

Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi

The Transcendental Touchstone of the Holy Name

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Glories of the Holy Name

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the life of Śrīmatī Jahnavā-devī; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya and Mother Sītā; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

At Nilācala, within His sacred temple near the ocean shore, the Supreme Personality of Godhead resides in His form of wood known as Daru-brahman. The Supreme Lord Hari descended to the material world in this form of Jagannātha to deliver the living entities from their eternal bondage. He grants material benedictions to those who require them and final release from all material attachments to those who are more spiritually advanced.

In this same sacred abode, the same Supreme Lord took the role of a renounced *sannyāsī* to give His supreme blessing to humanity. Residing in Kāśī Miśra's home, He propagated the only *dharma* needed by the fallen souls of this age, and so established the real meaning of religion in Kali-yuga.

There, like a desire tree yielding unlimited treasures, surrounded by His many devotees, Lord Caitanya distributed love of Godhead (Kṛṣṇa-prema) freely to all people. Ensuring that His teachings would be correctly disseminated, He had certain associates speak on specific subjects while He Himself gave His blissful audience. Thus He relished Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya's revelation of the confidential sweetness of the conjugal love of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa; Śrī Sarvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya's explanation of actual liberation; Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's intricate analysis of the various levels of loving exchange with the Lord; and Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's glorification of the supreme efficacy and excellence of the Holy Name.

One day, after bathing in the ocean, Lord Caitanya met Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura under the Siddha-Bākula tree. Greatly pleased at seeing Śrīla

Haridāsa, the Lord inquired from him the means by which the conditioned souls can most easily be delivered from sin.

Śrīla Haridāsa fell at the Lord’s lotus feet and clasped them tightly. His entire body went into rapture, and he offered humble prayers punctuated by shivering and tears. In a choked voice Śrīla Haridāsa said, “My Lord, Your wonderful pastimes are unfathomable, and I am but unfortunate and illiterate. Your lotus feet are my only resort. What is the use of asking such questions of a worthless person like me?”

Śrīla Haridāsa continued: “You are Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has appeared in Navadvīpa to save all living entities. O my Lord Gauraṅga, kindly shelter me in the shade of Your lotus feet, for only this will gladden my heart. Your Holy Name is unlimited, You are the embodiment of endless excellences, and Your exquisite beauty draws me into a shoreless ocean of joy. Your pastimes are ever-expanding; You have manifested Your name, form, qualities and activities in this material world so even a fallen wretch like myself can relish them. It is impossible for one with mundane vision to perceive Your transcendental features with his limited senses, but now You are mercifully revealing Yourself for the highest benefit of humanity; this is indeed the direct display of the internal spiritual potency of the Lord.

“You are the spiritual sun and I am an insignificant spark of Your effulgence. You are my Lord and master and I am Your servitor eternally. The ambrosia emanating from Your lotus feet intoxicates all my senses. My only hope lies in the limitless nectar of Your Holy Name. I am fallen what can I say of my own volition? I am here just to execute Your orders. I shall be greatly satisfied to speak the words You put into my mouth and I will not consider whether they are right or wrong.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa and His energies

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is beyond anyone’s jurisdiction, for He alone is the master (*sarveśvāra*) of all that exists. He completely independent, being self-willed and self-fulfilled. His unrestricted desires are effortlessly satisfied by His inconceivable internal potency that constantly associates with Him. This potency is a feature of His inherent nature and is therefore never independent of Him.¹

¹ He is known as the non-dual Supreme Consciousness by dint of His free will and inconceivable potency. Empirical philosophers (*jñānīs*) attempt to rob this non-dual Divinity of His personal will and potency by postulating Him to be the impersonal Brahman. But in

Kṛṣṇa exists within all His energies and is thus not different from them. The *Vedas* declare Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the infinite, absolute Vibhu; His energies are His attributes (*vaibhava*). His *vaibhava* energies are the root of all existing phenomena: yet even in the midst of unlimited phenomena ever-expanding throughout all time, Kṛṣṇa remains aloof and indivisible in His original form.

The three kinds of *vaibhava*

Vibhu is perceivable only by the grace of His *vaibhava* energies, of which there are three kinds. They are, as revealed in the scriptures, the spiritual energy (*cid-vaibhava*), the material energy (*māyā* or *acid-vaibhava*), and the marginal energy (*jīva-vaibhava*).²

The *cit-śakti* is known as *viṣṇupāda*

The *cit-śakti* is never affected by the inferior *acid-śakti*. Even when it descends to this material world, *cit-śakti* remains untouched by the inebrieties of matter. Forever spiritual, embodying the absolute nature of the Supreme Godhead, the spiritual potency is glorified in the Vedic hymns as being equal to the Lord Himself; thus it is known as *Viṣṇupāda* (intimately connected

fact the impersonal Brahman (Kṛṣṇa's consciousness minus will and potency) is only the effulgence of the Supreme non-dual Brahman.

Through the eightfold *yoga* system, *yogis* can perceive the non-dual Supreme Being within their hearts as the localized Supersoul or *Paramātmā* who pervades and witnesses all existence. But *Paramātmā* is also just a partial appearance of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa alone is the Absolute Consciousness, for only He displays absolute potency, will and control.

² Kṛṣṇa's *cid-vaibhava* is a direct transformation of His *cit-śakti*, His personal internal potency. The display of *cid-vaibhava* includes His abode, known as the *Vaikuṅṭha-loka*; His innumerable names like *Govinda*, *Hari*, etc.; His transcendental forms like the threefold bending form with two hands playing the flute; His divine qualities, so sublimely pleasurable to His devotees; His superexcellent pastimes like the *rasa* dance in *Vṛṇḍāvana* and its corresponding appearance in *Navadvīpa* as the congregational chanting of the Holy Names. These spiritual opulences are countless.

Another feature of the *cit-śakti* is the *sandhinī* potency by which all things exist and are held together as an interrelated whole, including the relationships of the *jīvas* to the Lord. Similarly, the *cit-śakti* manifests the *samvit* potency, which reveals knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, His energies, and one's own identity.

The *cit-śakti* also generates the *hlādinī* potency, which gives rise to the ecstatic bliss of spiritual relationships, spiritual emotions and their combination in the sweet exchanges of *rasa*, or the mellows of divine love. All of these transformations of the *cit-śakti* or *Yoga-māyā* (i.e. *cid-vaibhava* and the *sandhinī*, *samvit* and *hlādinī śaktis*) are beyond material place, time and qualities, being eternally pure and full of bliss.

with Viṣṇu). There is no tinge of material influence in Lord Kṛṣṇa's energies: they are transcendental and exist in pure goodness (*śuddha-sattva*).³

Viṣṇu-tattva

All the plenary expansions of the Lord such as Govinda, Vaikuṅṭhanatha, Mahā-Viṣṇu, Garbodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu are in the category of absolute goodness, supreme and divine, and are known as Viṣṇu-tattva.

The Viṣṇu-tattva forms may reside in any place, either the spiritual abodes of Goloka, Vaikuṅṭha, the Causal ocean, or in this material universe, yet They are always the master of *māyā* and the supreme controller of every other living entity great or small. Their remaining unaffected by the influence of the illusory potency is evidence of their inconceivable spiritual position.

Brahmā, Śiva and the other demigods are *miṣra-sattva*, being influenced by *māyā*. The Viṣṇu-tattva forms, Their abodes, Their pastimes, and all else in the spiritual sky exist in pure goodness.

Māyā-tattva

A river called Virajā separates the material universe from the spiritual abode. Everything in the fourteen material planetary systems is *acit-vaibhava* or the temporary manifestation of matter. This place has been described in the scriptures as Devi-dhāma (the abode of Durgā-devi), who is the presiding deity of *māyā*.

³ *Sattva*, or goodness, is of two kinds: *śuddha sattva* and *miṣra-sattva* (mixed goodness). Everything in the category of *cid-vaibhava* is *śuddha-sattva*, or pure goodness. All *sattva* in the material nature is mixed, or *miṣra-sattva*.

Śuddha-sattva is devoid of passion and ignorance. Birth indicates the mode of passion in action. The eternally existent spiritual essence, *śuddha-sattva*, has never been touched by birth, which is a manifestation of passion, nor by annihilation, which occurs in the mode of ignorance.

As the Supreme Lord's separated parts and parcels, the *jīvas* (the living entities, who are individual spirit souls) are originally *śuddha-sattva*, but due to their contact with nescience they have come under the sway of the material modes of passion and ignorance, and hence are now in the mixed or *miṣra-sattva* category. Even demigods like Siva, though far superior in many ways to the ordinary *jīvas*, are nevertheless captivated by the material glare due to false identification, and so fall in this category of *miṣra-sattva*.

The Supreme Lord is always in pure goodness. He descends to this material world by His inconceivable spiritual potency and is always the controller of the material nature, *māyā*, who is ever ready to act as His maidservant.

The material universe, including the physical bodies of the living entities, is made up of the five gross elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. Mind, intelligence and false ego are subtle material elements that comprise the psychic bodies of the living entities. The psychic bodies arise from desire. Yet the soul is always purely spiritual and distinct from his subtle body; he is by nature śuddha-sattva, as are his original mind, intelligence and ego.

The seven higher planetary systems Bhūr, Bhuvar, Svarga, Mahar, Jana, Tapa, and Satya or Brahmā and the seven lower planetary systems such as Atala, Sutala and so on are all manifestations of *māyā* (the illusory potency). *Cid-vaibhava* is the complete whole, and *māyā* is its shadow.

***Jīva-vaibhava* consists of both liberated and conditioned souls**

The *jīvas* are originally completely spiritual, infinitesimal and endowed with a limited degree of independence. The *jīvas* are countless in number and are in urgent need of spiritual bliss for the attainment of their perfection. In seeking that bliss, those who surrender their lives to Lord Kṛṣṇa are liberated from birth and death and reside eternally in the Lord's company as His confidential associates. On the other hand, the *jīva*-souls who desire self-importance and selfish pleasure become attracted by *māyā*, who awaits them on the other side of the River Virajā. She entices them away from Lord Kṛṣṇa's service and lures them into the trap of the Devi-dhāma, where they are chained to bodies manufactured by material nature. Bound by the reactions of their misdeeds, they wander from birth to birth in gross and subtle forms. Sometimes they are elevated to the heavenly planets and afterwards go to hell. In this way they travel through all the eight million four hundred thousand species of life, suffering the pains of material existence.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is always merciful to the *jīvas*

The Lord is the Supreme Personality, and the *jīva* is His tiny part and parcel. Kṛṣṇa is always concerned for the well-being of His *jīva* expansions. In whatever situation the *jīva* may find himself, Lord Kṛṣṇa is always prepared to grant the *jīva* his heart's desire, like a well-wisher who never forsakes his friend.

Kṛṣṇa's relationship with the *jīva* is eternal: He uses the *jīva* as an instrument through whom and to whom He manifests His energies and opulences. The Lord is the controller, the *jīva* the controlled; the Lord is independent, the *jīva* dependent; the Lord is master, the *jīva* the beneficiary of the results of his service to the master.

Pious acts are material and fruitive

The soul greedy for material sense pleasure finds even this easily available by the kindness of the master. The means to attain such gratification is the performance of auspicious activities (*śubha-karma*) recommended in the Vedas. These are: following the duties of the *varnāśrama* system; performing sacrifices such as the fire sacrifice (*agnistoma*); executing the eight-fold *yoga* process; offering *hāvana* or oblations; keeping vows on full-moon days; giving in charity on auspicious days and other occasions conducive to material benefit.

Although *śubha-karma* is performed with Lord Viṣṇu as the presiding Deity, the performer lacks spiritual intentions. He unfortunately takes complete shelter of material considerations of object, time and place and cannot even intuit his dearth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness because such ritualistic considerations thwart the mood of spiritual self-examination and inquiry.

The results of *śubha-karma* are material, for they merely inflame lust for more enjoyment in higher planets. Such sacrifices and their results can never satisfy the soul, the real self, because their cause is illusion. These so-called auspicious activities only avail the *jīva* temporary heavenly pleasures diametrically opposed to transcendental bliss.

The means of deliverance from material piety

If a person is fortunate enough to get the association of a saintly devotee and learns that he, the *jīva*, is an eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, then he easily surmounts the great obstacle of material nature. This is very rare, being the result of a vast accumulation of piety that can never be acquired by the performance of *śubha-karma*, which gives only insignificant results.

Empirical philosophy (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*) elevates one to the *brahmajyoti*

The dry empirical philosophers are more advanced than the *karmīs*, for they understand the material existence to be a condition of suffering and so strive for liberation. The Lord is kind to them also: He has given them the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* section of the *Vedas* so they can pursue impersonal knowledge of the Absolute. Their final goal is absorption into the *brahmajyoti*. The *brahmajyoti* is Kṛṣṇa's blinding spiritual effulgence and is situated on the bank of the *Virajā*. All the demons the Supreme Lord kills also merge into Brahman, just beyond the periphery of *māyā*. Both the empiricists and fruitive workers are non-devotees, disinclined to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa. They can never relish the sweetness of Lord Kṛṣṇa's service.

Piety leading to devotional service

Sukṛti, or pious activity, is of three varieties: *karmonmukhi* or piety derived from *śubha-karma*, *jñānonmukhi* or piety derived from the cultivation of knowledge, and *bhakty-unmukhi* or piety derived from devotional activities. The first two lead, respectively, to enjoyment of the fruits of action and to liberation. The last leads to an appreciation for saintly association. *Bhakty-unmukhi* is achieved by performing devotional service to the Lord unknowingly, without spiritual knowledge.

Bhakty-unmukhi is the most important kind of *sukṛti*, for it impels the *jīva* to meet a pure, saintly devotee. By associating with a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, the *jīva*'s faith becomes firm. Gradually he develops a taste for chanting the Holy Name, becomes compassionate towards all beings, and is then firmly fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Lord compassionately guides the *karmī* and *jñānī* to the unknowing performance of devotional service

The Lord is an ocean of magnanimity, and the supreme controller of everyone. He is always keen to serve the conditioned souls, including the *karmīs* and *jñānīs*. Thinking of their welfare, He provides them the opportunity for indirect devotional service.

The *karmī* who follows Varnāśrama-dharma associates with saintly persons and executes his duties for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord Hari. Such activities cleanse his heart and gradually destroy the desire for more fruitive work. In its place the seed of *śraddhā*, or pure faith, is sown within his heart.

The *jñānī* who sincerely seeks transcendental wisdom humbly enters the company of pure devotees and invokes their inherent compassion towards him. By their grace, he easily develops firm faith in the direct process of pure devotional service. In this way, by the *jñānī*'s indirect devotion to knowledge, he gets the shelter of the pure devotees.

The Lord says, 'My servant, the *jīva*, may succumb to the treachery of My illusory potency, but I keep his best interests in My heart. By degrees I inspire him to develop an aversion to sense enjoyment and liberation, and then grant him attraction to devotional service unto Me. I lead the *jīva* in his pursuit to fulfill his material desires by engaging him in the indirect devotional processes of *karma* and *jñāna*, and in this way I strengthen his faith and love for Me.'

Lord Kṛṣṇa is most compassionate. The indirect devotional paths are but a hint of His causeless mercy. Without His loving intervention, how could the *jīva* ever become purified?

The indirect processes have deteriorated badly in Kali-yuga

The Satya-yuga sages who took up the process of meditation were personally purified by Kṛṣṇa and given the treasure of devotional service. In the Treta-yuga, the same spiritual success crowned those who flawlessly performed opulent sacrifices to satisfy the Lord. In the Dvāpara-yuga, He granted devotion to those who adhered to the path of perfect Deity worship. With the advent of Kali-yuga, Lord Kṛṣṇa saw the dreadful condition of the *jīvas* and relinquished all hope in the processes of karma, *jñāna* and *yoga*.

People in the Kali-yuga are short-lived, always harassed by disease, and are born with a weak body and mind. The observance of Varnāśrama-dharma and the cultivation of *sākhya* philosophy, *yoga*, and empiricism will not yield the strength humanity needs to redeem itself.⁴

The prime process: chanting the Holy Name

The Lord, considering the *jīvas*' welfare, descended in Kali-yuga along with His Holy Name to propagate the *yuga-dharma* (the religion of the age). By taking up the *yuga-dharma* the *jīva* attains love of Kṛṣṇa: he has only to remember the Supreme Lord's name (*nāma-smāraṇa* or *jaṇa*) and chant the Lord's name congregationally (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*).

