those who have no faith in the chanting of the holy name.

(97) Padma Purāṇa, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.18

*śrutvāpi nāma-māhātmyam yaḥ prīti-rahito 'dhamaḥ
aham-mamādi-paramo nāmni so 'py aparādha-kṛt*

śrutvā—having heard; *api*—even; *nāma*—of the holy name; *māhātmyam*—about the glories; *yaḥ*—who; *prīti*—of love; *rahitaḥ*—devoid; *adhamaḥ*—the lowest; *aham mama*—I and mine; *iti*—thus; *paramaḥ*—to consider (this conception) to be the supreme; *nāmni*—to the holy name; *saḥ*—he; *api*—also; *aparādha-kṛt*—he commits an offense.



10. That lowest among men who, even after hearing the glories of the transcendental holy name of the Lord, continues in a materialistic concept of life, thinking “I am this body, and everything belonging to this body is mine” (*aham mameti*), and does not show respect and love for the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is an offender of the holy name.



Conclusion: Chanting is the Topmost Activity

(98) Padyāvalī 29

*ākṛṣṭiḥ kṛta-cetasām su-manasām uccātanām cāmhasām
ācaṇḍālam amūka-loka-sulabho vaśyaś ca mukti-śriyaḥ
no dikṣām na ca sat-kriyām na ca puraścaryām manāg ikṣate
mantra 'yam rasanā-sprḡ eva phalati śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmātmakah*

The holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is an attractive feature for many saintly, liberal people. It is the annihilator of all sinful reactions and is so powerful that, save for the dumb who cannot chant it, it is readily available to everyone, including the lowest type of man, the *caṇḍāla*. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the controller of the opulence of liberation, and it is identical with Kṛṣṇa. Simply by touching the holy name with one's tongue, immediate effects are produced. Chanting the holy name does not depend on initiation, pious activities or the regulative principles generally observed before initiation (*puraścaryā*). The holy name does not wait for all these activities. It is self-sufficient.

This verse renders a nice summary of the transcendental qualities of the holy name:

- He is attractive even for saintly persons, because he bestows supreme spiritual bliss.
- He destroys all sinful reactions.
- He is available for everyone, regardless of caste, education, age and so on.
- He easily awards liberation.
- He is identical with Kṛṣṇa, thus a completely transcendental person.
- He immediately shows effect when chanted.
- He does not depend on initiation and the activities observed before initiation.
- He does not depend on time, place and circumstances.

Summed up, the holy name is self-sufficient, unlike any other process for spiritual elevation. Thus, the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's holy name is the topmost activity for the living entity.



Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, by examining the difference between meditating on the Lord and chanting His holy name, comes to the same conclusion:

(99) Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 11.453

*aghacchit smaraṇam viṣṇor bahvāyāsenā sādhyate
oṣṭha-śpandana-mātreṇa kīrtanān tu tato varam*

agha—sins; *chid*—cutting in pieces; *smaraṇam*—remembrance; *viṣṇoḥ*—of Viṣṇu; *bahu*—by a lot; *āyāsenā*—of trouble; *sādhyate*—it is attained; *oṣṭha*—of the lips; *spandana*—moving; *mātreṇa*—just by; *kīrtanān*—chanting the holy name; *tu*—however; *tataḥ*—than that (*smaraṇam*); *varam*—it is better.

The remembrance of Viṣṇu certainly cuts sin to pieces, but to attain perfection through this process is very difficult. However, simply by moving the lips, there is *kīrtana* of the holy name of Lord Viṣṇu, and therefore the chanting of the holy names is the topmost process on devotional service.

The holy name is self-sufficient, and worship of Kṛṣṇa is solely dependent on the chanting process, as emphasized by Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura:

(100) Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 2.1.103

*taṁ nirvyājam bhaja guṇa-nidhe pāvanam pāvanānām
śraddhā-rajyan-matir atitarām uttamaḥ-śloka-maulim
prodyann antaḥ-karaṇa-kuhare hanta yan-nāma-bhānor
ābhāso 'pi kṣapayati mahā-pātaka-dhvānta-rāśim*

O reservoir of all good qualities, just worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the purifier of all purifiers, the most exalted of the personalities worshiped by choice poetry. Worship Him with a faithful, unflinching mind, without duplicity and in a highly elevated manner. Thus worship the Lord, whose name is like the sun, for just as a slight appearance of the sun dissipates the darkness of night, so a slight appearance of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa can drive away all the darkness of ignorance that arises in the heart due to greatly sinful activities performed in previous lives.



It should be reminded that the true value of the holy name is not its liberating power, but its ability to award *prema*, pure love of Godhead. The great devotee Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura speaks a famous verse in this regard:

(101) Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta 107

*bhaktis tvayi sthīratarā bhagavan yadi syād
daivena naḥ phalati divya-kiśora-mūrtiḥ
muktiḥ svayam mukulitāñjali sevate 'smān
dharmārtha-kāma-gatayaḥ samaya-pratikṣāḥ*

bhaktiḥ—devotional service; *tvayi*—unto You; *sthīra-tarā*—with fixed determination; *bhagavan*—Oh my Lord; *yadi*—if; *syāt*—it takes place; *daivena*—by destiny; *naḥ*—unto us; *phalati*—bears a fruit; *divya*—transcendental; *kiśora-mūrtiḥ*—as the eternally youthful form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa; *muktiḥ*—liberation; *svayam*—personally; *mukulita*—folded; *añjaliḥ*—with her hands; *sevate*—she renders service; *asmān*—unto us; *dharma*—religion; *artha*—economic development; *kāma*—sense gratification; *gatayaḥ*—the goals of; *samaya*—nearby; *pratikṣāḥ*—expecting (our order).

O my Lord, if I am engaged in Your devotional service with firm determination, You become visible in Your original transcendental youthful form as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As far as liberation is concerned, I think that she stands before me with folded hands waiting to render service, and the subsidiary goals of religion, economic development and sense gratification are all automatically attained without separate endeavor.

In other words, that which is considered the supreme goal for most transcendentalists becomes an insignificant by-product of the real treasure that the pure devotee raises from the nectarean ocean of the holy name—namely *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa.

Chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa bestows the devotee with unparalleled ecstasy and loving sentiments, as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī poetically expresses in the following verse:



(102) Vidagdha-mādhava 1.15

*tuṅḍe tāṅḍaviniṁ ratim vitanute tuṅḍāvalī-labdhave
karṇa-kroḍha-kaḍambinī ghaṭayate karṇārbudebhyaḥ sprhām
cetaḥ-prāṅgaṇa-saṅginī vijayate sarvendriyāṅām kṛtim
no jāne janitā kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ kṛṣṇeti varṇa-dvayī*

I do not know how much nectar the two syllables ‘Kṛṣ-ṇa’ have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. In addition, when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.

