

KARTIK INSPIRATIONS 2024

GO ALL THE WAY!

Welcome to today's *Kartik Inspiration*.

Let us look at a very essential and hope-giving principle of spiritual practice. As we strive to raise the bar and go deeper into our practice, there will inevitably come a moment when we find ourselves unable to proceed on our own strength. Our physical body may become tired; our mind may rebel, holding up signs, "I can't, I won't, I don't like," and we may feel stuck. This is a good sign! Now you know you have reached your limit and need help to cross any "walls" you encounter.

Calling out for help is the essential principle in *bhakti* that distinguishes it from impersonal yoga, *karma-kanda*, and *jnana-kanda*. In *bhakti*, there is someone who listens, someone who sees. You may have tried your best, but now help is required.

In the *Harinama-cintamani*, Haridasa Thakura speaks about this in a very moving way. Imagine him, the *acarya* who chants from sunrise to sunset and throughout most of the night, with tears running down his face. Ecstatic symptoms cover him like a swarm of ants cover a piece of sugar.

He is completely absorbed, yet he says, "It is impossible for the living entity to single-handedly avoid and overcome the illusion of distraction. Only by the mercy of the Lord is this accomplished, and it is done so with ease. Therefore, it is essential for me to prayerfully beg for the Lord's grace with great humility, for this is the only means to salvation from this offense."

It's very good to adopt a humble position—in spiritual life humility is a high position from which you can reach what is otherwise unattainable. The way up is the way down. Embrace humility and the humble realization that you can't do it alone. You cannot overcome the illusion of distraction—where the whole world rushes through your mind when you try to focus it.

If you come to this position of humble recognition, then you can genuinely pray. And then—not by your own power but by Krishna's mercy, which responds to such a humble expression—you will reach new levels of your spiritual practice.

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Śaṅkara

ŚACINANDANA SWAMI