The Holy Name is both the means and the end

The only method or means (*sādhana*) in this age is the Holy Name of the Lord. The only goal (*sādhya*) to be attained in this age is Kṛṣṇa-prema. Even in the stage of perfection, the name is not given up but is chanted all the more, for it is intrinsic to the activities of prema. Indeed, the name is not different from the Lord: it is the very embodiment of *prema*. If the means is the end, then the end and the means never contradict one another. If process is identical to the objective, then it is easy for the *jīvas* to attain the desired

⁴ In Kali-yuga, the indirect devotional paths of *jñāna* and *karma* are extremely narrow and hazardous. They are intended to lead one to the shrine of devotional service through either the association of saintly persons during philosophical discussions, or by the ritualistic offering to the Supreme Lord of the results of work performed without desire. In Kali-yuga both paths have become contaminated. Genuine saintly persons, now rarely seen, have been displaced by crass, commercial pseudo-spiritualists. Religious duties are no longer performed for purifying the consciousness but for enjoyment of the material results of the rituals. Therefore these secondary paths are no longer beneficial. Even the process of Deity worship that gave the highest spiritual success in Dvāpara-yuga has become impure and degraded.

goal of life, Kṛṣṇa-prema. By the mercy of His Holy Name, Kṛṣṇa easily delivers the *jīvas* in the age of Kali.⁵

Śrīla Haridāsa, the incarnation of Lord Brahmā, fell at the Lord’s lotus feet with tears cascading from his eyes. His body heaving with sighs, Haridāsa declared, “I am extremely fallen and am much engrossed in material life. Being the rascal I am, I never chanted Your Holy Name.”



Only those persons who appreciate Lord Hari, His devotees, and devotional service can take this *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* to heart.

⁵ In *karma* and *jñāna*, the *sādhana* and *sādhya* are in conflict. The only real goal or *sādhya* of the *Vedas* is to attain the mercy of the Lord. As one approaches the goal via the paths of *karma* and *jñāna*, they vanish, being impermanent. But *nāma-sādhya* already exists in *nāma-sādhana*, for the Lord is forever identical to His Holy Name. This truth is known only by great good fortune.

Chapter Two

The Acceptance of the Holy Name

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the life of Śrīmatī Jahnava-devi; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya and Mother Sītā; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya. Śrīla Haridāsa continued to weep in ecstatic love. Lord Gauracandra encircled him with His arms in a loving embrace and said, “O Haridāsa, a devotee of your caliber is rarely found. You are well-versed in all spiritual conclusions and you are always unaffected by *māyā*.”

Elevation by pure devotion

“Taking birth in a low family and caste, you have proven to the world that Kṛṣṇa is not obtained merely by amassing wealth, reputation, lineage or refinement. Whoever develops unflinching faith in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Lord as you have done is factually superior to the demigods.

“You are learned in all the truths of the Holy Name of the Lord; your spiritual conduct is exemplary; and you are an expert preacher. Therefore, O Haridāsa, kindly reveal to Me something of the unlimited glories of the Holy Name. Please allow Me to savor your words.

Three stages of acceptance of the name

“One who chants the Holy Name even once is considered a Vaiṣṇava devotee, and the householders should be very attentive to respect such a person. But the devotee who constantly chants Kṛṣṇa’s name is even a better Vaiṣṇava, for he is endowed with all good qualities. The most advanced Vaiṣṇava of all is he who inspires others who see him to immediately chant the Lord’s name. When he chants the name even once, attraction to rendering eternal devotional service to the Supreme Lord is irrevocably established. Kindly tell Me how the non-devotees can be made to accept the chanting of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.”

The spiritual identity of the Holy Name

Śrīla Haridāsa clasped his hands together. Eyes brimming with tears and voice choked in spiritual love, he began his reply in soft, gentle tones.

“Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name is *cintāmaṇi*, formed of eternal and transcendental touchstone. Just as a touchstone yields all desirable objects, so the touchstone

of Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name gives religiosity, wealth, sense pleasure and liberation to a materialistic person. To a surrendered devotee, it offers pure love of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa and His Holy Name are not different; They are the one and same Absolute Truth who is the all-pervading yet supremely independent form of dynamic spirituality (*caitanya-vigraha*), fully cognizant and full of bliss, without beginning or end. Eternally free of material imperfection (*nitya-mukta*), always situated in pure goodness (*śuddha-sattva*), the Holy Name, identical (*abhinna*) with He who is denoted by the name (the *nāmī*, or Kṛṣṇa), descends to this world as the complete incarnation of the highest sweetness (*rasa*).

Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities and pastimes are full of potency

Any object is known by four characteristic features: name, form, qualities and activities. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Object, is knowable in terms of His unlimited and eternal name, form, qualities and pastimes. The absence of these four features in anything denies its status as object. For example, Brahman is impersonal and formless; hence it is not an object unto itself, but simply a distinctive trait of the Supreme Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the non-dual Absolute Object who perfectly manifests Himself through the four features of name, form, qualities and pastimes. Each one of these features is fully potent and able to express Him in totality. They exist and are sustained by the Lord's *sandhinī* potency, and they are eternal and transcendental. As Lord Kṛṣṇa attracts all living entities, similarly the Holy Name, which is not different from Him, also attracts everyone. Kṛṣṇa's sublime form is as identical to Him as His Holy Name. Remembering and chanting Kṛṣṇa's name immediately invokes His beautiful form in the mind, and both dance there harmoniously like inseparable partners.

Kṛṣṇa's sixty-four qualities are unlimited and transcendental. Brahmā and Śiva are expansions of His qualities, but they only partially display the transcendental nature of the Supreme Lord, which is infinite, eternal, unending and absolutely spiritual. Kṛṣṇa alone has the full sixty-four qualities of the Supreme Person; even His full expansions like Lord Nārāyaṇa and *avatāras* like Lord Rāmacandra are ornamented with only sixty of them. Demigods up to the level of Śiva possess fifty-five of these qualities, but only in limited measure. Ordinary *jīvas* have just fifty, visible in mere fractional degrees, like small drops. Only Kṛṣṇa, even amongst all His Viṣṇu expansions, is the master of four exceptional qualities visible in Him alone.

If the Lord's qualities are compared to waves, then His pastimes appear in these waves and continuously form, crest and reshape themselves again and again. Wherever they may be enacted, either in Goloka, Vaikuṅṭha, or Vraja,

they are always transcendental. Hence, the Lord's name, form, qualities and pastimes are of the same spiritual substance.

Conditioned consciousness is opposite to Kṛṣṇa consciousness

The *jīva* conditioned by the illusory material nature experiences a state of consciousness that is a complete reversal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Because he falsely identifies with his body, the *jīva*'s name, form, qualities and activities are full of contradiction. Once he is purified of his material contaminations, these four features become harmonious and identical with the soul. But until he is liberated by the Lord's grace, the *jīva* will continue to suffer the pains of his false identification eternally. Kṛṣṇa, being beyond material existence, eternally enjoys His name, form, qualities and activities as one Truth inseparable from Him.

The Holy Name is the primary feature

Of the four characteristic features, the Lord's Holy Name is the primary one because it awards cognition of the other three. Therefore chanting the Holy Name is the foremost religious activity (*dharma*) of a Vaiṣṇava. From the Holy Name gradually blossoms the Lord's form, qualities and pastimes. The entire panorama of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is present in the Holy Name. Lord Caitanya has personally declared Kṛṣṇa's name to be the highest Absolute Truth. There are only two realities in this world, the Holy Name and the *jīva*.

In the entire material existence there is nothing comparable to the Holy Name. The Holy Name is the most precious jewel in the Lord's treasure house. In this whole universe there are only two meaningful truths: the *jīva* and the Holy Name; everything else is deceptive. By the will of the Lord, the *jīva* entered this realm of inert matter and was bewildered by it, as when in the beginning Brahmā thought himself to be all alone. But when Kṛṣṇa descended into the world as His Holy Name, the spiritual reality of which Brahmā and the other *jīvas* are a part was revealed.

The name is of two kinds: principal and secondary

The Holy Name can be categorized in two types: principal and secondary. By taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa's principal names, the *jīva* obtains the real boon of spiritual life. The Holy Names of the Lord that describe His transcendental pastimes and which contain all of the Lord's spiritual excellences are defined as principal names. They are, for example: Govinda, Gopāla, Rāma, Śrī Nandanandana, Rādhānātha, Hari, Yaśomatī Prāṇadhana, Madana-Mohana, Śyāmasundara, Mādhava, Gopinātha, Vraja-gopāla, Rakṣala, Yādava, and so

on. Anyone who chants the names of the Lord that depict His eternal pastimes can attain the Lord’s supreme abode.

The secondary names and their symptoms

The *Vedas* address the Lord with names that describe His affiliation with His material energy. These are His secondary names, e.g. Creator, Supersoul, Brahman, maintainer and annihilator of the world, Yajñeśwar, Hara, etc. Such names of the Lord are invoked by those pursuing fruitive activities and empirical knowledge. In keeping with the Vedic directions, the chanting of such names of the Lord will result in piety and salvation. However, Kṛṣṇa-prema, the most perfect result of chanting the Holy Name of the Lord, is attained only by saintly souls who invoke Kṛṣṇa’s principal names.

The pure name and *nāmābhāsa*; different results

If the Holy Name is chanted just once, though impurely so, or if the sound is simply heard, then the living entity, regardless of his high or low caste, is immediately liberated. This is the declaration of scripture. However, when the Holy Name is chanted in the clearing stage (*nāmābhāsa*, the stage when impurities are swept from the heart of the chanter), then the highest goal is attained after some delay.

All other auspicious pious results including liberation can be quite easily achieved in *nāmābhāsa*, but the attainment of love of Godhead is suspended for a while until the *jīva* reaches the summit of chanting the pure name or *śuddha-nāma*. One obtains love of Kṛṣṇa only after reaching this stage of pure chanting. In *nāmābhāsa*, sin and unwanted desires in the heart are eventually dissipated; thereafter the devotee chants purely. *Śuddha-nāma* offers the devotee the highest spiritual success, love of Kṛṣṇa.

Vyavadhāna or ‘disruption’ causes offense

Chanting should be free from any form of disruption because this will result in offenses against the Holy Name, which in turn pose an insurmountable obstacle on the path to success. *Vyavadhāna* or ‘disruption’ is of two kinds. The first type is known as *varna-vyavadhāna* or disruption in the syllables. For example, in the Bengali word *hathikari*, ‘ha’ and the last syllable ‘ri’ can be put together to form ‘Hari’, a name of Kṛṣṇa. But because the syllables ‘*thi-ka*’ are inserted in the middle, the repetition of ‘*hathikari*’ will not give actual benefit. Yet the Islamic word *hārām* is not perverted by such disruption of the syllables or *varna-vyavadhāna*. The syllables comprising the Holy Name ‘Rāma’ are uninterrupted; hence, speaking the word ‘hārām’ gives liberation because it is *nāmābhāsa*. The second type of *vyavadhāna* is called *tattva-*

vyavadhāna or disruption of philosophical conclusions. This offense is much more serious. Lord Kṛṣṇa's name and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself are non-different. But someone who is polluted by Māyāvādī philosophy imagines them to be separate. Such an offensive conclusion is clearly against all Vedic teachings and will totally destroy one's spiritual life. It is impossible to obtain Kṛṣṇa-prema from such chanting. In summary, one should understand properly that the Holy Name is identical to the Lord Himself. The principal names of Kṛṣṇa should be chanted as *śuddha-nāma*, devoid of *nāmābhāsa* and the *aparādha* of *vyavadhāna*. The person who takes these considerations to heart and chants *śuddha-nāma* even once is considered a Vaiṣṇava. He is to be served with faith and devotion.

Overcoming *nāmābhāsa* and attaining *prema*

Anyone wanting to attain the highest spiritual success of chanting purely must approach a bona-fide spiritual master and serve him carefully and sincerely. Gradually, as all the *anārtas* or unwanted desires in the heart are destroyed, the transcendental name of Kṛṣṇa appears and dances on the tongue of the devotee. The Holy Name, now nectarean in taste, cannot but be relished by the devotee at every moment. Thus spiritually intoxicated, the devotee always feels like dancing. As the Holy Name dances, the devotee likewise dances, and at that moment the ecstasy of love of Godhead also enters dancing into the devotee's heart. Then the entire world will dance and *māyā* will flee away. Only the faithful are eligible to chant the omnipotent Holy Name. The Supreme Lord has infused His transcendental name with all of His potencies and offered it to humanity. One who has sufficient faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa's name is eligible to chant, and only one who chants the name is properly executing the prescribed duties of the human being. He is called an *adhikārī* or possessor of the Holy Name.

The Holy Name is so potent that chanting does not depend on conditions of time, place, rules, cleanliness, and so on. Pious activities, such as the giving of charity, the performance of sacrifices, the taking of ablutions, or the recitation of Vedic *mantras* are all regulated by stringent rules. But for the chanting of the Holy Name, the only prerequisite is faith. One who takes shelter of the Holy Name with unflinching faith will attain all perfection.

Accept things favorable to chanting and reject things unfavorable

The *jīva* in Kali-yuga must become free from deceit, join Lord Kṛṣṇa's family of devotees and continuously chant the Holy Name. He should accept everything favorable for devotional service and at the same time reject unfavorable things. He should seek out the association of devotees and utilize

his life in service to the Lord's Holy Name and the Vaiṣṇavas. He should forgo all other religious practices and pious activities and never worship any other *devatā*. Nor should he think anything to be independent from Kṛṣṇa. One who always chants the Holy Name and serves the devotees will surely obtain Kṛṣṇa-prema. Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura again placed his head on the Lord's lotus feet. Weeping, he begged the Lord that he might develop attachment for the Holy Name.



One who is blessed with love and devotion and who takes pleasure in serving Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's lotus feet will find the touchstone of the Holy Name to be as precious as life itself.

Chapter Three

The Unclarified Name (Nāmābhāsa)

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Śrī Gauraṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the life of Śrīmatī Jahnavā-devi; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya and Mother Sītā; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

Extending His lotus-like hands, the merciful Lord Caitanya lifted up Śrīla Haridāsa and said, “My dear Haridāsa, please take hold of yourself and inform Me about *nāmābhāsa*. The Holy Name is so potent and endowed with such transcendental qualities that anyone can easily achieve liberation simply by chanting. Once *nāmābhāsa* is understood, one can strive to chant purely the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.

***Ajñāna* is like mist, and *anārtha* is like clouds**

“The Holy Name is an all-powerful, brilliant sun that disperses the darkness of *māyā* or nescience. Clouds and mist may sometimes blanket one’s vision; the sun is then not visible. Similarly, the *jīvas* are covered over by the mist of *ajñāna* (ignorance) and the clouds of *anārtha* (material tendencies).

“Lord Kṛṣṇa and His Holy Name are identical. They are an omnipotent spiritual sun that destroys the darkness of nescience. To stream mercy upon the conditioned souls the sun of the Holy Name has arisen on the horizon of this material world. The mist of ignorance and the clouds of *anārtha* spread a blanket over the *jīva*’s vision so that he is unable to see the sun-like Holy Name. The sun is too big for any cloud or mist to cover, but if the *jīva*’s vision is obscured, then the sun is hidden from him.

Ignorance covers knowledge of the Holy Name, the Lord’s position, and self-identity

“Even after accepting the Holy Name, if one does not understand the name’s identity and transcendental nature, a mist of ignorance is created that plunges the *jīva* into darkness. One who is ignorant about Lord Kṛṣṇa’s position becomes confused and begins to worship the demigods. Thus he is entangled in the cycle of fruitive action or *karma*. That person who has not realized the *jīva*’s transcendental nature suffers from *svarūpa-bhrāma* (confusion of identity), and is in material consciousness, deluded and always in ignorance.” Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura exclaimed in exhilaration, “Today I am most fortunate, for from my mouth the Supreme Lord Himself, Caitanya

Mahāprabhu, wants to hear about the Holy Name!” He then began by elaborating further on the subject of ignorance.

One who is in ignorance does not know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is supreme over all. His eternal servitors are the demigods and all other *jīvas*. He does not know that the *jīva*'s nature is transcendental, and that the material world is an appearance of *māyā*, the Lord's illusory energy. Anyone who understands these truths and their relationships is freed from the darkness of ignorance and can pass beyond the veil of *nāmābhāsa*. The cloud of *anārtha* is comprised of hankering for illusory things, weakness of heart, and offenses. Hankering for things temporary and unreal, weakness of the heart and mind, and offenses are clouds of *anārthas* that keep the *jīvas* in constant suffering.

Asat-tṛṣṇa ('thirsting for the illusory') indicates desires for things not related to Lord Kṛṣṇa. These desires are: the craving for so-called material gains in this world or in heaven, the craving for mystic powers, and the craving for impersonal liberation.

Hṛdāya-daurbalyam refers to propensities of the heart and mind (viz. material attachment, deceit, enviousness of another's advancement, and desire for name, fame and glory) that arise from a condition of spiritual weakness.

Aparādha means offenses; these may be offenses to the Holy Name (*nāma-aparādha*), to Kṛṣṇa's service (*sevā-aparādha*), to Kṛṣṇa's devotees (*Vaiṣṇava-aparādha*), or to other living entities (*jīva-aparādha*).