A devotee on that level of transcendence will never abandon the chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s names, no matter what calamities he has to face. When Nawab Hussain Shah wanted to stop Haridāsa Ṭhākura’s chanting, by threatening him with death sentence, the Ṭhākura fearlessly said:

(103) Śrī-Caitanya-bhāgavata Ādi-līlā 11.91

*khaṇḍa khaṇḍa hai’ deha yadi jaya prāṇa
tabu āmi vadane nā chāḍi hari-nāma*

khaṇḍa khaṇḍa—cutting into pieces; *hai’*—doing; *deha*—my body; *yadi*—if; *jaya*—defeated; *prāṇa*—my life; *tabu*—still; *ami*—I; *vadane*—to chant; *nā*—never; *chāḍi*—I stop; *harināma*—the holy name.

Even if you cut my body into pieces, I will never give up chanting the holy name.

We want to end with the same text which inaugurated this book: with the marvelous praise of the holy name from the Ādi Purāṇa which delineates how the holy name is the all in all for the devotee, his greatest treasure and sole object of worship:



(104-108) Ādi Purāṇa

*na nāma-sadṛśam jñānam na nāma-sadṛśam vratam
na nāma sadṛśam dhyānam na nāma sadṛśam phalam
na nāma sadṛśas tyago na nāma sadṛśaḥ samaḥ
na nāma sadṛśam puṇyam na nāma sadṛśi gatiḥ
nāmaiva parama muktir nāmaiva parama gatiḥ
nāmaiva parama śāntir nāmaiva parama sthitiḥ
nāmaiva parama bhaktir nāmaiva parama matiḥ
nāmaiva parama prītir nāmaiva parama smṛtiḥ
nāmaiva kāraṇam jantor nāmaiva prabhur eva ca
nāmaiva paramārādhyam nāmaiva paramo guru*

na—not; *nāma*—to the holy name; *sadṛśam*—equal; *jñānam*—knowledge; *vratam*—vow; *dhyānam*—meditation; *phalam*—result; *tyāgaḥ*—penance; *samaḥ*—anything which is equal; *puṇyam*—piety; *gatiḥ*—goal, refuge; *nāma*—the holy name; *eva*—without doubt; *paramā*—the highest form of; *muktiḥ*—liberation; *gatiḥ*—goal; *śāntiḥ*—peacefulness; *sthitiḥ*—eternal life; *bhaktiḥ*—devotion; *matiḥ*—thought; *prīti*—pleasure; *smṛtiḥ*—remembrance; *nāma*—the holy name; *eva*—indeed; *kāraṇam*—the cause; *jantor*—of the living entity; *prabhur*—their lord and master; *eva ca*—as well; *parama*—the supreme; *ārādhyam*—worshipable object; *paramaḥ*—the topmost; *guru*—spiritual master.

There is no vow like chanting the holy name, no knowledge superior to it, no meditation which comes anywhere near it, and it gives the highest result. No penance is equal to it, and nothing is as potent or powerful as the holy name.

Chanting is the greatest act of piety and the supreme refuge. Even the words of the Vedas do not possess sufficient power to describe its magnitude. Chanting is the highest path to liberation, peace and eternal life. It is the pinnacle of devotion, the heart's joyous proclivity and attraction and the best form of remembrance of the Supreme Lord. The holy name has appeared solely for the benefit of the living entities as their lord and master, their supreme worshipable object and their spiritual guide and mentor.



3. Śrī Bhakti-rasāyana

A Spiritual Tonic

The word *rasāyana* is used in the science of Ayurveda for a life-giving elixir. In the past it was well-known how to revitalize people who were close to death, by treating them with the proper *rasāyana*. Often, the patients could go on living with full strength for many more years, and in many cases they started a new life.

There are also spiritual *rasāyanas*, namely *mantras* endowed with transcendental potency which energize one's spiritual life. In the last chapter of the *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatamṛta*, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī presents a collection verses called *Bhakti-rasāyana*. These verses, which form the essence of the Tenth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, are meant to stimulate *bhakti-rasa*, the devotional sentiments in one's relationship to Kṛṣṇa, and to evoke transcendental attachment to Kṛṣṇa's eternal realm, Vṛndāvana. They are called *rasāyana* because like an Ayurvedic medicine they act as potent nectar to purify the heart, steady the devotion, and increase one's love for Kṛṣṇa.

These verses were used by the previous *ācaryas* as a special method of *bhajana*: They combined their *japa* (the chanting on the beads) with reading these *Bhakti-rasāyana-ślokas*. While meditating on them and simultaneously continuing to chant the holy name, their minds and hearts would be completely immersed in the nectarean ocean of *prema-rasa*. By following in their footsteps, we can increase both the bliss of chanting and our love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

While chanting *japa*, one can stop at the end of a round and recite one *śloka*, starting from the beginning. Then, while resuming *japa*, one deeply meditates upon the verse. After some time, the next verse can be read.

In this way, our knowledge about Kṛṣṇa, His holy abode, His associates, and His pastimes steadily increases and intensifies our appreciation of the holy name. The more one knows about the Personality of the Lord, the better one can immerse in meditation about Him.



Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.37

*ānanda-cinmaya-rasa-pratibhāvitābhis
tābhir ya eva nija-rūpatayā kalābhiḥ
goloka eva nivasaty akhilātma-bhūto
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, residing in His own realm, Goloka, with Rādhā, resembling His own spiritual figure, the embodiment of the ecstatic potency possessed of the sixty-four artistic activities, in the company of Her confidantes (*sakhīs*), embodiments of the extensions of Her bodily form, permeated and vitalized by His ever-blissful spiritual *rasa*.

Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.43

*goloka-nāṁni nija-dhāṁni tale ca tasya
devi maheśa-hari-dhāmasu teṣu teṣu
te te prabhāva-nicayā vihitāś ca yena
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

Lowest of all is located Devī-dhāma [mundane world], next above it is Maheśa-dhāma [abode of Maheśa]; above Maheśa-dhāma is placed Hari-dhāma [abode of Hari] and above them all is located Kṛṣṇa's own realm named Goloka. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, who has allotted their respective authorities to the rulers of those graded realms.

Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.56

*śriyaḥ kāntāḥ kāntaḥ parama-puruṣaḥ kalpa-taravo
drumā bhūmiś cintāmaṇi-gaṇa-mayi toyam amṛtam
kathā gānaṁ nāṭyaṁ gamanam api vaṁśī priya-sakhi
cid-ānandaṁ jyotiḥ param api tad āsvādyam api ca
sa yatra kṣīrābdhiḥ sravati surabhībhyaś ca su-mahān
nimeṣārdhākhyo vā vrajati na hi yatrāpi samayaḥ
bhaje śvetadvīpaṁ tam aham iha golokam iti yaṁ
vidantas te santaḥ kṣiti-virala-cārāḥ katipaye*



I worship that transcendental seat, known as Śvetadvīpa where as loving consorts the Lakṣmīs in their unalloyed spiritual essence practice the amorous service of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa as their only lover; where every tree is a transcendental purpose tree; where the soil is the purpose gem, all water is nectar, every word is a song, every gait is a dance, the flute is the favorite attendant, effulgence is full of transcendental bliss and the supreme spiritual entities are all enjoyable and tasty, where numberless milk cows always emit transcendental oceans of milk; where there is eternal existence of transcendental time, who is ever present and without past or future and hence is not subject to the quality of passing away even for the space of half a moment. That realm is known as Goloka only to a very few self-realized souls in this world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.44.13

*puṇyā bata vraja-bhuvo yad ayaṁ nṛ-liṅga
gūḍhaḥ purāṇa-puruṣo vana-citra-mālyah
gāḥ pālayan saha-balaḥ kvaṇayaṁś ca veṇuṁ
vikṛīdayāñcati giritra-ramārcitāṅghriḥ*

How pious are the tracts of land in Vraja, for there the primeval Personality of Godhead, disguising Himself with human traits, wanders about, enacting His many pastimes! Adorned with wonderfully variegated forest garlands, He whose feet are worshiped by Lord Śiva and goddess Ramā vibrates His flute as He tends the cows in the company of Balarāma.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.31

*aho 'ti-dhanyā vraja-go-ramaṇyaḥ
stanyāmṛtaṁ pītam atīva te mudā
yāsāṁ vibho vatsatarātmajātmanā
yat-tṛptaye 'dyāpi na cālam adhvarāḥ*

O almighty Lord, how greatly fortunate are the cows and ladies of Vṛndāvana, the nectar of whose breast-milk You have happily drunk to Your full satisfaction, taking the form of their



calves and children! All the Vedic sacrifices performed from time immemorial up to the present day have not given You as much satisfaction.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.32

*aho bhāgyam aho bhāgyam nanda-gopa-vrajaukasām
yan-mitram paramānandam pūrṇam brahma sanātanam*

How greatly fortunate are Nanda Mahārāja, the cowherd men and all the other inhabitants of Vrajabhūmi! There is no limit to their good fortune, because the Absolute Truth, the source of transcendental bliss, the eternal Supreme Brahman, has become their friend.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.33

*eṣām tu bhāgya-mahimācyuta tāvad āstām
ekādaśaiva hi vyaṁ bata bhūri-bhāgāḥ
etad-dhṛṣṭika-caṣakair asakṛt pibāmaḥ
śarvādayo 'ṅhry-udaja-madhv-amṛtāsavam te*

Yet even though the extent of the good fortune of these residents of Vṛndāvana is inconceivable, we eleven presiding deities of the various senses, headed by Lord Śiva, are also most fortunate, because the senses of these devotees of Vṛndāvana are the cups through which we repeatedly drink the nectarean, intoxicating beverage of the honey of Your lotus feet.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.34

*tad bhūri-bhāgyam iha janma kim apy aṭavyām
yad gokule 'pi katamāṅghri-rajo-'bhiṣekam
yaj-jīvitam tu nikhilam bhagavān mukundas
tv adyāpi yat-pada-rajāḥ śruti-mṛgyam eva*

My greatest possible good fortune would be to take any birth whatever in this forest of Gokula and have my head bathed by the dust falling from the lotus feet of any of its residents. Their entire life and soul is the Supreme Personality of Godhead,



Mukunda, the dust of whose lotus feet is still being searched for in the Vedic mantras.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.35

*eṣāṁ ghoṣa-nivāsinām uta bhavān kiṁ deva rātetī naś
ceto viśva-phalāt phalaṁ tvad-aparaṁ kutrāpy ayan muhyati
sad-veṣād iva pūtanāpi sa-kulā tvām eva devāpitā
yad-dhāmārtha-suhṛt-priyātma-tanaya-prāṇāśayās tvat-kṛte*

My mind becomes bewildered just trying to think of what reward other than You could be found anywhere. You are the embodiment of all benedictions, which You bestow upon these residents of the cowherd community of Vṛndāvana. You have already arranged to give Yourself to Pūtanā and her family members in exchange for her disguising herself as a devotee. So what is left for You to give these devotees of Vṛndāvana, whose homes, wealth, friends, dear relations, bodies, children and very lives and hearts are all dedicated only to You?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.36

*tāvad rāgādayaḥ stenās tāvāt kārā-grhaṁ grham
tāvan mohō 'ṅghri-nigaḍo yāvat kṛṣṇa na te janāḥ*

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, until people become Your devotees, their material attachments and desires remain thieves, their homes remain prisons, and their affectionate feelings for their family members remain foot-shackles.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.37

*prapañcaṁ niṣprapañco 'pi viḍambayasi bhū-tale
prapanna-janatānanda- sandohaṁ prathitum prabho*

My dear master, although You have nothing to do with material existence, You come to this earth and imitate material life just to expand the varieties of ecstatic enjoyment for Your surrendered devotees.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.38

*jānanta eva jānantu kim bahūktyā na me prabho
manaso vapuṣo vāco vaibhavaṁ tava go-carah*

There are people who say, “I know everything about Kṛṣṇa.” Let them think that way. As far as I am concerned, I do not wish to speak very much about this matter. O my Lord, let me say this much: As far as Your opulences are concerned, they are all beyond the reach of my mind, body and words.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.39

*anujānīhi mām kṛṣṇa sarvaṁ tvam vetsy sarva-dṛk
tvam eva jagatām nātho jagad etat tavārpitam*

My dear Kṛṣṇa, I now humbly request permission to leave. Actually, You are the knower and seer of all things. Indeed, You are the Lord of all the universes, and yet I offer this one universe unto You.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.40

*śrī-kṛṣṇa vṛṣṇi-kula-puṣkara-joṣa-dāyin
kṣmā-nirjara-dvija-paśūdadhi-vṛddhi-kārin
uddharma-śārvara-hara kṣiti-rākṣasa-dhruḡ
ā-kalpam ārkam arhan bhagavan namas te*

My dear Śrī Kṛṣṇa, You bestow happiness upon the lotuslike Vṛṣṇi dynasty and expand the great oceans consisting of the earth, the demigods, the *brāhmaṇas* and the cows. You dispel the dense darkness of irreligion and oppose the demons who have appeared on this earth. O Supreme Personality of Godhead, as long as this universe exists and as long as the sun shines, I will offer my obeisances unto You.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.15.8

*dhanyeyam adya dharaṇī tṛṇa-vīrudhas tvat-
pāda-sprśo druma-latāḥ karajābhimṛṣṭāḥ
nadyo 'drayaḥ khaga-mṛgāḥ sadayāvalokair*



gopyo 'ntareṇa bhujayor api yat-sprhā śrīḥ

This earth has now become most fortunate, because You have touched her grass and bushes with Your feet and her trees and creepers with Your fingernails, and because You have graced her rivers, mountains, birds and animals with Your merciful glances. But above all, You have embraced the young cowherd women between Your two arms—a favor hankered after by the goddess of fortune herself.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.10

