

NĀMA RUCI - CHANTING WITH TASTE



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DISCOVERIES

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam idṛśam 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.

1.) What is real misfortune?

Only a person who has faith really advances in chanting. So, why are we so unfortunate that even after hearing so much about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we are still not able to place our faith entirely into the process and therefore our chanting remains poor? Why do we have weak faith? The answer is that we are overcome by a misfortune that is as old as the universe - that is the tendency to go against God.

Kṛṣṇa has, nevertheless, invested all his potencies in his holy names. Charity, austerity, *yajña*, and knowledge - all these have the potency to destroy sins. However, Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that all these potencies have been given to the holy name. Therefore, it is said that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is more powerful than e.g. performing *aśvamedha* sacrifices.



There are no rules and regulations to chanting the holy names. Kṛṣṇa has invested all his potencies in the holy names, and has pulled out all restrictions and rules on chanting them. Anyone can chant the holy names. However, it is due to our offensive nature that we have no attraction for chanting the holy names. As Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said, offensive chanting is like having worms. Worms represent material desires, *anarthas* and *aparādhās*. Many of us actually spend a good deal of time chanting (up to two hours a day), but because of these worm-like habits and desires, we do not develop deep taste for the holy names. In this way, the process does not really nourish us. Who would be nourished having worms inside him/her? The worms get all the food - not the person!



Chanting is difficult because we hang on to our bad habits, especially that of criticizing devotees. Therefore, we must develop humility. If you remain critical and judgmental towards devotees and do not open your heart towards *saṅga* you will never become nourished and you will thus remain spiritually thin.

On the other hand, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura encourages us by writing that we should not despair when we see that our hearts are still full of desires and *aparādhas*. Do not be hopeless! *“Whether my attachment to material life increases or disappears, whether there are millions of impediments to my devotional life, or whether these impediments all disappear, even if I have to go to hell on account of my offences, I will accept it willingly. But I will not give up devotion to my Lord. I will never take up the paths of dry rituals or knowledge even if Lord Brahmā himself comes and tells me.”* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.20.27-28, purport)

So the determination has to be there: Whatever happens or comes my way, I will not give up! Be determined to give up the obstacles, and renounce the false notion that material sense gratification will ever make you happy because mere enjoyment of the material world is the breeding ground for misery.

2.) Sādhu Saṅga - the Birthplace of Spiritual Progress

Rāmānujācārya says: *“If you cannot purify yourself by any endeavor whatsoever, then just go sit with the Vaiṣṇavas and you will achieve all auspiciousness.”* (Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Śrī Bhaktyāloka*, p. 109)

When you are close to a *vaiṣṇava*, bind his energy to your heart - thus *bhakti* will rise. In this way, the highest devotion will soon appear in one’s heart. Let us hear an example of the inspirational power of Śrīla Prabhupāda from one of his lectures.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is such a *bhakti*-generating force - listen to him and his classes and the *anarthas* will run away like elephants run when a powerful lion appears. In other words, when we hear from a pure devotee, the effect will be that one will think: why not become Kṛṣṇa conscious, why not now?! That is a *vaiṣṇava*’s *vīryavana* - potency - from which one develops *śraddhā* and from this faith, *bhakti* develops. If you want to develop your spiritual life more and more, you have to associate with devotees. *Sat-saṅga*, or proper *sādhu-saṅga* is when we remember to glorify and talk about Kṛṣṇa. In a strong *sādhu-saṅga* a seed of *bhakti* will come into our heart. And that seed will grow in your heart. There will be *sambandha* and you will like to serve Kṛṣṇa. You will be more inclined towards doing service. Therefore, open your heart to a devotee and be ready to receive advice with an open mind.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said: *“Always think like that, that as soon as you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, you must know that you are touching Kṛṣṇa with your tongue. Then you get the same benefit as Prahlāda Mahārāja [who was touched by the lotus palm of the Lord].”* (Lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.6., Māyāpur, Feb. 26, 1977)

Two Ways of Devotional Association: Taking Association and Giving Association

- 1.) Taking association means to be open to receive instructions.
- 2.) Giving association means to commit yourself to doing something beneficial for others.

As an exercise, every morning when you get up take a moment’s time and say: I have this precious human form of life, what can I do now to be encouraging to others? And, before you go to bed, take a moment’s time and think: how well did I do today in being compassionate, spiritually inspiring, not being judgmental and helping others? This practice will very quickly soften a lonely heart!