These clouds hide the sun of the Holy Name. If one chants the Holy Name while maintaining these *anārthas*, the chanting can at best be only the unclarified name (*nāmābhāsa*). The Holy Name is always perfect in itself, but *nāmābhāsa* obfuscates the *jīva*'s vision of it.

Nāmābhāsa is counteracted by sambandha-tattva

As long as the *jīva* is not firmly established in the knowledge of sambandha-tattva or the correct understanding of the relationship between God, His energies, and the *jīva*, he will continue to chant in the *nāmābhāsa* stage. When the serious chanter takes full shelter of a bona-fide spiritual master, he learns how to expertly perform devotional service and thus disperse the mist and clouds in his heart. Once the cloud and mist are removed, the sun of the Holy Name shines brilliantly once more and bestows the devotee with love of Godhead.

Sambandha as relationship, abhidheya as indication, prayojana as necessity

The bona-fide spiritual master gives the disciple *sambandha-jñāna*. The chanting of the Holy Name is the indication (*abhidheya*) of this eternal relationship (*sambandha*). The spiritual master enthuses the disciple to take up *abhidheya* or chanting. The sun of the Holy Name then shines stronger and evaporates the mist and clouds. Chanting at this stage becomes an indispensable need (*prayojana*). *Prayojana* leads the devotee to pure love of Godhead, at which point he experiences ecstasy in every moment of chanting. The spiritual master must exactly explain *sambandha-jñāna* to the disciple, who in turn must receive it with proper faith. The quintessence of this knowledge is that Lord Kṛṣṇa is eternally the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *jīva* is His eternal servitor, and the *jīva*'s loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa is likewise eternal as an inherent trait of his nature.

In contact with material nature, the *jīva* forgets his eternal relationship with the Lord and loiters aimlessly in this world of illusion searching for bliss. The material world is a veritable prison house where the *jīva* is penalized for turning his back on Kṛṣṇa. It consists of the fourteen planetary systems which together are known as the Devi-dhāma. These planetary systems are the cells within the prison where the recalcitrant *jīvas* are confined. Devi-dhāma is not a place for experiencing happiness and bliss. The material so-called pleasures offered to the *jīvas* here are only temporary, and as such are the cause of further suffering. As is the plan of any penal system, the *jīvas* are gradually reformed through this punitive arrangement. By the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava devotee of the Lord, an imprisoned *jīva* may accept the Holy Name and the attendant *sambandha-jñāna* and finally ascend to pure love of Godhead. Such a fortunate soul will consider even *sāyujya-mukti* or impersonal liberation to be reprehensible. But until he is solidly grounded on the *sambandha-jñāna* understanding, his chanting will be polluted by *anāarthas*. This is *nāmābhāsa*. In this stage, the *jīva* cannot chant the pure name of Kṛṣṇa.

The result of *nāmābhāsa* chanting

However, the value of the *nāmābhāsa* stage of chanting is not to be underestimated, for it avails many positive benefits to the *jīva* and increases his piety. Verily, *nāmābhāsa* proves to be one of the *jīva*'s greatest benefits. It offers him more good fortune than all religiosity, vows, *yoga*, or sacrifices can offer together.

In *nāmābhāsa*, all sins are absolved, liberating the *jīva* from the effects of Kali-yuga. The *nāmābhāsa* chanter becomes a well-wishing servitor of the

fallen souls because he frees others as well as himself from the disease of material consciousness. Fear and distress are subdued, allowing the chanter to enjoy security and equanimity. The miseries inflicted by demons, ghosts, hobgoblins, evil spirits and malefic planetary influences are easily averted. Even if the chanter is destined for the hellish planets he will attain liberation, because *prārabdha-karma* (sinful reactions of previous lives' activities that are taking effect now) is countered.

Nāmābhāsa is greater than the result of studying all the *Vedas*, of visiting every pilgrimage place, or of performing every possible altruistic and pious work. The four goals offered in *Vedas*—religiosity, wealth, sense enjoyment and liberation—are made freely available by *nāmābhāsa* chanting. It is endowed with unimaginable power to reclaim any living entity. It bestows unlimited joy and elevates even the derelicts to a very exalted stage of realization. *Nāmābhāsa* offers eternal residence in the spiritual abode of Vaikuṅṭha, especially in Kali-yuga. This is the declaration of scripture.

Nāmābhāsa* has four attitudes: *saṅketa*, *parihāsa*, *stobha* and *helā

The four attitudes in *nāmābhāsa* chanting are *saṅketa* (unintentionally or coincidentally), *parihāsa* (in jest or ridicule), *stobha* (derisively) and *helā* (with disregard and neglect).

Saṅketa is of two kinds: 1) when one, though intending to chant Lord Viṣṇu's name, has a material conception of it, and 2) when one has something entirely different than the Lord or His name on his mind, but chants the Holy Name being somehow or other reminded of that transcendental sound. The *yavanas* eat cows, yet in spite of this they can attain liberation by uttering 'hārām', an ordinary word of their language (Urdu). Because *saṅketa* is the least offensive attitude of *nāmābhāsa*, the power of the Holy Name is largely undiminished when chanted in that way. Chanting in jest—*parihāsa*, like Jarāsandha—results in liberation, as does chanting derisively (*stobha*, like Śiśupāla). Even chanting inattentively and with disregard (*helā*) results in deliverance from the pangs of material existence. *Nāmābhāsa* chanting can purify anyone. People of low upbringing like *mlecchas*, gross materialists, and lazy persons can all avail of this opportunity to obtain liberation.

The difference between *śraddhā-nāmābhāsa* and *nāmābhāsa*

Faithful chanting that is yet afflicted by *anārthas* is known as *śraddhā-nāmābhāsa*. The element of *śraddhā* (faith) is absent in the four attitudes of *nāmābhāsa* chanting; even *saṅketa* chanting is tinged with neglect. Nonetheless, even the lowest attitude of *nāmābhāsa* (*helā*) gives one liberation, what to speak of faithful chanting. Chanting with faith establishes

one on the platform of *sambandha-jñāna*, which results in *rati* or attraction for the Holy Name. *Śraddhā-nāma* actually clears away *anārthas* very easily and quickly.

Anārtha-free nāmābhāsa chanting becomes śuddha-nāma, which gives Kṛṣṇa-prema

Short of Kṛṣṇa-prema, every other success is available in *nāmābhāsa*. When *anārthas* are nullified, then *nāmābhāsa* is converted to *nāma* or *śuddha-nāma*, the pure name. By pure chanting and by following the rules of *sādhana* as instructed by *guru*, *sādhū* and *śāstra*, one slowly but surely acquires Kṛṣṇa-prema—love of Godhead. But *nāmābhāsa* chanting can never give Kṛṣṇa-prema. That soul is indeed fortunate who has freed himself from committing *nāma-āparādha* in the *nāmābhāsa* stage. The offenseless stage of *nāmābhāsa* is far superior to *karma* and *jñāna*, for it nurtures the seed of faith that sprouts *rati* or attraction. This attraction leads the chanter to *śuddha-nāma* and finally to *prema*.⁶

⁶ The scriptures are filled with words like ‘*nāmābhāsa*’, ‘*Vaiṣṇavābhāsa*’, ‘*śraddhābhāsa*’, ‘*rati-ābhāsa*’, ‘*premābhāsa*’, ‘*mukti-ābhāsa*’, etc. The suffix ‘*ābhāsa*’ has a special meaning that is applicable in many ways.

Ābhāsa (faint or indistinct image) is of two sorts: *svarūpa-ābhāsa* and *pratibimba-ābhāsa*. *Svarūpa-ābhāsa* is the partial infiltration of the full brilliance. For example, on a cloudy day the light of the sun is only partially visible because the full brilliance of the sun is shaded by the clouds. *Nāmābhāsa* caused by the cloudlike coverings of ignorance is called *chāya nāmābhāsa* or ‘the faint shadowy name.’ The way to the shadowy name is opened by *chāya śraddhābhāsa* or the faint shadow of *śraddhā* (faith).

Pratibimba-ābhāsa means the reflection of a distorted image of the real object, as sunlight is distorted when reflected off the surface of water. Such a distorted, broken reflection can never result in a complete perception of the original source of light.

When the rays of the Holy Name reflect off the heart of a Māyāvādī, *pratibimba-nāmābhāsa* appears, bequeathing *sāyujya-mukti* upon the Māyāvādīs who chant it. Such chanting, however, will fail to generate the quintessence of chanting: Kṛṣṇa-prema. Indeed, this type of *nāmābhāsa* is a major *nāmāparādha*; therefore it cannot really be counted as a *nāmābhāsa* at all.

Chāya-nāmābhāsa or *svarūpa-nāmābhāsa* is the real *nāmābhāsa*, and is subdivided into four categories of attitude, as previously mentioned. The scriptures, while praising *nāmābhāsa*, profusely condemn *pratibimba-nāmābhāsa*. *Chāya-nāmābhāsa* is the result of chanting the Holy Name with *anārthas* born of ignorance. But the chanting of the Holy Name with *anārthas* nurtured by wicked and distorted philosophy produces *pratibimba-nāmābhāsa*, and this is a major obstacle to devotional service and a grave offense. A Vaiṣṇava-ābhāsa person, though not honored as a genuine Vaiṣṇava, should still be given the respect due a neophyte devotee as long as he is not contaminated by the Māyāvādī philosophy. Such a person can easily become elevated by contact with saintly personalities. The elevated Vaiṣṇavas consider

When such a person sees pure firm faith in others, he is impressed, and dim faith is invoked in him by good association. Desiring elevation, he may chant constantly, but because he nurtures strong attachments to sense pleasure and liberation, his *śraddhā* is not real it merely appears to be *śraddhā*. This is defined in the scriptures as *pratibimba-śraddhā-ābhāsa*. Hence, *pratibimba-śraddhā-ābhāsa* results in *pratibimba-nāmābhāsa*. If this sort of *nāmābhāsa* becomes further aberrated by Māyāvādī philosophy, the chanter thinks that the perfect and transcendental name of the Lord is mundane and imperfect, and requires to be perfected by impersonal knowledge. This offense obliterates whatever little bit of genuine *śraddhā* he may have had.

The difference between chāya- and pratibimba-nāmābhāsa

Chāya-nāmābhāsa is symptomatic of ignorance and weakness of the heart. Many *anārthas* may plague the devotee in this condition, but all these faults are rectified by continuous chanting of the Lord's Holy Name. But *pratibimba-nāmābhāsa* chanting increases one's offenses.

According to the Māyāvādīs, Lord Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities and pastimes are all illusory, false, temporary and contaminated. They mistake *prema* or pure love of Godhead for sentimentalism. Māyāvādī philosophy characteristically contradicts the devotional path of *bhakti* at every turn. Therefore, Māyāvādīs are the greatest offenders.

The Māyāvādī's chanting is not real chanting. The syllables of the Lord's name may emanate from his mouth, but the vibration is bereft of the potency of the Lord. His chanting is filled with yearnings for sense pleasure and liberation, and all the while he thinks the Lord's name is material. Because he tries to cheat, his chanting results in unrelenting misery.

How does the Māyāvādī redeem himself?

If by some good fortune the Māyāvādī relinquishes the desire for sense gratification and liberation and, thinking himself a servant of Kṛṣṇa, begins to chant, he becomes exonerated from his offenses and philosophical aberrations. He then takes shelter of the Holy Name and repents. This opens the way to again hear from and associate with the pure devotees. Thus his

such neophytes to be innocent and so shower mercy on them. They must not be ignored and avoided like the agnostic Māyāvādīs. The pure devotees will resuscitate the small spark of devotion in the neophytes, encourage their propensity to worship the Deity and progressively give them *sambandha-jñāna* and establish them in devotional service of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. But if a neophyte exhibits a strong inclination to incorrigible Māyāvādī attitudes, then he must be avoided.

chanting leads him to comprehend *sambandha-jñāna*. If he chants while continuously shedding tears of contrition, he can invoke the mercy of the Holy Name.

The Māyāvādī's offense is he sees *bhakti* as material

The Māyāvādī considers both the transcendental form of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the *jīva*'s constitutional position as the Lord's eternal servitor to be transient and imaginary. This Māyāvādī philosophy is a grievous *nāmāparādha*. *Nāmābhāsa* is truly a wish-fulfilling tree, for it even offers to the Māyāvādīs the *sāyujya* liberation so desired by them. Because the Holy Name is omnipotent, it offers *mukti-ābhāsa* or seeming liberation in the *pratibimba-nāmābhāsa* stage. Amongst the five types of liberation, *sāyujya* (becoming one with God) is considered *ābhāsa*, or merely the hint of liberation. Material suffering is indeed terminated in *sāyujya*, but certain spiritual doom follows. The Māyāvādīs, captivated by *māyā*, find *sāyujya* pleasurable; but it is only a mere hint of actual happiness. They forever forfeit transcendental existence, knowledge, happiness and devotional service, because *sāyujya-mukti* obfuscates remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. Where is the question of eternal bliss when the eternality of *bhakti* and *prema* is doubted?

If the *chāya-nāmābhāsa* chanter refrains from Māyāvādī contamination, he gradually attains *śuddha-nāma*

If the *chāya-nāmābhāsa* chanter is not contaminated by atheistic concepts, then he has a good chance. He is ignorant about the potency of the Holy Name, but it is the inherent nature of the name to impregnate that knowledge into the chanter. For example, the sun may not be visible when the sky is cloudy, but once the clouds are dispersed, the sun shines through in full glory. The dispersal of the clouds of *anārtha* and ignorance is greatly assisted by the powerful influence of a bona-fide spiritual master, and in a short time the chanter is able to attain the pure name and Kṛṣṇa-*prema*.

A devotee must not associate with Māyāvādīs

Concluding his explanation of *nāmābhāsa*, Haridāsa said, "The devotee must diligently avoid the association of Māyāvādīs, and serve Vaiṣṇavas who are attached to the pure Holy Name. O Lord Caitanya, this is Your injunction and whoever follows it is very fortunate. Those who disregard and disobey this instruction are wretches who will suffer for a hundred million births. My Lord, please rescue me from bad association and keep me at Your lotus feet, for I can see no other alternative to Your lotus feet."



One who takes shelter at the feet of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura will incessantly chant the Holy Name and find real satisfaction in life.

Chapter Four

Ten Offenses against the Holy Name (nāmāparādha)

Blasphemy of the Devotees (sādhū-nindā) is the First Offense⁷

All glories to Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga, the life of Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the heart of Śrīmatī Jahnavā-devi; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya, the Lord of Mother Sītā; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

Lord Caitanya said, “Haridāsa, now describe in detail the offenses against the Holy Name.” Śrīla Haridāsa replied, “My Lord, whatever I say will be on Your prompting alone. I am a mere puppet.

The ten offenses against the Holy Name

“The scriptures enumerate ten offenses against the Holy Name. I am very fearful of these offenses. I will list them one by one. As I do, please give me the strength to avoid them, my Lord.”

1) Blasphemy of the devotees of the Lord. 2) To consider demigods to be independent of the Supreme Lord, and to similarly think Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name, form, qualities and pastimes are separate from Him. 3) To disobey the spiritual master who reveals the truth about the Holy Name. 4) To criticize the scriptures that describe the glories of the Holy Name. 5) To think the excellences and divine qualities of the Holy Name are imaginary, and to so interpret the scriptural glorification of the Holy Name. 6) To commit sinful activities on the strength of the Holy Name. 7) To instruct the faithless on the glories of the Holy Name. 8) To equate chanting of the Holy Name with auspicious ritualistic activities recommended in the *karma-kāṇḍa* sections of the *Vedas*.

⁷ *Nāmābhāsa* was described in the previous chapter; the next ten chapters deal with the ten offenses to the Holy Name, and Chapter Fourteen explains offenses to the Deity (*sevā-āparādha*). *Nāma-* and *sevā-āparādha* initially arise from *anārtas* that cause *nāmābhāsa*. If these *āparādhas* are not corrected and become intentional, they not only impede one’s spiritual progress, but remove one from devotional service entirely, placing him in hell. The first of these offenses is the subject of this chapter. Criticism or harmful intent to a qualified *sādhū* is a serious offense to the Holy Name. How can the Lord tolerate criticism of those who spread the glories of His name?

9) To be inattentive while chanting the Holy Name. 10) To not develop love for the Holy Name after learning the name's glories because of maintaining attachments to the body and things related to the body.

To blaspheme devotees is the first offense

To blaspheme a devotee of the Lord is the first offense against the Holy Name, and it completely disrupts one's spiritual life. The good qualities of a devotee have been personally described by Lord Kṛṣṇa in His instructions to Uddhava, as recorded in the Eleventh Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The devotee is merciful; is tolerant; is equal to all; does penance without injuring the body; is truthful; is pure-hearted; is compassionate; is free from lust in his intelligence; is master of the senses; makes no claims of ownership; is gentle; is clean; is regulated in eating; is peaceful; is apathetic to materialism; is patient; is steady; takes Lord Kṛṣṇa as his only shelter; is free from illusion; is grave; has conquered over hunger, thirst, lamentation, envy, old age and death; does not expect honor from others; offers respect to others; is expert; is not a cheater; is knowledgeable.