*vṛndāvanaṁ sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyaṁ
prekṣyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam*

O friend, Vṛndāvana is spreading the glory of the earth, having obtained the treasure of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govinda's flute, and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all become stunned.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.18

*hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyo
yad rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparaśa-pramodaḥ
mānaṁ tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos tayor yat
pānīya-sūyavasa-kandara-kandamūlaiḥ*

Of all the devotees, this Govardhana Hill is the best! O my friends, this hill supplies Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, along with Their calves, cows and cowherd friends, with all kinds of necessities—water for drinking, very soft grass, caves, fruits, flowers and vegetables. In this way the hill offers respects to the Lord. Being touched by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Govardhana Hill appears very jubilant.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.16

*dṛṣṭvātape vraja-paśūn saha rāma-gopaiḥ
sañcārayantam anu veṇum udīrayantam
prema-pravṛddha uditāḥ kusumāvalibhiḥ
sakhyur vyadhāt sva-vapuṣāmbuda ātapatram*

In the company of Balarāma and the cowherd boys, Lord Kṛṣṇa is continually vibrating His flute as He herds all the animals of Vraja, even under the full heat of the summer sun. Seeing this, the cloud in the sky has expanded himself out of love. He is rising high and constructing out of his own body, with its multitude of flower-like droplets of water, an umbrella for the sake of his friend.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.15

*nadyas tadā tad upadhārya mukunda-gītam
āvarta-lakṣita-manobhava-bhagna-vegāḥ
āliṅgana-sthagitam ūrmi-bhujair murārer
grhṇanti pāda-yugalaṁ kamalopahārāḥ*

When the rivers hear the flute-song of Kṛṣṇa, their minds begin to desire Him, and thus the flow of their currents is broken and their waters are agitated, moving around in whirlpools. Then with the arms of their waves the rivers embrace Murāri's lotus feet and, holding on to them, present offerings of lotus flowers.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.35.9

*vana-latās tarava ātmani viṣṇuṁ
vyañjayantya iva puṣpa-phalādhyāḥ
praṇata-bhāra-viṭapā madhu-dhārāḥ
prema-hṛṣṭa-tanavo vavṛṣuḥ sma*

When the cows wander onto the mountainsides and Kṛṣṇa calls out to them with the sound of His flute, the trees and creepers in the forest respond by becoming so luxuriant with fruits and flowers that they seem to be manifesting Lord Viṣṇu within their hearts. As their branches bend low with the weight,



the filaments on their trunks and vines stand erect out of the ecstasy of love of God, and both the trees and the creepers pour down a rain of sweet sap.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.15.6

*ete 'linas tava yaśo 'khila-loka-tīrthaṁ
gāyanta ādi-puruṣānupathaṁ bhajante
prāyo amī muni-gaṇā bhavadīya-mukhyā
gūḍhaṁ vane 'pi na jahaty anaghātma-daivam*

O original personality, these bees must all be great sages and most elevated devotees of Yours, for they are worshiping You by following You along the path and chanting Your glories, which are themselves a holy place for the entire world. Though You have disguised Yourself within this forest, O sinless one, they refuse to abandon You, their worshipable Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.35.11

*sarasi sārasa-haṁsa-vihaṅgāś
cāru-gītā-hṛta-cetasa etya
harim upāsata te yata-cittā
hanta mīlita-dṛśo dhṛta-maunāḥ*

The charming flute song then steals away the minds of the cranes, swans and other lake-dwelling birds. Indeed they approach Kṛṣṇa, close their eyes and, maintaining strict silence, worship Him by fixing their consciousness upon Him in deep meditation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.14

*prāyo batāmba vihagā munayo vane 'smin
kṛṣṇekṣitaṁ tad-uditaṁ kala-veṇu-gītam
āruhya ye drumā-bhujān rucira-pravālān
śṛṅvanti mīlita-dṛśo vigatānya-vācaḥ*

O mother, in this forest all the birds have risen onto the beautiful branches of the trees to see Kṛṣṇa. With closed eyes



they are simply listening in silence to the sweet vibrations of His flute, and they are not attracted by any other sound. Surely these birds are on the same level as great sages.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.11

*dhanyāḥ sma mūḍha-gatayo 'pi hariṇya etā
yā nanda-nandanam upātta-vicitra-veśam
ākarnya veṇu-raṇitam saha-kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ
pūjām dadhur viracitām praṇayāvalokaiḥ*

Blessed are all these foolish deer because they have approached Mahārāja Nanda's son, who is gorgeously dressed and is playing on His flute. Indeed, both the doe and the bucks worship the Lord with looks of love and affection.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.13

*gāvaś ca kṛṣṇa-mukha-nirgata-veṇu-gīta
pīyūṣam uttabhita-karṇa-putaiḥ pibantyaḥ
śāvāḥ snuta-stana-payāḥ-kavalāḥ sma tasthur
govindam ātmani dṛśāsru-kalāḥ sprśantyaḥ*

Using their upraised ears as vessels, the cows are drinking the nectar of the flute-song flowing out of Kṛṣṇa's mouth. The calves, their mouths full of milk from their mothers' moist nipples, stand still as they take Govinda within themselves through their tear-filled eyes and embrace Him within their hearts.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.35.5

*vṛndaśo vraja-vṛṣā mṛga-gāvo
veṇu-vādya-hṛta-cetasa ārāt
danta-daṣṭa-kavalā dhṛta-karṇā
nidritā likhita-citram ivāsan*

O girls! This son of Nanda, who gives joy to the distressed, bears steady lightning on His chest and has a smile like a jeweled necklace. Now please hear something wonderful. When He vibrates His flute, Vraja's bulls, deer and cows, standing in



groups at a great distance, are all captivated by the sound, and they stop chewing the food in their mouths and cock their ears. Stunned, they appear as if asleep, or like figures in a painting.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.17

*pūrṇāḥ pulindya urugāya-padābja-rāga
śrī-kuṅkumena dayitā-stana-maṅḍitena
tad-darśana-smara-rujas tṛṇa-rūṣitena
limpantya ānana-kuceṣu jahus tad-ādhim*

The aborigine women of the Vṛndāvana area become disturbed by lust when they see the grass marked with reddish *kuṅkuma* powder. Endowed with the color of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, this powder originally decorated the breasts of His beloveds, and when the aborigine women smear it on their faces and breasts, they feel fully satisfied and give up all their anxiety.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.12.6

*yadi dūraṁ gataḥ kṛṣṇo vana-śobhekṣaṇāya tam
aham pūrvam aham pūrvam iti saṁspṛśya remire*

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa would go to a somewhat distant place to see the beauty of the forest. Then all the other boys would run to accompany Him, each one saying, "I shall be the first to run and touch Kṛṣṇa! I shall touch Kṛṣṇa first!" In this way they enjoyed life by repeatedly touching Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.12.11