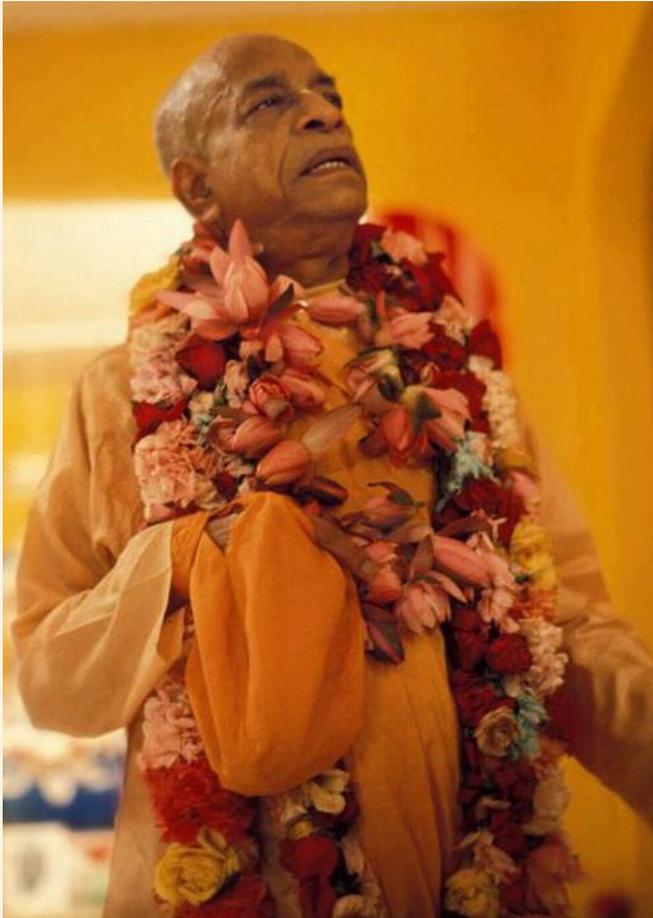
—❁❁❁ PRACTICE ❁❁❁—

Śrīla Prabhupāda has encouraged us to enter the presence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa through chanting, as chanting is a glorification of the divine couple. He told us that Kṛṣṇa keeps a list in his heart of those who chant his names. Chanting means to enter into the divine relationship.

„The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them.“ (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.4.68)

1.) Think of the Person whose Name you Chant

We are not encouraged to do mind-less *kīrtana*, but to do mind-full *kīrtana*. This means that while you chant you should think about the person whose name you chant. In the ancient scriptures *japa* is always a part of *dhyāna* - meditation! So when you chant you want to come into a state of inner silence, or mental silence. Silence is a prerequisite for engaging in spiritual life. We need to bring the material mind into silence. Chanting is not a mental exercise nor do we wish to direct the mind through chanting here and there. Rather we should make the material mind silent so that the new impressions that come with chanting can be rooted deeply into our subconsciousness



and our heart. As the material mind becomes silent, the spiritual impressions then have their impact on us. This is very deep and very rich. Drift into the divine sound, be carried by the sound, be immersed into the sound.

2.) Association with Devotees

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives a variety of solutions from which we can adapt in order to work on the inner obstacles (*anarthas*) we have (see 7.15.22-25).

However, associating with the right people can help us conquer all unwanted things. In order to overcome our problems we should bind the energy of the devotee to our heart and absorb the qualities of that person.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura instructs that one should pay special attention to the company one keeps because the quality of the one you associate with will be reflected in the mirror of your heart. So seek the company of those who have the same ideals so that you can develop auspicious qualities. Association begins to form in one's speech, habits and mind. In this way association transforms.

So while chanting, you can meditate on your spiritual master or Śrīla Prabhupāda and then you can invite him by offering a nice seat and some water, and worshipping him. From that point onwards, chant as if you are chanting in the association of your spiritual master. Beg and request this exalted devotee to give you the rare treasure of devotional service.

There may be many different ways on how to deal with our weaknesses, but we can effectively conquer all the different obstacles just by associating with a dear devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

3.) Chanting in Association of our Guru

In the 6th chapter of *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, the following meditation on the spiritual master can be found:

One worships the spiritual master by offering him:

- A seat
- Water for washing his feet
- Water to drink
- A bath
- And after letting him dry off
- Fresh clothes and ornaments
- Then, with the spiritual master's permission, one can worship the divine couple.

Please try this method by going through the steps in your mind and then chant in your guru's inspiring association.