Qualities are of two kinds: *svarūpa* and *taṭasthā*

These qualities can be divided into two categories: *svarūpa*, or the direct and indigenous quality of any substance, and *taṭasthā*, qualities that are ornamental and visible when the substance comes in contact with something else. The devotee's acceptance of Lord Kṛṣṇa as his only shelter (*kṛṣṇa eka śaraṇam*) is his *svarūpa-lakṣana*, and all the other qualities are *taṭasthā*.

If by some good fortune one associates with a Vaiṣṇava, he may develop a taste for the Holy Name and take complete shelter at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Thus he develops the *svarūpa-lakṣana*, and then through continued chanting he will gradually develop all the other *lakṣana* or symptoms. The other symptoms are *taṭasthā* but nevertheless are essentially present in a Vaiṣṇava.

Saintliness depends not on external designations but on *svarūpa-lakṣana*

External designations such as the four social and religious orders of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra* and *brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, *sannyāsa* are not the symptoms of a devotee. The scriptures say the quality of complete surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa is the hallmark of a devotee, and he alone can chant Kṛṣṇa's name purely. Through Raghunātha das Gosvāmī's example, Śrī Caitanya taught everyone how the proper *gṛhastha* Vaiṣṇava should behave. Śrīla Raghunātha das Gosvāmī appeared not in the *brāhmaṇa* caste but in the inferior *kāyastha* caste of the village of Saptagrāma. The Lord

instructed him not to be impatient and impulsive, but to return to his household life and remain there.

One is purified in degrees by following this orderly process. There is no need to prematurely pretend that one is detached and renounced just to impress people. Renunciation has to take place within the heart. Wearing the dress of a renunciant when the senses are still uncontrolled is called monkey renunciation or *markaṭa-vairāgya*.

The householder should regularly fulfill his duties. Detachment from matter will naturally arise within his heart as he internally cultivates firm faith in Kṛṣṇa while conducting normal external social dealings among the people in general. Very quickly Lord Kṛṣṇa will personally liberate him.

The symptoms of a renounced *sādhus*

When Śrīla Raghunātha das Gosvāmī at last left his household and embraced a *sannyāsī's* life, the Lord personally instructed him about the proper path of renunciation. The *sannyāsī* should not engage in nor give audience to frivolous materialistic conversations. The wearing of fine clothes and the tasting of delicacies must be rejected. Being always ready to offer respect to others, demanding no respect for himself, the *sannyāsī* should constantly chant the Holy Name. He should render intimate service to Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the mood of the residents of Vraja.

The *svarūpa-lakṣana* of both the householder and *sannyāsī* is the same

The *svarūpa-lakṣana* or principal symptom (i.e. surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa) must prevail in a devotee regardless of his *varna* or *āśrama*. The *taṭasthā-lakṣana* or marginal symptoms will naturally vary according to the *varna* and *āśrama*, while undeviating surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa remains as the fixed symptom of devotional service in all cases.

Once he has this symptom, gradually but unfailingly the marginal symptoms appear in the devotee's character. Even if the marginal symptoms haven't reached full maturity in a surrendered devotee, and instead some serious discrepancies are visible in his character, he is still to be respected as a *sādhu* or saintly soul. This is the verdict of the scriptures as expressed in Lord Kṛṣṇa's own words in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and it must be given full respect.

It is offensive to criticize a devotee on the basis of his past sins

When one has developed a real taste for chanting, then a single utterance of the Holy Name can eradicate all previous sins. Some vestiges of sinful reaction may still remain in a particular individual, but these will steadily be

removed by the process of chanting. As these last traces of sin disappear, he emerges a pure devotee. Of course, the lingering traces of sin are seen by ordinary people as actual sin; if a devotee is criticized because of the traces of almost extirpated sin in his character, that is a grievous offense. If criticism is made against a devotee for sins committed prior to his surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, that is likewise another serious offense. Such a faultfinder surely invites the wrath of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

A few words on the principal symptom of a devotee

One who has fully surrendered to Lord Kṛṣṇa will naturally only chant Lord Kṛṣṇa's name. By the grace of the Lord, such a person is entitled to be called a *sādhū*. Only a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa is eligible to be respected as a *sādhū*, and none other. One who proclaims himself a *sādhū* is but a charlatan and a braggart; one who humbly says he is a poor soul surrendered to Lord Kṛṣṇa and who constantly chants Kṛṣṇa's name is a real *sādhū*. He, considering himself lower than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree, offers all respects to others without expecting any for himself. The Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa grants such a *sādhū* pure love of Godhead.

A Vaiṣṇava firmly fixed in the Holy Name is the real *sādhū*; criticizing him is *nāma-aparādha*

Hearing such a *sādhū* chant the Holy Name, one should offer him all respects, knowing him to be a perfect Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava is the spiritual master of the world, a true friend of every being, and is always an ocean of compassion. Anyone who criticizes such a Vaiṣṇava goes directly to hell and suffers untold pains birth after birth. The doors of *bhakti* are closed to such an offender because devotional service is the merciful gift of a Vaiṣṇava to the living entities. The Vaiṣṇava is an abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa's spiritual potencies; others receive Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* only by his confidential association. This pure *bhakti* potency is distributed by a perfected pure devotee to the aspirant devotee, and that devotee, becoming perfect, distributes it to another aspirant. Thus the *bhakti* potency expands. The three great touchstones of *bhakti-śakti* are the mercy of the pure devotee in the form of his eatable remnants, the water from his foot bath, and the dust from his lotus feet.

How a Vaiṣṇava imbues his potency in others: By remaining in the presence of a Vaiṣṇava for some time, one absorbs the *bhakti* energy flowing from the body of that saintly person. If one is sufficiently faithful, he can bind that energy within his own heart and experience immediate ecstasy. By just a moment's association with a Vaiṣṇava, *bhakti* is invoked in the heart of a

pious person, who will immediately be inspired to chant Lord Kṛṣṇa's name; gradually, the Holy Name will award him all good qualities.⁸

There are four kinds of blasphemy of a devotee

The offender criticizes a Vaiṣṇava about his caste, or some unpremeditated accidental fall-down, or the last traces of his previous sins, or his sinful activities prior to his surrendering to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such an offender will never develop a taste for chanting the Holy Name.

One who has taken complete shelter of the pure devotional process is considered a pure Vaiṣṇava. The four abovementioned faults may be present in him, but he is totally free from all other shortcomings. Hence, criticizing him spells doom for the offender. The glories of the Holy Name are propagated by the Vaiṣṇava, and Lord Kṛṣṇa does not tolerate any criticism against him. One may discard all other activities like religiosity, *yoga*, sacrifices, fruitive activities, empirical knowledge and so on; if one simply chants the Holy Name, that is the quintessence of spiritual culture. The *sādhū* takes complete shelter of the Holy Name

Never criticizing demigods or other scriptures, the Vaiṣṇava simply chants the Holy Name. Regardless of whether such a *sādhū* is a householder or a *sannyāsī*, one should eagerly take the dust from his lotus feet. The purity of a Vaiṣṇava is judged by how much attraction or *rati* he has for the name. His purity has nothing whatsoever to do with his official status as a Vaiṣṇava, or his wealth, erudition, youth, pleasing appearance, strength or following.

One who aspires to take shelter of the Holy Name must shun the propensity to criticize devotees. Pure devotion in the chanting of the Holy Name depends on association with the pure devotee and his pure devotion. Without this association, everything becomes perverted and spoilt. Bhakti immediately recedes at the first indication of *sādhū-nindā*, which immediately becomes *nāma-āparādha*. Let the aspirant devotee reject *sādhū-nindā* and associate with and serve the pure devotees.

⁸ The potency or *śakti* of pure devotion is a blend of *hlādinī* (Kṛṣṇa's pleasure-giving potency) and *samvit* (Kṛṣṇa's knowledge-giving potency). *Bhakti* reposes in the heart of the transcendentalist and uses him as a vehicle for further movement. When a *jīva* becomes free from envy and is inclined to devotional service, the bhakti potency is then transferred from the pure devotee's heart into that *jīva*'s heart, where it takes shelter of his soul and achieves perfection there. This is a great mystery.

There are two types of bad association, the first being association with women

The proper Vaiṣṇava behavior is to avoid *asat-saṅga* or bad company that influences a person to disrespect a *sādhū*. Bad association is of two kinds. The first is association with a woman, which means either to have illicit connection with a woman other than one's wife, or to be excessively fond of one's own wife. The scriptures permit a husband only a properly regulated relationship with his spouse. Keeping company with a licentious or henpecked man also falls within this first category of *asat-saṅga* or bad association.

Non-devotees are of three kinds

The second type of bad association is to mix with non-devotees. There are three kinds of non-devotees: the *Māyāvādī*, the *dharma-dhvajī* (pretender), and the *nirīśvara* (atheist). *Māyāvādīs* never accept the Supreme Lord's form as being eternal. They say the Deity form of the Lord is material, and that the *jīva* is also a product of *māyā*. A *dharma-dhvajī* is a person who has no devotion or attachment in the heart but makes a show of it externally. He wears the clothes of a devotee to accomplish materialistic ends. A *nirīśvara* is a nonbeliever who rejects God outright. A serious aspirant or *sādhaka* must shun such bad association. If anyone argues that avoiding such non-devotees is *sādhū-nindā*, their company must also be shunned. One has to keep away from such bad association and take complete shelter of the Holy Name. Only then is love of Godhead ensured.

There are three kinds of devotees: the lowest is the *kaniṣṭha* devotee

The neophyte devotee (*kaniṣṭha* Vaiṣṇava) displays a faith that is formal and worldly. He worships the Deity but has no service attitude towards the devotees of the Lord. He is almost a Vaiṣṇava (*Vaiṣṇava-prāya*), but is not a real Vaiṣṇava yet; hence, he is not able to take full advantage of *sādhū-saṅga*. Such a neophyte will have to receive the blessings of a pure devotee to advance further.

The *madhyama* devotee

The *madhyama* devotee knows well the importance of the Lord's devotees, and remains always in their association. He is convinced of Kṛṣṇa's position as the Lord, the *jīvas* as His eternal servants, the means of advancement as *bhakti* and the goal as *prema*. He is compassionate to the innocent and avoids the company of atheists.

The *madhyama* stage of devotee marks the beginning of pure Vaisnavism because at this stage one become eligible to chant the pure name. The *madhyama* devotee knows well the different effects of different types of association. He distinguishes between the Vaiṣṇavas and the non-Vaiṣṇavas, for he is especially required to serve the advanced devotees and avoid *asat-saṅga* and *sādhū-nindā*. Indeed, this is his necessity. If he neglects to differentiate between the grades of devotees and between Vaiṣṇavas and non-Vaiṣṇavas, then he stands to commit *Vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

The *uttama* devotee

A pure devotee of the highest order sees Lord Kṛṣṇa manifest everywhere, and knows that everything rests in Him. He sees Kṛṣṇa is his very life and soul. He is unconcerned with distinctions of who is a Vaiṣṇava and who is not, thus for him there is no regulation to serve a Vaiṣṇava. His whole life revolves around the Holy Name, which he considers to be the essence of everything. The scriptures declare that a *kaniṣṭha* devotee, being ignorant of the proper attitudes towards Kṛṣṇa, the devotees and the Holy Name, is only capable of *nāmābhāsa* chanting. A *madhyama* devotee is worthy of chanting the pure name: therefore he must always carefully avoid offenses to other devotees, so that his chanting will be pure. The *uttama* Vaiṣṇava can never commit any offense, because he perceives Lord Kṛṣṇa everywhere. Every *sādhaka* should consider these points calmly and reflect upon his real position. First, he must stop *sādhū-nindā*. Then he should chant with firm faith, according to his status as a Vaiṣṇava. He should aspire to become fixed on the *madhyama* platform through association with equal devotees, service to superior devotees, avoidance of non-devotees, compassion for all living entities and constant chanting of the Holy Name.

The remedy for *sādhū-nindā*

If anyone offends a devotee in a moment of delusion or madness, he must fall at the devotee's feet and repent bitterly and, weeping and full of contrition, beg forgiveness. He should declare himself a fallen wretch, in need of that devotee's grace. A devotee is very merciful; his heart will soften and he will embrace the offender, thus exonerating him from his offenses.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura concluded, "I offer this explanation of the first of ten *nāma-aparādhas* at Your lotus feet."



One who is like a bumble-bee lingering the lotus feet of Śrīla Haridāsa
Ṭhākura will find his life and soul in this *Harināma Cintāmaṇi*.

Chapter Five

Worshipping the Demigods Independently of Kṛṣṇa is the Second Offense

All glories to Lord Śrī Gauraṅga, the life of Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the heart of Śrīmatī Jahnava-devi; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya, the Lord of Mother Sītā; all glories to all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura continued speaking with folded hands: “O Lord of the Universe, now I pray that You may listen to my explanation of the second offense against the Holy Name.” Viṣṇu-tattva, or the principle of the Supreme Godhead Viṣṇu Lord Viṣṇu is the supreme non-dual Absolute Truth. Though He is the ultimate lord of material creation, His own form is transcendental, being always situated in pure goodness. Lord Kṛṣṇa in Goloka is the original and supreme form of Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa is embellished with sixty-four extraordinary excellences, and He is the shelter of all transcendental mellows. Lord Nārāyaṇa possesses sixty of those excellences, and to a lesser degree of fullness than Him, so do Lord Viṣṇu and the *puruṣa-avatāras*.⁹

The Supreme Lord’s separated parts or *vibhinnāmśa* are of two categories. The ordinary *jīvas* possess only fifty of the Lord’s transcendental characteristics, and these in lesser degree. But in the second category of *jīvas*, including the demigods, the same fifty characteristics are found in full potency. Additionally, five more qualities are partially evident in Śiva. These five qualities are exhibited in full potency only by the Viṣṇu category. Thus the Viṣṇu forms are adorned to the fullest degree with the fifty-five qualities of the demigods. They furthermore display an extra five qualities for a total of

⁹ Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha, is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s *vilāsa-vigraha* or partial expansion. In Vaikuṅṭha, the Saṅkarṣana form of Nārāyaṇa expands as Mahā-Viṣṇu, Who lies in the Causal Ocean. This is the first *puruṣa* expansion; the next is Garbodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the source of Brahmā. He enters every universe as the *puruṣa-avatar*. He further expands as Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the Supersoul within every living entity.

The three *puruṣa* expansions are known as Lord Viṣṇu. Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is the source of the incarnations like Matsya, Kūrma, etc. All these incarnations are different forms of the same Viṣṇu principle and are ornamented with sixty transcendental characteristics. The *śaktyāveṣa-avatāras* are *jīva-tattva*; in them the potency of the Lord has descended. They are Lord’s separated expansions or *vibhinnāmśa* and are exemplified as Parasurama, Buddha, Pṛthu, and so on.

sixty, which are visible to a degree of absolute fullness in Lord Nārāyaṇa alone. Śiva and the other demigods are the Supreme Lord's servitors. Though the demigods are superior *jīvas*, the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu is the master and controller of the *jīvas* and demigods alike.

Out of sheer ignorance, people equate the Supreme Lord with the demigods

People who are ignorant of the Viṣṇu-tattva principle try to equate the Supreme Lord with the demigods, but Śiva and the other demigods are simply the order carriers of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.

Māyāvādīs say that Brahman is really impersonal and formless, and that the worshipable forms of God (i.e. the three predominating deities of the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance) are material. But the scriptures unequivocally declare that Brahmā only creates the material world and Śiva only destroys it, while Lord Nārāyaṇa or Lord Viṣṇu maintains everything eternally, including Brahmā and Śiva and their cycles of creation and destruction. Therefore only He is the eternal worshipable Lord. Whoever worships other demigods and disregards Vāsudeva, the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa, rots eternally in the hell of material existence.

On the basis of the *Vedas*, some persons, accepting Lord Viṣṇu as the all-pervading Absolute Truth, argue that since the Lord is present in all the demigods, the worship of demigods is equivalent to the worship of Lord Viṣṇu. This argument is fallacious. The scriptures do not support the notion that the worship of the demigods is the same as the worship of Lord Viṣṇu. In truth, Lord Viṣṇu's worship accomplishes the worship of all the demigods. Hence, separate worship of demigods is not required.

The correct interpretation of the Vedic truth is: if Lord Viṣṇu is omnipresent, then worship of Him is automatically worship of all the demigods. By watering the roots, a tree prospers, but by watering the limbs, leaves and branches, the tree withers and dies. Only foolish people who have forgotten all Vedic principles can commit such a mistake. They fail to understand that worship of Lord Viṣṇu is an eternal activity in pure goodness, beyond the three material modes.