*itthaṁ satāṁ brahma-sukhānubhūtyā
dāsyam gatānām para-daivatena
māyāśritānām nara-dārakeṇa
sākam vijahruḥ kṛta-puṇya-puñjāḥ*

In this way, all the cowherd boys used to play with Kṛṣṇa, who is the source of the Brahman effulgence for *jñānīs* desiring to merge into that effulgence, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead for devotees who have accepted eternal servitorship,



and who for ordinary persons is but another ordinary child. The cowherd boys, having accumulated the results of pious activities for many lives, were able to associate in this way with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. How can one explain their great fortune?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.12.12

*yat-pāda-pāṁsur bahu-janma-kṛcchrato
dhṛtātmabhir yogibhir apy alabhyaḥ
sa eva yad-dṛg-viṣayaḥ svayaṁ sthitaḥ
kiṁ varṇyate diṣṭam ato vrajaukasām*

Yogīs may undergo severe austerities and penances for many births by practicing *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, none of which are easily performed. Yet in due course of time, when these *yogīs* attain the perfection of controlling the mind, they will still be unable to taste even a particle of dust from the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. What then can we describe about the great fortune of the inhabitants of Vrajabhūmi, Vṛndāvana, with whom the Supreme Personality of Godhead personally lived and who saw the Lord face to face?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.15.16

*kvacit pallava-talpeṣu
niyuddha-śrama-karśitaḥ
vrkṣa-mūlāśrayaḥ śete
gopotsaṅgopabarhaṇaḥ*

Sometimes Lord Kṛṣṇa grew tired from fighting and lay down at the base of a tree, resting upon a bed made of soft twigs and buds and using the lap of a cowherd friend as His pillow.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.15.17

*pāda-saṁvāhanaṁ cakruḥ
kecit tasya mahātmanaḥ
apare hata-pāpmāno
vyajanaiḥ samavijayan*



Some of the cowherd boys, who were all great souls, would then massage His lotus feet, and others, qualified by being free of all sin, would expertly fan the Supreme Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.15.18

*anye tad-anurūpāṇi
manojñāni mahātmanaḥ
gāyanti sma mahā-rāja
sneha-kinna-dhiyaḥ śanaiḥ*

My dear King, other boys would sing enchanting songs appropriate to the occasion, and their hearts would melt out of love for the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.46

*śrī-rājovāca
nandaḥ kim akarod brahman śreya evaṁ mahodayam
yaśodā ca mahā-bhāgā papau yasyāḥ stanam hariḥ*

Having heard of the great fortune of mother Yaśodā, Parikṣit Mahārāja inquired from Śukadeva Gosvāmī: O learned *brāhmaṇa*, mother Yaśodā's breast milk was sucked by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. What past auspicious activities did she and Nanda Mahārāja perform to achieve such perfection in ecstatic love?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.51

*tato bhaktir bhagavati putrī-bhūte janārdane
dampatyor nitarām āsīd gopa-gopīṣu bhārata*

Thereafter, O Mahārāja Parikṣit, best of the Bhāratas, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead became the son of Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā, they maintained continuous, unswerving devotional love in parental affection. And in their association, all the other inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, the *gopas* and *gopīs*, developed the culture of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.6.43

*nandaḥ sva-putram ādāya pretyāgatam udāra-dhīḥ
mūrdhny upāghrāya paramām mudaṁ lebhe kurūdvaha*

O Mahārāja Parīkṣit, best of the Kurus, Nanda Mahārāja was very liberal and simple. He immediately took his son Kṛṣṇa on his lap as if Kṛṣṇa had returned from death, and by formally smelling his son's head, Nanda Mahārāja undoubtedly enjoyed transcendental bliss.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.9.18

*sva-mātuḥ svinna-gātrāyā visrasta-kabara-srajah
dr̥ṣtvā pariśramaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane*

Because of mother Yaśodā's hard labor, her whole body became covered with perspiration, and the flowers and comb were falling from her hair. When child Kṛṣṇa saw His mother thus fatigued, He became merciful to her and agreed to be bound.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.9.20

*nemaṁ viriñco na bhavo na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁśrayā
prasādaṁ lebhire gopī yat tat prāpa vimuktidāt*

Neither Lord Brahmā, nor Lord Śiva, nor even the goddess of fortune, who is always the better half of the Supreme Lord, can obtain from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the deliverer from this material world, such mercy as received by mother Yaśodā.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.6.39-40

*payāṁsi yāsām apibat putra-sneha-snutāny alam
bhagavān devakī-putraḥ kaivalyādy-akhila-pradaḥ
tāsām avirataṁ kṛṣṇe kurvatīnām sutekṣaṇam
na punaḥ kalpate rājan saṁsāro 'jñāna-sambhavaḥ*



The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the bestower of many benedictions, including liberation [*kaivalya*], or oneness with the Brahman effulgence. For that Personality of Godhead, the *gopīs* always felt maternal love, and Kṛṣṇa sucked their breasts with full satisfaction. Therefore, because of their relationship as mother and son, although the *gopīs* were engaged in various family activities, one should never think that they returned to this material world after leaving their bodies.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.19.16

*gopīnām paramānanda āsīd govinda-darśane
kṣaṇam yuga-śatam iva yāsām yena vinābhavat*

The young *gopīs* took the greatest pleasure in seeing Govinda come home, since for them even a moment without His association seemed like a hundred ages.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.30.43

*tan-manaskās tad-alāpās tad-viçeṣṭās tad-ātmikāḥ
tad-guṇān eva gāyantyō nātmagārāṇi sasmaruḥ*

Their minds absorbed in thoughts of Him, they conversed about Him, acted out His pastimes and felt themselves filled with His presence. They completely forgot about their homes as they loudly sang the glories of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.44.14

*gopyas tapaḥ kim acarān yad amuṣya rūpaṁ
lāvaṇya-sāram asamordhvam ananya-siddham
dṛgbhiḥ pibanty anusavābhinavaṁ durāpam
ekānta-dhāma yaśasaḥ śrīya aiśvarasya*

What austerities must the *gopīs* have performed! With their eyes they always drink the nectar of Lord Kṛṣṇa's form, which is the essence of loveliness and is not to be equaled or surpassed. That loveliness is the only abode of beauty, fame and opulence. It is self-perfect, ever fresh and extremely rare.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.44.15

*yā dohane 'vahanane mathanopalepa
preṅkhenkhanārbha-ruditokṣaṇa-mārjanādau
gāyanti cainam anurakta-dhiyo 'śru-kaṅṭhyo
dhanyā vraja-striya urukrama-citta-yānāḥ*

The ladies of Vraja are the most fortunate of women because, with their minds fully attached to Kṛṣṇa and their throats always choked up with tears, they constantly sing about Him while milking the cows, winnowing grain, churning butter, gathering cow dung for fuel, riding on swings, taking care of their crying babies, sprinkling the ground with water, cleaning their houses, and so on. By their exalted Kṛṣṇa consciousness they automatically acquire all desirable things.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.44.16

*prātar vrajād vrajata āviśataś ca sāyaṁ
gobhiḥ samaṁ kvaṇayato 'sya niśamya veṇum
nirgamya tūrṇam abalāḥ pathi bhūri-puṇyāḥ
paśyanti sa-smita-mukhaṁ sa-dayāvalokam*

When the *gopīs* hear Kṛṣṇa playing His flute as He leaves Vraja in the morning with His cows or returns with them at sunset, the young girls quickly come out of their houses to see Him. They must have performed many pious activities to be able to see Him as He walks on the road, His smiling face mercifully glancing upon them.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.32.22

*na pāraye 'haṁ niravadya-saṁyujāṁ
sva-sādhū-kṛtyaṁ vibudhāyuṣāpi vaḥ
yā mābhajan durjara-geha-śṛṅkhalāḥ
saṁvṛścyā tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhunā*

I am not able to repay My debt for your spotless service, even within a lifetime of Brahmā. Your connection with Me is beyond reproach. You have worshiped Me, cutting off all domestic ties,



which are difficult to break. Therefore please let your own glorious deeds be your compensation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.46.3

*gacchoddhava vrajaṁ saumya pitror nau prītim āvaha
gopīnām mad-viyogādhiṁ mat-sandeśair vimocaya*

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] Dear gentle Uddhava, go to Vraja and give pleasure to Our parents. And also relieve the *gopīs*, suffering in separation from Me, by giving them My message.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.46.4

*tā man-manaskā mat-prāṇā mat-arthe tyakta-daihikāḥ
mām eva dayitaṁ preṣṭham ātmānaṁ manasā gatāḥ
ye tyakta-loka-dharmās ca mad-arthe tān bibharmy aham*

The minds of those *gopīs* are always absorbed in Me, and their very lives are ever devoted to Me. For My sake they have abandoned everything related to their bodies, renouncing ordinary happiness in this life, as well as religious duties necessary for such happiness in the next life. I alone am their dearest beloved and, indeed, their very Self. I personally sustain such devotees, who for My sake give up all worldly duties.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.46.5

*mayi tāḥ preyasām preṣṭhe dūra-sthe gokula-striyaḥ
smarantyo 'ṅga vimuhyanti virahautkaṅṭhya-vihvalāḥ*

My dear Uddhava, for those women of Gokula I am the most cherished object of love. Thus when they remember Me, who am so far away, they are overwhelmed by the anxiety of separation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.46.6

*dhārayanty ati-kṛcchreṇa prāyaḥ prāṇān kathañcana
pratyāgamana-sandeśair ballavyo me mad-ātmikāḥ*



Simply because I have promised to return to them, My fully devoted cowherd girlfriends struggle to maintain their lives somehow or other.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.12.10

*rāmeṇa sārdham mathurām praṇīte
śvāphalkinā mayy anurakta-cittāḥ
vigāḍha-bhāvena na me viyoga-
tivrādhayo 'nyam dadṛśuḥ sukhāya*

The residents of Vṛndāvana, headed by the *gopīs*, were always completely attached to Me with deepest love. Therefore, when My uncle Akrūra brought My brother Balarāma and Me to the city of Mathurā, the residents of Vṛndāvana suffered extreme mental distress because of separation from Me and could not find any other source of happiness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.12.11

*tās tāḥ kṣapāḥ preṣṭhatamena nītā
mayaiva vṛndāvana-gocareṇa
kṣaṇārdha-vat tāḥ punar aṅga tāsām
hīnā mayā kalpa-samā babhūvuḥ*

Dear Uddhava, all of those nights that the *gopīs* spent with Me, their most dearly beloved, in the land of Vṛndāvana seemed to them to pass in less than a moment. Bereft of My association, however, the *gopīs* felt that those same nights dragged on forever, as if each night were equal to a day of Brahmā.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.12.12

*tā nāvidan mayy anuṣaṅga-baddha-
dhiyaḥ svam ātmānam adas tathedam
yathā samādhau munayo 'bdhi-toye
nadyaḥ praviṣṭā iva nāma-rūpe*

My dear Uddhava, just as great sages in yoga trance merge into self-realization, like rivers merging into the ocean, and are



thus not aware of material names and forms, similarly, the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana were so completely attached to Me within their minds that they could not think of their own bodies, or of this world, or of their future lives. Their entire consciousness was simply bound up in Me.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.12.13

*mat-kāmā ramaṇam jāram
asvarūpa-vido 'balāḥ
brahma māṁ paramam prāpuḥ
saṅgāc chata-sahasraśaḥ*

All those hundreds of thousands of *gopīs*, understanding Me to be their most charming lover and ardently desiring Me in that way, were unaware of My actual position. Yet by intimately associating with Me, the *gopīs* attained Me, the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.58

*etāḥ param tanu-bhṛto bhuvi gopa-vadhvo
govinda eva nikhilātmani rūḍha-bhāvāḥ
vāñchanti yad bhava-bhiyo munayo vyaṁ ca
kim brahma-janmabhir ananta-kathā-rasasya*

[Uddhava sang:] Among all persons on earth, these cowherd women alone have actually perfected their embodied lives, for they have achieved the perfection of unalloyed love for Lord Govinda. Their pure love is hankered after by those who fear material existence, by great sages, and by ourselves as well. For one who has tasted the narrations of the infinite Lord, what is the use of taking birth as a high-class *brāhmaṇa*, or even as Lord Brahmā himself?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.59

*kvemāḥ striyo vana-carīr vyabhicāra-duṣṭāḥ
kṛṣṇe kva caiṣa paramātmani rūḍha-bhāvāḥ
nanv īśvaro 'nubhajato 'viduṣo 'pi sākṣāc*



chreyas tanoty agada-rāja ivopayuktaḥ

How amazing it is that these simple women who wander about the forest, seemingly spoiled by improper behavior, have achieved the perfection of unalloyed love for Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul! Still, it is true that the Supreme Lord Himself awards His blessings even to an ignorant worshiper, just as the best medicine works even when taken by a person ignorant of its ingredients.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.60

*nāyaṁ śriyo 'ṅga u nitānta-rateḥ prasādaḥ
svar-yoṣitām nalina-gandha-rucām kuto 'nyāḥ
rāsotsave 'sya bhujā-daṇḍa-grhīta-kaṇṭha-
labdhāśiṣām ya udagād vraja-vallabhīnām*

When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was dancing with the *gopīs* in the *rāsā-līlā*, the *gopīs* were embraced by the arms of the Lord. This transcendental favor was never bestowed upon the goddess of fortune or other consorts in the spiritual world. Indeed, never was such a thing even imagined by the most beautiful girls in the heavenly planets, whose bodily luster and aroma resemble the lotus flower. And what to speak of worldly women who are very beautiful according to material estimation?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.61

*āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauśadhīnām
yā dustyajāṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padavīm śrutibhir vimṛgyām*

The *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to give up, and they have forsaken the path of chastity to take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, Kṛṣṇa, which one should search for by Vedic knowledge. Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers or herbs in Vṛndāvana, because the *gopīs* trample them and bless them with the dust of their lotus feet.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.62

*yā vai śrīyārcitam ajādibhir āpta-kāmair
yogeśvarair api yad ātmani rāsa-goṣṭhyām
kṛṣṇasya tad bhagavataḥ caraṇāravindaṁ
nyastaṁ staneṣu vijahuḥ parirabhya tāpam*

The goddess of fortune herself, along with Lord Brahmā and all the other demigods, who are masters of *yogic* perfection, can worship the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa only within her mind. But during the *rāsa* dance Lord Kṛṣṇa placed His feet upon these *gopīs'* breasts, and by embracing those feet the *gopīs* gave up all distress.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.63

*vande nanda-vraja-strīṇāṁ
pāda-reṇum abhikṣṇaśaḥ
yāsāṁ hari-kathodgītāṁ
punāti bhuvana-trayam*

I repeatedly offer my respects to the dust from the feet of the women of Nanda Mahārāja's cowherd village. When these *gopīs* loudly chant the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vibration purifies the three worlds.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.21.9

*gopyaḥ kim ācarad ayaṁ kuśalam sma veṇur
dāmodarādhara-sudhām api gopikānām
bhunkte svayaṁ yad avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ hradinyo
hṛṣyat-tvaco 'śru mumucus taravo yathāryaḥ*

My dear *gopīs*, what auspicious activities must the flute have performed to enjoy the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips independently and leave only a taste for us *gopīs*, for whom that nectar is actually meant! The forefathers of the flute, the bamboo trees, shed tears of pleasure. His mother, the river on whose bank the bamboo was born, feels jubilation, and therefore her blooming lotus flowers are standing like hair on her body.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.90.48

*jayati jana-nivāso devakī-janma-vādo
yadu-vara-pariṣat svair dorbhir asyann adharmam
sthira-cara-vṛjina-ghnaḥ su-smīta-śrī-mukhena
vraja-pura-vanītānām vardhayan kāma-devam*

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is He who is known as *jana-nivāsa*, the ultimate resort of all living entities, and who is also known as Devakīnandana or Yaśodā-nandana, the son of Devakī and Yaśodā. He is the guide of the Yadu dynasty, and with His mighty arms He kills everything inauspicious, as well as every man who is impious. By His presence He destroys all things inauspicious for all living entities, moving and inert. His blissful smiling face always increases the lusty desires of the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. May He be all glorious and happy!



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Nectar an Ocean of the Holy Name

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Retreats, Events & Seminars

“In every human being lies a tremendous spiritual power – the power of transformation. Seeds grow into flowers, caterpillars into butterflies and we human beings can turn into self-realized souls.”

Śacīnandana Swami’s retreats, events and seminars are designed in such a way that they create an atmosphere in the heart which furthers spiritual growth. He and his team especially try to nurture experience-based transformations. As well as philosophy and deeper insights, the presentations offer many practical tools to help the participants apply what they have learned into their daily lives. The team also maintains long-term contact after the events with free training newsletters that help refresh specific themes and give tips and advice on how to deepen the individual’s personal practice.

Events include:

Japa and Kirtanas Retreats

Sacred Space Retreats

Kṛṣṇa Katha Retreats

More details on www.sacinandanaswami.com

Stay in Touch

Śaraṇāgati Newsletter

Śaraṇāgati is a free monthly two-page email newsletter published by Śacīnandana Swami that is filled with highly useful and inspirational spiritual information. You can subscribe on sacinandanaswami.com or by sending a request to saranagati@sacinandanaswami.com

Website

You may also stay in touch by visiting Śacīnandana Swami’s website. It is regularly updated with articles and poems on bhakti and includes his traveling schedule.

www.sacinandanaswami.com

Audio Archive

You can download and listen to Śacīnandana Swami’s recorded lectures on saranagati-library.net



Projects

Śacīnandana Swami is involved in many projects around the globe. Some of them are:

The Vedic way

The Vedic Way is a framework for a spiritual life style developed and taught by Śacīnandana Swami that integrates teachings that range from fulfilling basic human needs to the deepest spiritual aspirations from a Vedic viewpoint and with reference to life in the modern world.

www.vedicway.org

Govardhana Retreat Center

At the foot of Govardhana Hill the Govardhana Retreat Center offers facilities for concentrated spiritual practice in privacy. It also hosts guided retreats such as the two annual and internationally acclaimed Japa and Govardhana Retreats.

www.govardhancenter.com

Braj Care

Braj Care is a charitable organization that provides humanitarian and poverty relief programs in the area of Vrāja, Northern India. The charity's work is focused on raising awareness and funds in order to improve the conditions of life of the poor and destitute, providing medical care, preserving monuments and environmental programs.

www.brajcare.com

Vedic Academy

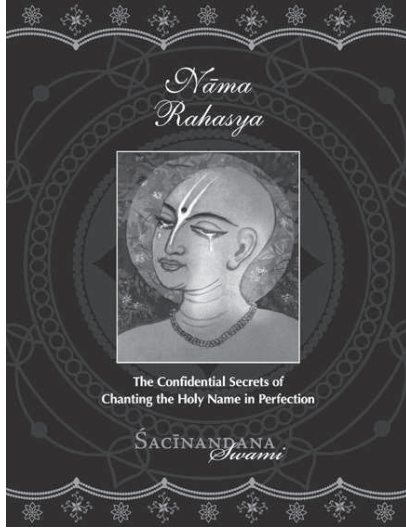
The Vedic Academy is an educational institution that offers courses and counseling in Vedic sciences such as vastu, ayurveda, astrology and more.