Due to the advent of Kali Yuga and the contamination of Māyāvāda, people disregard the supreme position of Lord Viṣṇu and worship the demigods independently of Him. Individual demigods offer only specific benefits, while the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu alone can offer all benedictions. He is the maintainer of everyone. If only these greedy materialists could realize the advantage of worshiping Lord Viṣṇu, they would abandon that kind of demigod worship.

A householder Vaiṣṇava's responsibilities

The householder Vaiṣṇava should simply worship Kṛṣṇa in all of his duties and not worry about transgressing the Vedic codes. For example, in all saṁskāras from insemination (*garbhādhāna*) to funeral rites (*antyeṣṭhi*), he should worship Kṛṣṇa through the Vedic *mantras*. The real purport of the Vedic injunctions is that one should worship Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas directly and worship the forefathers and demigods by offering them the remnants of Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇava worship.

If on the other hand the householder devotee worships the demigods or forefathers directly, as is the Māyāvādī method, he commits the second offense to the Holy Name and is immediately disqualified from the path of pure *bhakti*.

Another dangerous form of this same *nāmāparādha* is to consider demigods like Śiva to be separate supreme divinities. Such polytheism is a heinous offense. “Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Godhead, but Lord Śiva and the other demigods are also individual supreme godheads”—such thinking is completely wrong.

One can, however, worship the demigods as *guṇa-avatāras*, *śaktyāveṣa-avatāras* or as Lord Viṣṇu's servants. No one is independent of the Viṣṇu's control, for He is the Supreme Controller and master of all energies. Demigods like Śiva, Brahmā, Gaṇeṣa and Sūrya have been invested with the Supreme Lord's potencies. Hence, they are powerful. The Supreme Lord is one, the rest are His energies.

The householder devotee should abandon outright all materialism in the execution of his duties. He should increase his mood of pure devotion while satisfying his social and religious obligations according to the *varnāśrama* system. He should be convinced that just by worshiping Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, all results will be attained.¹⁰

Even the lowborn outcastes are fully eligible to enter devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. But they must live their lives free from sin and offenses; they will do that only by submitting to the duties of householder life prescribed at least for

¹⁰ Human society should conduct itself according to the guidelines of the *varnāśrama* system; such a lifestyle is called *sanātana-dharma* or ‘eternal religion’. India is the land of piety (*puṇyā-bhūmi*), and the *varnāśrama* religious system was introduced and implemented there by great sages of yore. In other countries *varnāśrama* is also present in some form, though it never evolved into the perfected socio-religious system that was established in India. Human nature cannot find full expression nor attain consummation without the social divisions of *varna*.

the *śūdra* class. Without situating oneself in one of the four *varnas*, there is no question of *dharma* or religious life.

Even those desiring just their own material welfare respect the customs of *varnāśrama-dharma*.

On the strength of worshiping Kṛṣṇa in full surrender, one is gradually elevated through *varnāśrama-dharma* to the platform of saintliness. But if one follows the *varnāśrama* system without worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa, he is doomed. Every householder is obliged to fulfill his *varnāśrama* responsibilities. He should therefore live with restraint and accept only what is essential for serving Lord Kṛṣṇa, and fulfill the formal rules and responsibilities of his *varna*. One easily accomplishes all this simply by chanting the Holy Name and engaging in devotional service. Moreover, one attains bhava or spiritual ecstasy by these same devotional practices. With the advent of *bhava*, one transcends the jurisdiction of rules and regulations.

As long as one needs a regulated, formal social life, he must remain within the bounds of *varnāśrama*. But after the first stirrings of love of Godhead with the attainment of bhava, the *jīva*'s own divine nature becomes apparent: he will then require no further inspiration from the external guidelines of *varnāśrama-dharma*. The mood of bhava is incomprehensible to materialistic persons because it is transcendently dynamic, appearing in a person by its own volition regardless of that person's *varna* or *āśrama*. The Vaiṣṇava householder who follows this path of Kṛṣṇa conscious *varnāśrama-dharma* with single-mindedness, shunning the Māyāvāda contamination, thus transcends the limits of *varna* and *āśrama*.

Lord Viṣṇu's name and qualities are not different from Him; lack of this knowledge is *nāmābhāsa*

Lord Viṣṇu's name, form, qualities and so on should never be viewed as being separate from the Lord Himself. He is non-dual (*advaya-tattva*); as the complete whole, He is the Supreme Absolute. If due to ignorance someone has a dualistic concept of God, he can at best rise to the *nāmābhāsa* stage of chanting, but he will never reach prema. Then again, if he can get the mercy of a bona fide spiritual master and can overcome his *anārtas*, he will attain the pure name by the progressive clearing process.¹¹

¹¹ Self-opinionated philosophers fall into duality when they try to conceptualize God with their tiny brains. Imposing duality upon Lord Viṣṇu is an offensive tendency that is very difficult to overcome. Māyāvādī philosophers propose that Brahman is formless and impersonal, and that Lord Viṣṇu's name, form etc are all products of illusion; with the lifting of the veil of illusion, they expect to perceive Lord Viṣṇu as impersonal Brahman and

The intelligence of the Māyāvādī philosopher is extremely demented. Seeing that the material existence is variegated, he concludes that the spiritual existence, being opposite to the material realm, must be void. This incomplete, immature theorizing leads him to imagine Brahman as dry and impersonal. In its original state, Brahman has a name, form, qualities, pastimes and so on but the Māyāvādī is incapable of accepting this truth. If he would accept it, Brahman would appear before him as Lord Viṣṇu.

Māyāvāda is the wretched condition of human existence, and the pure devotee is the scourge of this mischievous philosophy. He establishes the correct scriptural viewpoint that the Supreme Lord is non-different from His name, form, pastimes and qualities.

***Nirviśeṣa* and *sa-viśeṣa* Viṣṇu versus the Māyāvādī notion of Brahman**

Both the personal and impersonal features are inherent in Lord Viṣṇu's divine Being. The Lord's *acintya-śakti* (inconceivable potency) harmoniously displays His personal and impersonal aspects (*sa-viśeṣa*, with variety, and *nirviśeṣa*, without variety). The Supreme One, by His *acintya-śakti*, exhibits all-attractive beauty and pastimes that silence all contradictory speculations about Him.

Human intelligence is limited and puny. It cannot easily fathom the Lord's inconceivable potency. So when a human being tries to conceive of a supreme truth with his inadequate brain, he can only come as far as the impersonal Brahman, which is a partial representation of the Absolute Whole. In this way he is diverted from the supreme goal of worship, Lord Viṣṇu, whose lotus feet are worshiped even by the great demigods. Ignorant of the benefit he has lost, he becomes attached to the worship of impersonal Brahman. But anyone who comprehends the transcendental nature of the name, form and qualities of the Supreme Lord, knowing them to be not different from Him, can perceive Lord Kṛṣṇa in His divine fullness by chanting His Holy Name purely.

Duality exists only on the material plane here a name is different from the object it identifies. But as this is not the case on the spiritual platform, it is a gross blunder to imagine such a difference between the Lord and His name, form, qualities and so on. The same pitfall entraps those who consider Śiva and other demigods to be independent of the Supreme Lord's control.

nothing more. But such arguments are foolish and nihilistic. The Māyāvādī viewpoint stems from madness and a stubborn ignorance of the fact that the Supreme Lord is endowed with omnipotence. 'Omnipotent Brahman' is verily a name for the Supreme Person, Lord Viṣṇu.

Why devotees do not mix with Māyāvādīs

The devotee who has taken single-minded shelter in the Holy Name is a truly elevated soul. He worships Kṛṣṇa and no one else as the Supreme Lord. He does not attack the deities of other scriptures, but worships and respects them as servitors of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He always refrains from dry speculation. When different scriptures try to establish the superiority of other demigods, it is only to facilitate the limited ability of a particular mentality to grasp the absolute truth. These scriptures are actually trying to elevate their followers to become devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore one should never criticize other scriptures and the demigods described therein, for such criticism is an offense.

A devotee should not accept remnants of food or garlands from a Māyāvādī, even if they were offered to Lord Viṣṇu, because a Māyāvādī's worship is impure. A Māyāvādī's chanting of the Holy Name is likewise offensive. The Lord never accepts the Māyāvādī's offerings or worship. It is also an offense for the devotee to accept garlands and other remnants of demigod worship, for this is detrimental to the development of pure devotion. But if a devotee worships Kṛṣṇa and offers His remnants to the demigods, it will not be offensive to receive these remnants, nor will one's spiritual development be hampered in any way.

A pure devotee must always avoid the second offense to the Holy Name and chant the name constantly. Thus he attains *prema*. His entire success is found in the Holy Name.

The remedy for the offense

Illusion and madness blind the *jīva*, and thus he thinks that others are also on the same platform as Lord Viṣṇu. The only remedy is to repent intensely and meditate on Lord Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, for by this remembrance all offenses are dissolved. Thereafter, one must meticulously avoid committing the same offense again.

Remembrance of the Lord is the most effective penance; the Vedas always recommend imperiled *brāhmaṇas* to meditate upon the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu for protection. Remembering the Lord's name is the same as meditating upon His lotus feet. The Holy Name can disperse all previous offenses, for it acts as the devotee's best friend. The Lord is an ocean of mercy and forgiveness. Like a dear friend, he forgives one for previous mistakes.

In conclusion, the devotee must disassociate himself from demigod worshippers and polytheists and seek the company of Vaiṣṇavas who exclusively worship Kṛṣṇa as their Supreme Lord.



One who is blessed with love and devotion and takes pleasure in serving Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's lotus feet will find this book *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* as valuable as life itself.

Chapter Six

To Disrespect and Disobey the Spiritual Master (guruavājñā) is the Third Offense

All glories to Śrī Pañca-tattva and Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. All glories to Navadvīpa-dhāma, Vraja-dhāma, Yamunā-devi and all the Vaiṣṇava devotees. Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura said, “O Lord, kindly allow me to explain the third *nāma-aparādha*. This *aparādha* is to disobey the orders of the spiritual master and thus to disrespect him.”

The soul travels through many lifetimes in different bodies and at last gets a chance at the rare human birth, which is auspicious in every respect. The soul has rotated through 8,400,000 different species, It is by *ajñāta-sukṛti* or unintentional pious activities that the soul finally attains a human body. A birth in the human form is most uncommon, because only in that body are spiritual activities possible to perform, unlike any other species.

A demigod or denizen of the heavenly planets is destined only to enjoy the reactions of his past good *karma*. He cannot voluntarily initiate any spiritual activities. Animals are likewise bound by karmic reactions and are too steeped in gross ignorance to undertake any pious activities independently. The human birth alone is most conducive for spiritual life and service to the Supreme Lord.

A spiritual master is essential for everyone

Yet the fact remains that this body is transient. If one does not carefully endeavor for self-realization, which is the greatest benediction, then he returns again to the endless cycle of birth and death. An intelligent person will therefore utilize this rare opportunity. He will search out a spiritual master who can lead him to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa.¹²

A few of the characteristics of a bona fide spiritual master are that he is peaceful, unperturbed and a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He should be approached

¹² Such a spiritual master is the only helmsman who can help the drowning *jīva* get across the ocean of material nescience. Only the most foolish persons will attempt to cross this ocean by their own intelligence. The achievement of any success in this world requires the help of a teacher's instructions. How, then, will one obtain perfection in the best of all subjects, spiritual science, without the aid of a teacher? He is who fit to teach this science is he who is self-realized and fully proficient in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

with humility. The *jīva* should satisfy him with service and receive from him formal initiation into the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Herein lies his best chance to surmount the material entanglement. The *jīva*'s inherent love for Kṛṣṇa lies dormant in the heart and can easily be revived by a qualified spiritual master.

But the *jīva* can just as easily lose this chance by challenging the spiritual master through speculative debates and mischievous logic. He must evade such pitfalls, surrender to the spiritual master's instructions and receive the proper mantra from him. As for householders, they should take shelter of a bona-fide spiritual master and remain within the *varnāśrama* system.

A good brāhmaṇa is fit to be a spiritual master

A *brāhmaṇa* is fit to be a spiritual master for all the other *varnas* or social orders as long as he is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But if a *brāhmaṇa* spiritual master is not available then a spiritual master from another *varna* should be searched out. If there is a choice, the householder would be best advised to accept initiation from a spiritual master in the *brāhmaṇa-varna*.

A real spiritual master is one who is conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A spiritual master can be from any *varna* or *āśrama*, but he must be a *kalpataru* or touchstone that can fulfill the spiritual needs of people from all *varnas* and *āśramas*. He must be able to give the *jīva śuddha-rati* (pure attraction) for Kṛṣṇa.

The prestige of having a spiritual master from a superior *varna* is a material consideration, because that prestige simply depends on the caste status of the one who judges the spiritual master's caste. The factor of caste rarely has any bearing on spiritual realization.

Necessity demands that one must find a spiritual master who is bona fide and qualified. If he happens to belong to a higher *varna*, so much the better. A householder may look for a spiritual master from a higher *varna*, and if he finds one who is qualified then he need not look for one from a lower *varna*. It must be noted well, though, that in looking for a 'high class' spiritual master, one should not choose an unqualified person simply for the prestige of having a spiritual master from a higher *varna*.

A renunciant should accept a *sannyāsī* guru

If a householder leaves home to embrace the life of a renunciant but has not yet been satisfactorily trained in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he naturally requires a qualified spiritual master. For one who is determined to renounce, a spiritual master in the *sannyāsa* order is best. By receiving spiritual guidance and

initiation from a *sannyāsa guru*, the renunciant will very quickly relish the ecstasy of chanting the Holy Name.

If the householder previously had a qualified spiritual master, he should not, when planning to renounce householder life, disrespect or neglect that guru. Indeed, while he is in the *gṛhastha-āśrama*, the householder is advised to take shelter of a householder *guru* who is qualified and pure. That spiritual master should always be honored.

But if such a householder spiritual master is not available, one can take initiation from a qualified *sannyāsī* even before leaving home. In any case, the spiritual master must be qualified. Under his instructions, the neophyte householder begins Kṛṣṇa consciousness and gradually advances to experience transcendental loving emotions in the service of the Lord.

Only when the neophyte householder develops distaste for material life is he ready to become a *sannyāsī*. This is a natural development of the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Once he has actually renounced sense gratification, he is obliged to accept a *sannyāsī* spiritual master. He must be trained in the life of renunciation from the *sannyāsī-guru* and accept from him the clothes or *veśa* of a mendicant.

Both *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* must be equally respected

There are two kinds of spiritual masters: the initiating spiritual master or *dīkṣā-guru*, and the instructing spiritual master or *śikṣā-guru*. Both *gurus* have to be respected equally. This is the key to success in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The *dīkṣā-guru* initiates his disciple into the chanting of the Holy Name and gives *dīkṣā-mantra*. The *śikṣā-guru* imparts *sambandha-jñāna* or the knowledge of the *jīva*'s relationship with the Supreme Lord and his energies. The *dīkṣā-guru* is one but the *śikṣā-guru* can be many. In fact, all the pure Vaiṣṇava devotees who benedict the world by distributing the Holy Name are *śikṣā-gurus*. Both the *dīkṣā-guru* and the many *śikṣā-gurus* are to be equally respected.

The Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*

The four Vaiṣṇava disciplic successions (*sampradāyas*) are the only real schools of saintly teachers. These *sampradāyas* have since days of yore disseminated the bona-fide *mantras*, the proper scriptural conclusions, the authorized devotional process and the ultimate goal of life. If one wants to be saved from the perils of false doctrines, then he should surrender to a saintly spiritual master from one of the four Vaiṣṇava schools.

The teachings left by the founder-*ācāryas* of the four *sampradāyas* are to be especially honored. Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Nimbārkācārya, and Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī are the four original *ācāryas* of the Vaiṣṇava schools. One should accept only their teachings and conclusions and not others. One should receive spiritual initiation in one of these four *sampradāyas* and not others.

The founder-*ācārya* is the principal *śikṣā-guru*

The founder *ācārya* of the *sampradāya* is the principal *śikṣā-guru* for the entire disciplic succession. Speculations that contradict his teachings are to be immediately rejected. Only a saintly devotee who has understood the teachings of the principal *śikṣā-guru* is eligible to be a *dikṣā-guru* for others. If one thinks that he can be initiated by an unauthorized *guru* or a Māyāvādī into these teachings, he errs severely. He will never attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One should accept only a pure devotee as a spiritual master

He who imparts wrong teachings and he who receives them are both destined for hell. One who has accepted teachings and conclusions outside the line of pure bhakti has wasted his life. How then can such a person become a spiritual master? How can he save other conditioned souls? He himself is in illusion and is therefore imperfect, so how can he bring good fortune to others? One must understand that a pure devotee is not an ordinary soul. The scriptures declare that only he is eligible to be worshipped as the spiritual master.

The principle of the spiritual master

The *dikṣā-guru* and the *śikṣā-guru* are both intimate associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are eternally situated in the Vraja mood of service, and they are manifestations of Lord Kṛṣṇa's own energy.¹³

¹³ Never make the mistake of judging the *guru* as an ordinary mortal. The spiritual master is the representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa's potencies, sent by the Lord as the eternal master of the disciples. He must always be worshiped as an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord, empowered by the Lord's superior spiritual potency.

On the other hand, the spiritual master must never be considered to be the Supreme Lord Himself, for this is Māyāvādī philosophy and is not in line with the pure Vaiṣṇava conclusions. The Vaiṣṇava devotees are very wary of such misinterpretations because the Māyāvādī whirlpool of word jugglery is so contaminating to the heart. The spiritual master must always be worshiped according to the scriptural conclusions, for when properly executed, this worship results in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Guru-pūjā and how to respect the spiritual master

Before one can worship Kṛṣṇa, he must first worship the spiritual master. While doing *guru-pūjā*, *upacāra* like seat, foot-wash, *ārghya*, bath, cloth, ornaments and so on are to be offered; then with the spiritual master's permission one may begin worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *vigraha*. The Deity's *prasādam* is given to the spiritual master first, then to the demigods and forefathers. Just as the disciple is required to get the spiritual master's blessings before worshipping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, before chanting the Holy Name the disciple should remember the spiritual master and his instructions.

One who disrespects the spiritual master commits a serious offense that will expel him from the path of *bhakti*. The spiritual master, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and the Vaiṣṇavas must be worshiped with equal attention. Undeviating faith in the spiritual master will lead to pure chanting and the final goal of Kṛṣṇa-*prema*.

When to reject a guru

If by some misfortune the spiritual master falls into bad association, he may gradually lose his spiritual realization and potency. At the time the disciple accepted him, the *guru* was exalted, famous and greatly realized. But offenses against the Holy Name are so dangerous that even a highly qualified soul becomes bewildered. In that condition he comes to detest Vaiṣṇava company and the chanting of the Holy Name. Gradually, he is enslaved by lust, greed, wealth and women. If by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa the disciple sees through all this, he must reject that *guru*, seek out a pure devotee and under his spiritual guidance cultivate the pure chanting of the Holy Name.

The spiritual master must be strict

The spiritual master must be strict with his disciples. He must straighten out the prospective disciples before initiating them, and punish the wayward initiated ones. This is the symptom of a responsible spiritual master. A disciple's spiritual life is rendered useless if he serves and worships a slack, irresponsible *guru*. But as long as the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple is stable (i.e. each remains qualified in his position) then there is no question of one rejecting the other.

The *guru*-disciple relationship is eternal. If both maintain their pure positions and are bona fide, their eternal relationship is never jeopardized. However, if the spiritual master is later exposed as perfidious, the disciple must immediately repudiate him. The same is to be done by the spiritual master if the disciple is similarly exposed. If such repudiation is not carried out by both parties when it is necessary, then they stand to be condemned.

A spiritual master must be tested before acceptance to insure that he is a pure devotee

One who disrespects the bona fide pure Vaiṣṇava spiritual master is a reprobate fit to be shunned by all. It is advisable, therefore, that before accepting a spiritual master one should carefully choose the right person. Basically, the spiritual master must be a pure devotee of the Lord.¹⁴

How to serve the spiritual master

Never disrespect the articles used by the spiritual master: for instance, his seat, bed, shoes, vehicle, footstool, bath water, etc. Stepping on his shadow, worshipping another person in his presence, giving initiation while he is still alive, showing off spiritual knowledge in his presence and trying to control him are to be totally rejected.

Whenever and wherever one sees his spiritual master, he should offer his prostrated obeisances to him with prayers. The *guru*'s name must be uttered with great reverence. His orders are never to be disobeyed. Always be eager to honor his remnants and do not say anything that is displeasing to him. Fall humbly at his feet and beg shelter from him and in this way act to please him. Simply by behaving thusly, one can easily develop a taste for chanting, which in turn offers all perfection. All this is confirmed in the *Vedas*. But if one offends the *nāma-guru*, the spiritual master who initiates one into the chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord, he will surely fall into the sinful company of atheists.¹⁵

¹⁴ The scriptures recommend that both the spiritual master and the disciple place each other under strict scrutiny before mutual acceptance. This, then, precludes the acceptance of a *kula-guru* or traditional family *guru*. Of course, if the *kula-guru* is qualified, it is of immediate convenience to accept him; but if he is not, a pure devotee should be searched out and taken as one's spiritual master.

Since even ordinary household items are tested before acquisition, it is only an unfortunate fool who will fail to go through a testing period in the selection of his true spiritual master, who is his ever well-wisher. The unqualified *kula-guru*, after he is offered due respect and worship, should be requested to release the disciple from all duties of allegiance. Having abandoned his connection to the family *guru*, the genuine aspirant then must seek out a qualified spiritual master.

The point is that one must not bring upon himself the calamity of having to reject his spiritual master. If one is prudent then he can avoid such a situation. One must be very careful not to commit any offense against a pure devotee *guru*. This is so disastrous it will ruin both men and demigods alike.

¹⁵ The *nāma-guru* teaches scriptural conclusions and reveals the esoteric nature of the Holy Name, and he initiates the disciple in the *mantra* consisting of the Holy Name. The Vaiṣṇava

The remedy for *guruavāṅṅā*

The only way to be pardoned for this offense is to forsake sinful company, cast away blasphemous literatures and throw oneself at the spiritual master's lotus feet, repenting piteously. As a compassionate Vaiṣṇava, the spiritual master will surely be forgiving and bestow *prema* upon the disciple through the Holy Name.



I, the wretched author of *Harināma Cintāmaṇi*, am a sinner. My only hope of redemption is the dust of the lotus feet of Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

dikṣā-guru is the *nāma-guru*, and the *dikṣā-mantra* is *nāmātmikā*, receiving its life from the Holy Name. The *mantra* loses its meaning and purpose if it is separated from the Holy Name, and conversely, simply by uttering the Holy Name of the Lord, the *mantra* is automatically chanted.

Chapter Seven

Criticism of the Vedic Scriptures (śruti-śāstra-nindā) is The Fourth Offense

All glories to Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Advaita Ācārya and all the devotees of Lord Gauraṅga.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura said, “My Lord! To criticize the Vedic literature and other literatures in pursuance of the Vedic version is a serious offense that denies a person the ecstasy of pure devotion.”

The Veda (śruti) is the only proof

The *śruti-śāstra* (the Vedic literature), which includes the four *Vedas*, the *Upāniṣads*, the *Purāṇas* and other corollary scriptures, has emanated from the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa’s own lips. This literature establishes and proves the Absolute Truth. It contains transcendental knowledge that is beyond the range of the material senses, and it can be understood by Lord Kṛṣṇa’s grace alone.

The senses are capable of experiencing only material objects; transcendence lies completely beyond their bounds. The science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is purely spiritual: hence it is transcendental. That knowledge of transcendence has been mercifully given by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Vedic literature for the ultimate benefit of humanity. The word *veda* specifically refers to scriptural knowledge received through the proper authorized disciplic succession or *paramparā*.

Human beings are born with four natural faults: they commit errors, they are subject to illusion, they have the propensity to cheat, and they have imperfect senses. Everything they do is tainted by these faults. Vedic literature is free from any mistakes or discrepancies. It is the only means to spiritual salvation. The Vedic knowledge was originally revealed by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It was compiled by sages who had received this knowledge while in *samādhi*, or total spiritual absorption, far beyond the range of the four natural human faults.

The śruti teaches ten principles

The Vedic literature teaches that both mundane fruitive activities (*karma*) and empirical speculative knowledge (*jñāna*) are inferior paths. The

conclusion is that perfection is available only through bhakti. The Lord gives *karma* and *jñāna* for preliminary purification of the *jīvas*, and afterwards gives pure *bhakti*. In the Vedic literature there are ten principal instructions. The first is that the proof or basis (*pramāṇa*) of real knowledge is the *śruti*. The other nine principles are *prameyas*, ascertained from the *pramāṇa*. These ten principles destroy nescience and establish true spiritual knowledge.

The nine ascertainable principles: the first three pertain to Kṛṣṇa

The first of the nine *prameyas* is that Hari, Kṛṣṇa, is the only Supreme Absolute Truth. The second is that He is omnipotent. The third is that He is Rasa-mūrti, the embodiment of all spiritual mellows. He is the source of bliss for all living entities and He eternally resides in His abode in the spiritual sky. These first three teaching pertain to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa.

The second three pertain to the position of the *jīva*

The fourth *prameya* is that the *jīva* is the Lord's separated part and parcel. The *jīvas* are the infinitesimal eternal spiritual sparks of pure consciousness who comprise the innumerable living entities. The *jīva* is of two types: eternally conditioned, who populate the material world, and eternally liberated, who populate the spiritual world.

The fifth *prameya* is that the conditioned souls are enamored by the glitter of *māyā*'s illusory potency. They have forgotten Kṛṣṇa and remain eternally in this phenomenal world, enjoying and suffering material existence.

The sixth *prameya* is that the eternally liberated *jīvas* are associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa. They reside in the spiritual world and enjoy transcendental loving relationships with the Lord. These three, then, are the teachings about the *jīva* found in the *śruti*.

The seventh *prameya* is *acintya-bhedābheda-sambandha*

Everything material and spiritual is *acintya-bhedābheda-sambandha* (simultaneously one and different). The *jīvas* and matter are inconceivably manifested from Lord Kṛṣṇa's internal potency. Once knowing *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, the *jīva* understands that he is the servant of Kṛṣṇa and is like the spark or ray of the spiritual sun that is Kṛṣṇa.

The transformations of the Lord's energy are beyond the mind's grasp (*acintya*), says the *śruti*. But the so-called transformations of the Supreme Lord Himself that the Māyāvādīs would like to have us all believe in are only mischievous and offensive postulations.

Thus, so far, the above seven *prameyas* comprise *sambandha-jñāna* or knowledge of the eternal connection between the Lord and his energies. The *śruti* further points out *abhidheya*, which is the means to achieve *prayojana*, the supreme goal.

Abhidheya is devotional service

The nine limbs of devotional service are: hearing, chanting, remembering, worshiping, praying, rendering service, carrying out the orders of the Lord, being a friend of the Lord and completely surrendering to the Lord. The chanting of the Holy Name is the most important devotional activity, and for this reason the *Vedas* glorify the chanting of the syllable *om*. Devotional service (*sādhana-bhakti*) has two divisions: *vaidhī* and *rāga*. *Abhidheya*, the nine-fold process of *sādhana-bhakti*, is the eighth *prameya*.

Prayojana is Kṛṣṇa-prema

By the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the *jīva* who takes shelter of *abhidheya* will attain Kṛṣṇa-*prema* or love of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa *prema* is the *prayojana* (necessity and ultimate goal) of the *jīva*; it is the ninth *prameya*.¹⁶

These nine basic principles were ascertained from the *śruti* by learned spiritual masters who taught them for the guidance of all conditioned souls. But those who criticize the *śruti*, the very source of spiritual knowledge, are offenders against the Holy Name and are known as the lowest among men.

Philosophers who opposed the *śruti*

Jaimini, Kapila, Nagna, Cārvāka, Sugata-Buddha and Gautama were philosophers who propagated theories based on mundane logic and reasoning. Some of them did some lip service to the teachings of the *śruti*, but they all rejected God. Jaimini proclaimed that the best knowledge the *śruti* has to offer is the fruitive ritualistic portion known as *karma-kāṇḍa*. Kapila dared to argue that God is imperfect. He accepted the process of *yoga*, but without understanding its real goal: realization of Paramātmā. Nagna spread poison by teaching tantric practices in the mode of ignorance. Cārvāka Naṣṭika was an atheist who never accepted the Vedic authority, and Sugata devised his own path of religion in place of the *śruti*. Gautama propagated logic and did not worship the Supreme Lord.

¹⁶ Pure devotion is indicated by the human proclivity to always render favorable devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Such devotion strives only for further excellence in service, being satisfied with nothing else. Pure devotion is uncontaminated by fruitive activity or empirical knowledge. The Vedic literature recommends that we cultivate pure devotion by taking full shelter of the Holy Name.

These mischievous interpretations are in fact offenses against the Vedic literature. Through sophism, such philosophers speak half-truths that are likely to confuse the ordinary listener, though a learned devotee knows their sole object is to defame the *śruti*. One who develops faith in these theories becomes an offender. Therefore the devotee avoids hearing them.

The Māyāvādī philosophy is equally as dangerous, for it suppresses *bhakti* in the heart of the *jīva*. Māyāvādī philosophy is factually camouflaged Buddhism. On the Lord's behest, Śiva became its chief proponent in the Kali-yuga. As Jaimini seemingly upheld Vedic authority but practically propounded a warped version of the Vedic conclusions, similarly Māyāvādī philosophers pervert Vedic proofs to establish their covert Buddhism. Thus they hide the essential message of the *śruti*, which is the science of devotional service.

Aṣṭāvakra, Dattātreya, Govinda, Gaudapāda, Śaṅkarācārya and his followers are well-known Māyāvādī philosophers. In Buddhism, the principal teaching is the nonexistence of the soul, and there is no concept of Brahman. The theory of nothingness, the last word in Buddhism, is rendered by the Māyāvādīs into the concept of the formless, impersonal Brahman which they argue is beyond matter. Such ideas diametrically oppose the eternal science of devotional service. Any affiliation with such thoughts automatically makes the *jīva* commit *nāmāparādha*.

The direct meaning is the real meaning

When all the principle understandings of the Vedic philosophy are brought together, they add up to pure devotional service by which the *jīva* attains pure love of Godhead. Wherever the principle understandings are applicable, it is wrong to substitute secondary understandings in their place. These principle meanings all indicate the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To artificially impose secondary meanings upon the Vedic statements is a sin that distances one from the Absolute Truth.

From beginning to end, the *śruti-śāstra* expounds the super-excellence of the syllable *om*. The *omkāra* is a name of Kṛṣṇa, and by chanting the Lord's name, the *jīva* attains the Lord's supreme abode. The Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Śrī Sampradāya chant *om* as a Holy Name of the Lord. The *Vedas* declare the Holy Name to be the transcendental form of the Supreme Lord in this material world; even *nāmābhāsa*, the Holy Name's indistinct appearance, grants all perfection. Only unfortunate fools will purposefully disregard such Vedic teachings and thus ruin their lives by offenses.

The *śruti* teaches pure chanting of the Holy Name

The devotee who takes shelter of the pure name accepts the absolute authority of the *Vedas*, and quickly attains the nectar of the name, Kṛṣṇa-*prema*. The *śruti* proclaims that by chanting the Holy Name of Hari, one experiences ecstatic bliss. Further, it is declared that the eternally liberated residents of the spiritual sky are always engaged in chanting the pure name.

Māyā-devi engages the present-day critics of the *śruti* in sinful practices

As Kali-yuga degrades, more and more people worship *māyā*, the material energy. Even so-called great devotees give up the opportunity to chant the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name, which is full of ecstasy, and instead take up tantric worship in the mode of ignorance. Ever-critical of the Vedic literature, they swerve from the real path of religion to eat meat, drink alcohol and perform other sinful activities. These offenders can never receive the shelter of the name, nor can they enter the Supreme Lord's eternal abode of Vṛndāvana.

Māyā-devi engages such atheists in ever-increasing sin, depriving them of the nectar of chanting the Holy Name. The superior spiritual energy is Lord Kṛṣṇa's original and primeval energy. *Māyā* (Durgā, Kālī) is its shadow. Her intention is to rectify the erring *jīvas* who drift away from Kṛṣṇa and bring them back to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Indeed, this is her prime duty to the Lord.¹⁷

The remedy for *śruti-nindā*

One must avoid committing the offense of criticizing the Vedic scriptures and constantly chant the Holy Name. If one inadvertently criticizes the *śruti*, he should sincerely repent his error by properly glorifying the *śruti*. He should worship the Vedic literature and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with great joy and

¹⁷ *Māyā* showers two kinds of graces *niṣkaṇṭha* (honest and unrestricted) and *sakaṇṭha* (capricious and illusory). By her *niṣkaṇṭha* mercy she gives *bhakti* by way of *jñāna* (*bhakti-jñāna-miṣra*). Her *sakaṇṭha* mercy gives temporary pleasures that overwhelm the *jīva*, bringing him under the control of illusion. And when she is thoroughly merciless, she casts the *jīva* into *brahma-sāyujya* liberation; thus he is doomed.