www.veda-academy.com



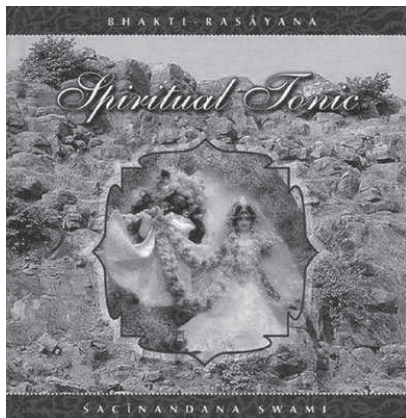
Śaraṅāgati publishing

Books and CDs by Śacīnandana Swami



Nāma Rahasya

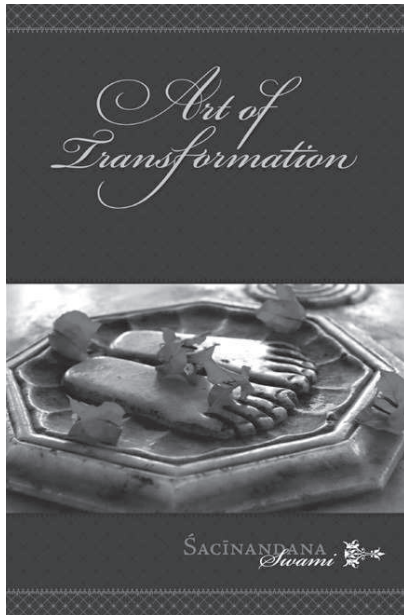
While recovering high in the mountains of Bosnia from a traumatic illness and surgery, I read *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta* by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. There, in the sixth chapter, which he poetically calls the “sixth rainfall”, the Ṭhākura explains in a little more than thirty pages the complete secret of chanting the holy name. As I read on and on, I felt his presence in my heart and was reminded of those few precious moments that every chanter knows – those moments when from the depths of the soul a little spiritual insight bursts forth and pervades one’s entire being. This book has been written to help sincere practitioners obtain access to the world of divine mercy and to empower them to chant the holy name in perfection.



Spiritual Tonic

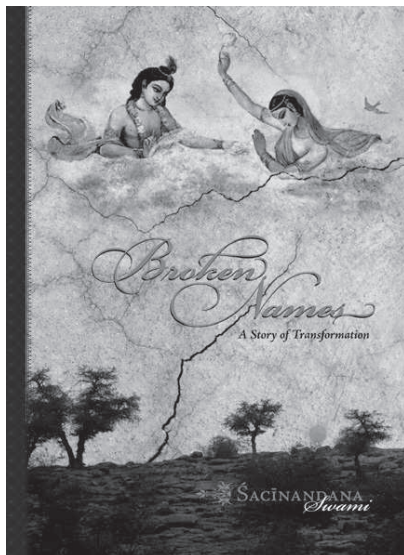
Kṛṣṇa consciousness is more than a physical culture or a sociological movement; it is a culture of absorption. The entire point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to absorb the mind. The more one knows about the personality of the Lord, the better one can absorb one’s mind in chanting his holy name. Contemplating on the *bhakti-rasāyana* verses is a way to increase our knowledge about Kṛṣṇa, his holy abode, his associates, and his pastimes in Vṛndāvana. While meditating on the verses and simultaneously chanting the holy name, our minds and hearts can become completely immersed in the nectarean ocean of *bhakti-rasa*.





Art of Transformation

Spiritual cultures the world over have always tried to assist humankind's inner development. At the heart of this development is the transformation of character. Even modern psychology and secular personality-development movements have become aware of the tremendous potency encapsulated in traditional spiritual processes. This small book attempts to present the essence of the philosophy and practical techniques used in inner transformation gleaned from the Vedic – and especially Vaiṣṇava–viewpoint, as it has been presented by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



Broken Names

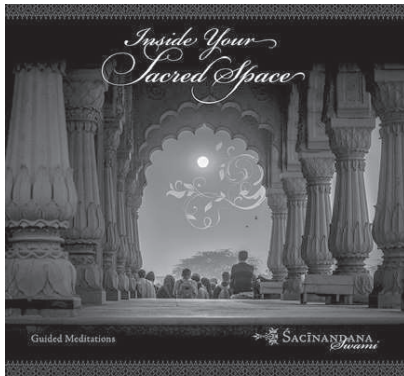
This book tells the exciting story around the inner transformation of a young pilgrim named Vishvambhara, who, in the company of his guru and one mysterious saint, rediscovers his faith in chanting the divine names. Deeply spiritual and at the same time highly relevant for modern practitioners of *bhakti*.

H.H. Śivarāma Swami on this book:

“Yesterday I read Broken Names. I want to thank you for that composition, a gift to the Vaiṣṇava community including myself. In a very captivating narrative you have passed on wonderful capsules of advice on how we struggling sādhakas can raise the quality of our chanting of the all so sweet names of the Divine Couple. I found your teachings illuminating and shall apply them in my own practices.”

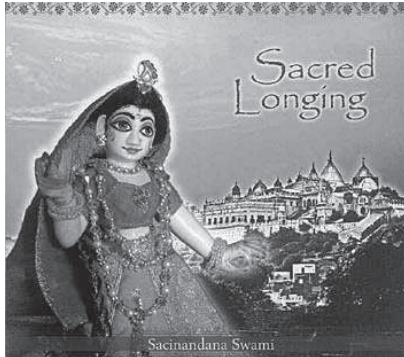


Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name



Sacred Space

Śacīnandana Swami regularly offers meditations in his retreats and seminars. Most of them are guided meditations designed to allow participants to have a deep experience with their inner selves. This Sacred Space CD was developed from the desires of retreat participants to invite as many people as possible to have the same deep experiences. Just as each of us has to find our own rhythm in breathing, so we each have find our own inner guidance in meditation. The meditations on this CD are therefore meant to help you get in touch with your innate ability to go within. Each meditation is preceded by a short introduction and concludes with a wisdom text from an ancient Indian scripture. Be prepared to discover your inner world.



Sacred Longing

Śacīnandana Swami comments on this recording: *“These CDs are different from other recordings in that the kīrtanas are imbued with deep and sacred longing. We recorded them a day after Janmāṣṭamī, the amazing festival of Kṛṣṇa’s appearance in this world. The altar had been converted into a boat, and when the curtains opened, all who were present felt as if Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had come on a river of love flowing directly into our hearts. The next day we sang through the night, still being carried on the wave of that inspiration. We wanted only Kṛṣṇa, nothing else. Nothing in this whole wide world could match the sweetness of the supreme, and we poured those feelings into the kīrtanas on these CDs.”*





The Gāyatrī Book

Third, revised and extended edition, in a beautiful new design.

The Gāyatrī book is a comprehensive manual and a source of inspiration on the mystery of the gāyatrī-mantras, their meaning and practice. A book not only for *brahmana* initiated practitioners, but for aspiring candidates as well as for inquisitive nectar seekers.

This edition includes a new section of study questions that help you test and deepen your understanding of each chapter. Also, the text has been completely re-layouted and is printed in two colors making it easy to read. A definite must in every spiritual bookshelf!

Kṛṣṇa-Kṣetra Swami on the Gāyatrī book:
“If Vaiṣṇava culture is to take root and carry on indefinitely, surely practitioners need to have a thorough understanding of their adopted tradition. The Gāyatrī Book aims to fulfill this need. Those who know Śacīnandana Swami personally will recognize the imprint of his expertise and concern as a teacher. The Gāyatrī Book is both a practical manual and a carefully woven explication, thoughtfully structured as an unfolding blossoming flower, revealing one after another the layers of significance to this important aspect of brahmana practice.”