But she becomes pleased when someone renders service to a saintly Vaiṣṇava, and showers him with her true mercy, connecting him to Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. *Māyā* is an eternal maidservant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. She punishes the wayward *jīvas* who drift away from Kṛṣṇa's service, for those who want to serve *māyā* are simply cheaters who can never know happiness. Yet *Māyā-devi* rewards those who chant the Holy Name. She helps them cross over the ocean of material nescience.

respect, offering them flowers and Tulasī. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the essence of the Vedic teachings and is the scriptural incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavatam* will certainly shower mercy upon the offender, because the *Bhāgavatam* is an ocean of mercy.



One who hankers for the dust of the lotus feet of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura will wear this gem necklace called *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* around his neck.

Chapter Eight

To Consider the Glories of the Name as Imaginary (ārtha-vāda harināma kalpanām) is The Fifth Offense

All glories to Lord Gauraṅga and Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita; all glories to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. All glories to the places of Lord Gauraṅga’s pastimes, and to all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord.

“O Lord Gauraṅga! The fifth *nāmāparādha* is to think that the glories of the Holy Name are exaggerated, as for example when one thinks, ‘The scriptural presentation of the glories of the Lord’s Holy Name is not entirely true, because hyperbole has been employed to increase the readers’ faith in the chanting of the name.’”

It is a fact that in the *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* sections of the *Vedas*, ritualism and philosophical speculation have been overly praised. Such praises are intended to elicit interest in these processes. But the same is not true in the case of the Holy Name. Therefore to think so is an abominable offense.

The glories of the Holy Name

The Purāṇas (*smṛti-sāstras*) say that anyone who chants the Holy Name, whether with faith or neglect, attracts the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Holy Name is the purest form of knowledge; it is the best of all *vratas* or vows and the highest meditation; it gives the most auspicious fruits; it is the greatest renunciation; it gives incomparable peace; it is the most pious of holy works; it is the supreme path of self-realization; it is the greatest liberation and goal; it is the topmost destination; it is the best devotional service; it is the purest inclination; it gives love of Godhead and is the essence of remembrance of the Lord; it is the cause of all causes, the Supreme Absolute Truth; it is the most worshipable object and acts as the supreme spiritual master. ‘A thousand names of Lord Viṣṇu is equal to one name of Lord Rāma, and three names of Lord Rāma are equal to one name of Lord Kṛṣṇa.’ Thus the Holy Name’s transcendental nature is ever glorified in the scriptures.

One goes to hell for thinking the glories of the name are exaggerated

Only a hardened atheist thinks that the passages of the *śruti* and *smṛti* scriptures describing the superexcellent qualities of the name contain exaggerations. Whoever commits such an abominable offense rots eternally in

hell. Offenders claim that misrepresentations have been made to increase attraction for chanting. They have no idea of the purport of the scriptures and of what is beneficial for humanity, because they take everything backwards.

Because they have no reserve of previous pious activities (*bhakti-sukṛti*), they can never develop faith in the scriptural science of devotional service. The chanting of the Holy Name is the best form of devotional service. Without sufficient piety a person can neither acquire a taste for chanting nor have adequate faith in its results. Those who are attached to just one section of the scriptures (i.e. *karma-kāṇḍa*) cannot perceive the essential meaning of the scriptures.

There is no appeal to selfishness in the methodology of the Holy Name

The exaggerations in the *karma-kāṇḍa* section of the Vedas appeal to ambitious materialists. Concessions to selfishness are absent from the scriptural presentation of the method of chanting the Holy Name in pure devotion. The scriptures frankly declare that the results of the *karma-kāṇḍa* process are merely transient sensual enjoyments, whereas the results of chanting the Holy Name and engaging in Kṛṣṇa's service are eternal and permanent.

In the chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord, capriciousness, cheating and exaggeration are shunned. For instance, when a devotee inspires someone to chant, he does so without self-interested motives. He engages another in Kṛṣṇa's service only for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Though attractive material results of chanting the Holy Name may be mentioned in some scriptures, a pure devotee pays no heed to them, for he is beyond material desire.

But the officiator of a ritualistic sacrifice displays explicit selfishness, for as a matter of course he expects remuneration. Since the scriptures declare that chanting begets unlimited auspicious results, why do such seekers of fruitive rewards minimize the glories of the Holy Name?

The follower of *karma-kāṇḍa* is supposed to gradually realize that pious fruitive works, being material, give only unimportant fruits. He should then perform his duties free of self interest. This will purify his heart and help him to see the need for chanting the Holy Name. A purified heart strives for self-realization and is naturally repelled by material activities.

Thus the real success of *karma-kāṇḍa*, when performed without material motivation, is attraction for the chanting the Holy Name of the Lord. Pious results that a *brāhmaṇa* could not accrue anywhere in the entire universe are easily obtained by chanting Kṛṣṇa's name. The supreme position of the

chanting of the Holy Name cannot be diminished by the envious statements of stubborn *karmīs* and *jñānīs*.

Simply by *nāmābhāsa* chanting one gains all the results of the paths of *karma* and *jñāna*. So if mere *nāmābhāsa* offers such wonderful results, then surely the pure name will offer so much more, unlimitedly. Therefore, whatever results the scriptures say are gained from chanting are easily obtainable by the devotee who is attached to the pure name.

There is no point in objecting to what the Lord Himself has wrought

One who doubts this fact is a sinner who is doomed because of committing *nāmāparādha*. All the revealed scriptures the *Vedas*, *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas* and others are filled with glorifications of the super-excellence of the Holy Name. What can the person who blatantly disregards this evidence expect? He is simply abominable.

The Holy Name and the Lord Himself are the same. Kṛṣṇa personally positioned the chanting of His Holy Name at the very top of all auspicious activities. He is fully independent, autocratic and omnipotent. All processes have come into force due to His energy. He invested *karma-kāṇḍa* with his material energy, and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* with his impersonal energy. Kṛṣṇa then invested of His own accord His entire personal potency in the syllables of His Holy Name. There is no point in objecting to these arrangements. An intelligent person will therefore carefully avoid offending the all-powerful name of the Lord.

The remedy for the *ārtha-vāda* offense

If this *nāmāparādha* is somehow committed, the offender has to go humbly to the assembly of Vaiṣṇavas and attentively listen to the narrations of the pastimes and qualities of the Supreme Lord from the lips of a pure devotee. Full of remorse, the offender must admit his transgression against the Holy Name and beg forgiveness from the Vaiṣṇavas. The Vaiṣṇavas are realized in the glories of the name, and they will mercifully deliver the offender from his sins by embracing him. The offender, now purified, will be protected from further onslaughts of *māyā*.

If a devotee meets or even just sees the face of an unrepentant doubter of the power of the Holy Name, he should immediately plunge himself, fully clothed, into the Ganges for purification; if the Ganges is not nearby, he should bathe in some other pure water. In the event that this also is not possible, he should purify himself by bathing mentally.



One who takes shelter of the mercy of Kṛṣṇa's dear companion, His flute, will be adorned by the glory of *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*.

Chapter Nine

To Commit Sin on the Strength of Chanting the Holy Name (nāmno balād yasyāhi pāpabuddhi) is the Sixth Offense

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the life of Śrīmatī Jahnavā-devī; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya and Mother Sītā; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

Chanting destroys all *anārthas*

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura continued by explaining that the Holy Name is eternally situated in pure goodness. Those *jīvas* who take shelter of Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name are most fortunate, because chanting soon removes the *anārthas* from their hearts. Consequently, *hṛdāya-daurbalyam* (weakness of heart) disappears.

As faith in the Lord's Holy Name becomes firm, the propensity to sin is totally extirpated. All previous sins are then dissolved, and the heart shines with positive purity. Sinful activities sprout from the seeds of sinful desire in the heart, and the sinful desire seeds are rooted in ignorance; these three (ignorance, the seeds of sin and sin) are the source of all suffering for the conditioned soul. Not being able to bear the sufferings of His dependent parts and parcels, the Lord in His infinite compassion gives them help through the process of *bhakti-yoga* by which the lust to enjoy the senses is driven from their hearts.

As one practices *bhakti*, he finds materialistic endeavor to enjoy wealth and women repulsive. He follows the path of righteousness, being satisfied in his service to the Lord. He accepts only what is favorable for executing devotional service and rejects that which is unfavorable. He has absolute conviction in all situations that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his protector, savior and maintainer. He is free from attachments to the body and the notions of 'me' and 'mine.' In a humble state of mind, he constantly chants the Holy Name of the Lord. Such a person is never again inclined to sinful activities.

Previous sin and its faint residue are also destroyed

Chanting gradually diminishes the propensity to sin and simultaneously purifies the consciousness. As the inclination to commit sinful activities

vanishes, taste for the Holy Name appears, though a faint residue of previous sinful activity still lingers on in the consciousness. The receding sinful reactions leave an odor of sinful habit (*pāpa-gandha*), but the chanter's contact with the name engenders the strength of willpower and purity of mind that overcomes this clinging smell of sin.

Lord Kṛṣṇa promised Arjuna that His devotees will never be in danger of destruction. If there are reverses He personally comes to His devotees' rescue. The devotees' sins are annihilated by the Lord's mercy alone. The empirical philosopher or jnani may subdue his sins with great efforts and penance, but as soon as he leaves or denies the shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, he immediately falls down. The scriptures testify that whoever simply embraces the Lord's protection is an elevated soul, and his progress will never be impeded by obstacles.

There is no need for ritualistic penances or *prāyaścitta*

By chance, a devotee may commit some sin, but still he does not have to undertake the penance of *prāyaścitta*. Such sins are a passing phase that will be drowned in the nectar of the Holy Name. The devotee is never lost from the path of pure devotion.

However, if a devotee again commits another sin, this time calculating that the strength of Holy Name will counteract the reaction, then he is not fixed on the path of pure devotion. Rather, he is a deceitful person doomed by his offenses to the Holy Name. Scripture affirms that there is a vast difference between sin committed due to sudden weakness or mistake and due to premeditation.

Just being inclined to this *nāmāparādha* is utterly ruinous

For *karmīs*, the means to get free of sinful reaction is the performance of *prāyaścitta* in repentance. But if someone even contemplates relieving himself of the reaction of deliberate sin by exploiting the purifying strength of Holy Name, he is utterly ruined, and no amount of *prāyaścitta* will help him. Even after untold retribution in hell, he will not be absolved from this mental *nāmāparādha*. If just the inclination to commit sin on the strength of chanting results in such tribulations for the soul, the fate of one who acts on that inclination is too terrible to envision.

This *nāmāparādha* is inevitable for the cheaters

The scriptures declare the Holy Name to be so potent that it can eradicate a burden of sins that even in ten million lifetimes could not be committed. Even the gravest of sins are counteracted just in the '*nāmābhāsa*' stage of

chanting. And that is precisely why the cheats and charlatans are attracted to the chanting of the Holy Name. They forsake the responsibilities of honest labor as being drudgery and, disguised in the renunciant's attire, travel from country to country, their hearts smoldering with desires for wealth and women. Such persons are called *markaṭa-vairāgi* or 'monkey renunciant'.

These unfortunate fellows dress as *sannyāsīs* but nurture the householder mentality. They are nothing more than dead weights upon mother earth and human society and must be avoided. A devotee who has taken shelter of the Holy Name can live in any situation in household life or in the forest as a hermit. If the household situation is conducive to chanting, then the life of a mendicant is unnecessary, but if household life is unfavorable, the devotee is duty-bound to forsake it. In either case, it is a terrible offense to commit sins on the strength of chanting. Such an offender is forever banished from the path of devotional service.

Devotees in the *nāmābhāsa* stage of chanting must beware of such cheating company because that company will have an evil influence on them they will also fall down into committing this dreaded *nāmāparādha*. As for those who are chanting the pure name, they are always free from this *nāmāparādha*.

Pure devotees are free from the ten *nāmāparādhas*

Devotees who have taken complete shelter of chanting the pure name are never prone to commit any of the ten *nāmāparādhas*. The Holy Name Himself protects these pure devotees who have surrendered themselves to chanting. But as long as the pure name has not dawned in the heart of the devotee, he is always threatened by the danger of committing *nāmāparādha*. Therefore devotees in the *nāmābhāsa* stage have to particularly avoid this offense of committing sin on the strength of chanting.

Vigilance is required in the *nāmābhāsa* stage

A devotee must seek the association of pure devotees who chant the Holy Name without offense, and he should personally be very alert against committing offenses. One who chants the name purely is of fixed mind and consciousness, since he never deviates from thinking about Kṛṣṇa for even a moment. As long as one has not strengthened his chanting to the point of full surrender to the Holy Name, he must be very vigilant to avoid offenses. He must especially guard against the offense of committing sin on the strength of chanting. He should continuously chant the Holy Name and thus attract his spiritual master's mercy, which yields *sambandha-jñāna*. This knowledge reveals the science of pure devotion and the pure Holy Name.

The remedy for this *nāmāparādha*

If by some error one commits this *nāmāparādha*, one must go before an assembly of pure Vaiṣṇavas. The propensity to sin is like a highway robber, and the pure devotees are like the guardians of the path who come to one's aid when the someone calls aloud for their help. Just hearing that call, the robber immediately runs away, fearing that the guards will come. The guardians, the pure Vaiṣṇavas, will console the devotee with soothing words and assurances of their protection.



I, the author of *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, am a useless wretch. I recite this composition having taken shelter of the pure Vaiṣṇavas.

Chapter Ten

*To Instruct the Glories of the Holy Name to the Faithless
(aśraddādhāna vimukhe'py aṣṛnvati)
is the Seventh Offense*

All glories to Lord Śrī Gauraṅga, the life of Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the heart of Śrīmatī Jahnavā-devi; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya, the Lord of Mother Sītā; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and to all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

With his hands folded and in a soft voice Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura said, “Now please hear about another *nāmāparādha*.”

Śraddhā (faith) is essential for chanting the Holy Name

The foremost requirement for chanting Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name is *śraddhā* or firm faith. One who is bereft of it cannot hear the name and is therefore unfit to chant. High birth, respectable family, knowledge, strength, learning or wealth are not qualities that make a person eligible to chant the name. The scriptures extol *śraddhā* to be the one indispensable ingredient for proper chanting. Lord Kṛṣṇa's name is the *jīva*'s most valuable treasure. Faith means to have complete conviction that chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa's name will automatically fulfill all duties and complete all pious activities. Those who do not possess such faith are unfit to chant.

It is an offense to instruct the faithless on the Holy Name

According to Vaiṣṇava etiquette, a person who does not have faith in the name should not be initiated into chanting. If a faithless person is initiated into chanting or is instructed about the glories of the Holy Name, then he will only defile and neglect the name. This is the statement of scripture. The swine will crush the pearls strewn before it and the monkey will tear the cloth it is given; the faithless person will likewise increasingly offend the Holy Name and thus invite his doom. Simultaneously, the initiating *guru* will be dragged down by his share in these offenses. Very soon, he will be forced off the path of devotional service.

What is to be done if a faithless person wants to be initiated?

The faithless person sometimes slyly comes to the Vaiṣṇavas to beg initiation into chanting. The devotee should see through this pretentious cheating and

refuse him initiation. The pretender thinks, “The Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa is the all-purifying agent, and once I’ve received the name I will not have to worry about committing sins. Besides, when I chant people will respect and worship me as a Vaiṣṇava then I can extract a goodly amount of service from them. The prestige I have lost by my bad deeds will be regained fully by chanting; such a loss will never occur again. I shall at last become very happy in material life”, etc.

The devotee should demand of the pretender his full renunciation of dishonesty. To become worthy of initiation, he must at once neglect his desires for distinction and adoration, and should instead try to develop *śraddhā* for the Holy Name. Only when faith in the Holy Name is present in the heart can one be initiated into chanting. The Holy Name then carries the chanter across the material ocean of nescience. But as long as one has not developed sufficient *śraddhā*, he is unfit to chant. One should hear the glories of the Holy Name from a saintly Vaiṣṇava. Becoming humble by hearing his instructions, he should cast aside material desires and begin to chant. When the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master perceives the proper degree of *śraddhā* in the candidate, he initiates him into the greatest spiritual treasure Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name. But to initiate a faithless person is an abominable offense. The *guru* goes to hell if he gives initiation to a faithless person for remuneration.

If the *guru* knows that a person who has approached him for initiation is an insincere, faithless pretender, and yet he still heedlessly initiates this unfit person out of consideration for the material gain it may bring him, he is condemned as a *nāmāparādhī*. If the *guru* was unable to make a correct assessment and gave the candidate initiation only to later discover that he is a pretender, he must make immediate redress for his mistake.

The remedy for this *nāmāparādhā*

If it was due to inadvertence and lack of experience that the mistake of instructing and initiating a faithless person occurred, the initiating spiritual master should be filled with fear and remorse. He has to publicize his offense before the Vaiṣṇava community and reject that insincere disciple, excommunicating him. If the *guru* fails to act promptly, he will gradually sink into the depths of moral depravity and illusion, and be disenfranchised from the path of devotion.

Lord Caitanya’s instructions to preachers

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura said, “O Lord Caitanya, in Your instructions to those You have ordained to propagate the Holy Name, You specifically give warning about this. Preachers may instruct the glories of the Holy Name only to the *śraddhāvān* (persons with *śraddhā*).

“This the way by which the whole world will be inundated with the chanting of the Holy Name: with loud congregational chanting, the Holy Name is to be propagated widely among the masses. Those who are faithful will come forward and choose a bona-fide spiritual master, receiving instructions and initiation in the name from him. By sincere chanting they will surely obtain love of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa-*prema*.

“Prostitutes, criminals, cheaters and other sinful people should first be made to give up their unrighteous, harmful ways. Sincere faith should then be implanted in their hearts by good association. When their faith in Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name matures, only then may they receive initiation. This is the duty of a preacher as he goes from place to place.

The result of this *nāmāparādha*

“If, without paying heed to Your instructions, a guru initiates an insincere pretender, he commits a grievous offense for which he goes to hell. The *nāmāparādhas* committed by the charlatan disciple slowly but surely diminish the *guru*’s spiritual potency, and finally the *guru* is ruined. This offense has a devastating effect on both the *guru* and the disciple: they both must enter hell.

***Śraddhā* first, then initiation**

“My dear Lord, You were very merciful to Jagāi and Madhāi. These brothers were born in a brāhmaṇa family, their original names being Jagadānanda and Mādhavānanda. They became known as the worst rascals in Navadvīpa due to their virulent and violent acts. First You invoked faith in them and then You gave them the Holy Name. O Lord, Your character and activities are exemplary, and they spread illumination throughout the world. Let everyone follow Your wonderful example.”



Those who are servants of the servants of the Vaiṣṇavas are entitled to wear the precious gem of this *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*.

Chapter Eleven

To Equate Chanting with Other Pious Activities (dharma-vrata-tyāga hutādi) is the Eighth Offense

All glories to Lord Gauracandra, the *avatāra* Who delivers the Holy Name; all glories to the Holy Name, the essence of all Vedic conclusions.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura continued, “O Lord, other pious activities can never be equal to chanting the name.”

The original form of the Holy Name

The Supreme Lord is like a transcendental sun Whose potency is unlimited, ever-pure and all-pervading consciousness. All His endless expansions exhibit this absolute transcendental consciousness, as do His name, abode, and pastimes. Unlike forms of inert matter which are separate from their names, His direct names are not different from Him.

Descending from Goloka, having been summoned by the chanting of the pure devotee, the Holy Name enters that devotee’s soul. The pure name then emanates out of the soul and permeates his entire body, dancing on the tip of his tongue. One who chants understanding this is actually chanting the Holy Name, but one who nourishes a material concept of the name is drowned in despondency and suffers eternally in hell; a devotee should never see the face of such an offender.

The scriptures declare Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the only object of research for seekers of the Absolute Truth. According to their abilities, different researchers adopted their own means to find that one goal. Thus different paths like *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* are delineated. Those who are attached to gross materialism are recommended the path of *karma* for purification. For souls attracted to the illusionism of *māyā*, the suggested path is the cultivation of monistic philosophy. But for all *jīvas*, pure devotional service is the best and most suitable.

What is śubha-karma?

Persons pursuing mundane existence take to the worship of the Supreme Lord out of fear of death. The Lord’s lotus feet are the perfect shelter, free from all anxiety, and are the only means to cross over the ocean of nescience. But when the process to obtain the protection of the Lord becomes colored by

material motives, then the process itself becomes mundane. Even though it is the Lord who is being worshiped, because the process of worship is mundane, the worship becomes materially pious activity or *śubha-karma*.

Śubha-karma includes: altruistic work, fire sacrifices, ablutions, charity, *yoga*, the practice of *varnāśrama-dharma*, pilgrimages, vows, offerings to forefathers, meditation, cultivation of empirical knowledge, propitiation of demigods, penances, austerities, etc. All these activities are means to mundane objectives. But after a long period of practice of *śubha-karma*, the performer gradually obtains the real goal of all his endeavors the shelter of the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. At this juncture, he must abandon the temporary ways of *śubha-karma*, for he now knows the genuine essence of all religious duties bhakti, devotion to the Lord. *Śubha-karma* is indeed a viable path for conditioned souls to attain the ultimate goal, i.e. love of Godhead. Yet one fact must be clearly stated reaching perfection through *śubha-karma* is a time-consuming affair. The ultimate objective is Kṛṣṇa-prema, which is fully spiritual, but on the *śubha-karma* path, the means to attain it is mundane. Thus there is a gulf of difference between the means and the objective.¹⁸

Chanting the Holy Name is not *śubha-karma*

Out of His causeless compassion, the Supreme Lord incarnated as the Holy Name, making Himself immediately available to the *jīvas*; thus the Holy Name is accepted by the intelligent and righteous *jīvas* as their only means of perfection. The scriptures recommend chanting the Lord's name as the most effective process of obtaining the supreme goal, but some persons understand this to mean that chanting is one of many *śubha-karmas*. This misconception is similar to Lord Viṣṇu being seen as just another demigod like Śiva or Brahmā.

The Holy Name is fully spiritual and transcendental to material nature. It is untainted by matter. Though the *jīva* is likewise spiritual, he thinks himself material due to gross ignorance. Consequently, he thinks that everything, including the Holy Name of the Lord, is also material. Thus the chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name came to be categorized as *śubha-karma*, and the *jīvas*

¹⁸ The evolution of the *jīva* from mundane religiosity to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the master plan of Providence, which impels the *jīva* to aspire for perfection. The conditioned souls cannot exist without contacting matter. All their thoughts and activities are intimately woven into the fabric of materialism. Pious activities (*śubha-karma*) provide a means for the *jīva* to approach pure devotion through skillful efforts of material contact. Simultaneously, this contact with matter gives rise to discontent and suffering. Therefore, to achieve the bliss of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in the end the *jīva* must give up *śubha-karma*.

with Māyāvādī leanings are convinced that this is right and proper. But those who adhere to this view are excluded from the path of devotional service.

The Holy Name is both the means and the end

The Holy Name is the repository of spiritual bliss. He has descended to this material world to be the means by which He, the *summum bonum* of *bhakti*, is attained. The scriptures eulogize His divine glories, for Kṛṣṇa's name is both the means to prema and prema itself. According to the individual *jīva*'s degree of spiritual perfection, he considers the Lord's Holy Name to be either the means or the end. As long as one has not attained full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the name appears as the means to reach that goal.

***Śubha-karma* is the secondary means; the Holy Name is the primary means**

There are two means to the supreme goal: primary and secondary. *Śubha-karma* is the secondary means and the Lord's Holy Name is the primary means. Though the Holy Name is counted as a 'means', it is nevertheless eternally the principal means. Once this point is clearly understood, the differences between the Holy Name and *śubha-karma* will be clearly seen. The scriptural verdict is that the Holy Name is the essence of spiritual bliss, and is thus incomparable to any other *śubha-karma*. One who chants purely experiences how the unsurpassable joy of the Lord and His pastimes enters the heart and makes it soar with sublime delight: such is the nature of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.

The joy of *sāyujya-mukti* is insignificant

Even the bliss of self-realization through *jñāna* or *yoga* cannot be compared to that of chanting the Holy Name, for the state of joy in impersonal liberation is merely the cessation of material suffering.

The wonderful quality of the Holy Name is that during the *sādhana* (practice) period it is the means, and in the perfected stage, it is the ultimate goal. Even while being utilized as the means, the Holy Name remains always the goal. This cannot be said of other *śubha-karmas*, which are all mundane activities. The Holy Name is purely spiritual, being self-manifested from the realm of *śuddha-sattva*. Even during the practice of *sādhana*, the Holy Name is situated in pure goodness; the *sādhaka*'s imperfections and *anārthas* only seem to color it.

The Holy Name must be chanted in the association of devotees: then all the material inebrieties and *anārthas* disappear, being replaced by the pure name of Kṛṣṇa. The practice of *śubha-karma* must be discarded upon attainment of

the shelter of the ultimate destination. But chanters have never to give up the Holy Name. They simply chant the pure name in the perfected stage.

The Lord's Holy Name is diametrically opposite in nature to mundane *śubha-karma* activities. In the *sādhana* stage, the devotee should, by the grace of his spiritual master and on the basis of Vedic proofs, comprehend the difference between the Holy Name and *śubha-karma*.¹⁹

The remedy for this *nāmāparādha*

This *nāmāparādha* of equating the Holy Name with *śubha-karma* is committed because of sinful activities, especially the sin of offending the devotees of the Lord. Immediate countermeasures must be undertaken, because as a result of these offenses, the *jīva* acquires the perverted Māyāvādī understanding of the Holy Name. Only the association of devotees can exculpate such offenses.

To rid himself of this *nāmāparādha*, one must approach a householder Vaiṣṇava who originally came from a very low caste; this is to stamp out any false understandings of designation and caste distinctions. The offender should then smear all over his own body, with great respect and faith, the dust of the feet of that Vaiṣṇava. He must also eat the remnants of this Vaiṣṇava's food and drink the water that washed his feet. In this way, the proper attitude towards the pure name will again develop within the offender's heart. The whole world sings of how Kalidāsa was saved from this *nāmāparādha* by the mercy of the Lord.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's attachment to the Holy Name

“My dear Lord, my consciousness is thoroughly mundane. Though I mouth the names of the Lord, I am too unfortunate to experience their transcendental touchstone qualities. 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 or place me in the spiritual sky. Whatever desire is Yours, You are free to fulfill, but please let me taste the divine nectar of Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name. You have descended amongst the

¹⁹ *Śraddhā*, when sufficiently mature, brings one to the association of devotees. In that association, one begins devotional service. The heart is cleansed of all *anāṛthas* by chanting the Holy Name of the Lord. As much as the heart is cleansed of *anāṛthas*, to that degree the chanting becomes pure. Progressively, one is fixed in devotion and develops taste for the Holy Name. The knowledge of these developmental stages must be preliminarily understood and believed in by the *sādhaka* through the grace of his spiritual master. Otherwise, his *anāṛthas* will multiply due to his committing *nāmāparādha*. But with this proper understanding and faith, the pure name manifests very quickly.

conditioned souls 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 eternal relationship. O Savior! On the strength of this relationship, I am begging from You the nectar of the Holy Name.

Why the name is the religion of the age

“In Kali-yuga all other processes except the Holy Name are incapable of redeeming the fallen souls. Therefore the chanting of the Holy Name is the *yuga-dharma*. Actually, it is the most efficient religious practice throughout all the ages. But in Kali-yuga, unlike other ages, there is no other religion available. Thus the Holy Name appears as the only religion that can redeem the fallen souls.”



Only one who is blessed with loving devotion as the servant of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and who thinks himself devoid of qualification, is fit to recite this *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*.

Chapter Twelve

To Chant Inattentively (pramāda) is the Ninth Offense

All glories to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and all His devotees; by their causeless grace alone, I perform congregational chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord.

The offense known as *pramāda* or inattentive chanting

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura then said, “O Lord Caitanya, to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī here in Jagannātha Purī and Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī in South India, you taught that the Holy Name must be chanted attentively. Inattention in chanting is *nāmāparādha*. One may carefully avoid all other *nāmāparādhas*, yet still not experience the ecstasy of the pure name. This is an indication of another type of *nāmāparādha* known as *pramāda*, which prevents the chanter from reaching the stage of *niṣṭhā*, or firm faith. This in turn blocks the further growth of *bhakti* to the flowering of *Kṛṣṇa-prema*.”

Three kinds of inattention

Pramāda means ‘madness’, but ‘inattention’ and ‘carelessness’ are also synonyms of this word. Inattentive chanting sows the seeds of *anārtas* which soon develop in the heart. Inattention is of three kinds. The first is called *audāsīnya*, or ‘apathetic devotional service’, meaning a lack of fixed resolve in *sādhana*. The second type is *jaḍya*, ‘laziness’ or even ‘inertia’. The third kind is *viṣkepa*, which means ‘distraction’ or ‘misplacing one’s attention in engagements other than *sādhana-bhakti*.’

It is essential to give special attention to chanting while *anurāga* is undeveloped

By a special stroke of good fortune, a *jīva* develops enough *śraddhā* to take shelter of the Holy Name. By regularly chanting a fixed number of Holy Names with special care and attention, he may, by degrees, progress to *anurāga*, or spontaneous attraction for the Lord’s name. He should chant his prescribed number of rounds on a *tulasī-mālā* and increase his rounds with time. Before he reaches the stage of *anurāga*, he must be very cautious about offenses in chanting.

Most people are naturally very attached to material things, their memories always absorbed in matter. They may indeed chant the Holy Name of the Lord, but their minds may be far away from the chanting. Even if they daily

chant one *lakh* (one hundred thousand) Holy Names on the *japa-mālā*, not a drop of taste for the Lord's name will be produced in their hearts. It is difficult to restrain materialistic hearts from such offenses.

The process of overcoming apathy

One must make it his daily routine to chant for an hour in the company of saintly Vaiṣṇavas in a sacred, undisturbed place. Taking note of the Vaiṣṇavas' devotional attitude and their relish for the Holy Name, the neophyte should try to emulate this mood and gradually rid himself of his apathy to chanting. Step-by-step, his mind and attention should become fixed in the Holy Name. By constant chanting, the sweetness of the Holy Name makes him anxious to taste more of that nectar.

Advanced Vaiṣṇavas advise that chanting is best performed in the presence of *tulasī-devī* and in a place of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. The chanter should always seek the association of saintly devotees and emulate their discipline. He must follow in the footsteps of previous *ācāryas* in the joyful method of worshiping the Lord through His Holy Name. He may begin with an hour of such chanting, then two, then increase it to four until finally he will chant not less than three *lakhs* of Holy Names a day. This helps him to soon sever his links with materialism.

Another effective method for ridding oneself of apathy towards the Holy Name is to sit in a closed room alone and meditate on the name as did the previous sages. Or one can cover the head and face with a cloth and concentrate on the sound of the Holy Name. This will immediately fix the mind firmly on the Holy Name; slowly, one develops attraction for the name, and the offense of apathetic inattention will vanish.

Overcoming laziness

Inattention arising from laziness (*jaḍya*) prevents a person from relishing the nectar of the Holy Name. He is slow to chant and remember the Holy Name. Even after trying, he very soon finds the effort unendurable, and wants to sleep or otherwise engage himself in frivolity.

Advanced devotees are cautious against such an offense. They never waste a single moment in useless talks or activities. Their meditation on the Lord's Holy Name is unbroken. They are so absorbed in the nectar of the Holy Name that they do not want anything else. One must therefore aspire to associate with such rare devotees and follow their example, thus ridding himself of his laziness.

It is the nature of saintly Vaiṣṇavas to be always engaged in devotional activities. They never waste time uselessly. One should become attracted to

this devotional trait. One should ask himself how he also can become like these devotees, immersed in meditation upon the Holy Name; how, from this very day, he can increase his chanting step by step until such time as he can actually chant three *lakhs* of Holy Names with inspiration and eagerness. When Lord Kṛṣṇa sees such enthusiasm, He reciprocates by removing the neophyte's mental inertia with the power of His name, and by allowing him to remain in the association of His advanced devotees.

Overcoming distraction

Distraction in chanting breeds illusion which becomes the cause of further serious offenses against the Holy Name. This illusion, difficult to overcome, engenders attraction to wealth, women, position, success and the cheating propensity. When these attractions cover the heart, the neophyte becomes neglectful of the chanting of the Holy Name.

One must make a constant effort to try and drive such attractions away from the mind by diligently following the ways of Vaiṣṇava culture. This will bring back his good fortune. For instance, he should nicely observe the Ekādaśī vows, the appearance days of the Lord and other such important festival days. He should spend the entire festival day and night chanting and singing the glories of the Lord in association of saintly devotees. The ideal way to observe these festivals is to be in one of the *dhāmas* (Navadvīpa, Vṛndāvana, Purī etc.) with *sādhus* (pure devotees in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī) reading and discussing *śāstra* (Vedic literatures like *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other Vaiṣṇava scriptures). He should wholeheartedly participate in the festival programs without anxiety and hesitation. These festivals will rekindle the dying spark of spiritual taste. Thus he will be attracted to the pastimes of the Supreme Lord.

Tasting the superior flavor of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he will naturally be disgusted by his inferior material attachments. He will be enraptured by sweet songs of the Lord's pastimes sung by the devotees, and his ears will fill up with nectar that dislodges his mind from matter and fixes it upon the Holy Name again. The devotee can then chant steadily in a joyous and peaceful mood.

Good advice for chanters

One must diligently complete the chanting of the daily prescribed number of Holy Names according to one's vow. But another kind of distraction occurs when one is too eager to complete the fixed number of Holy Names even at the sacrifice of quality. One must therefore always insure that he chants his rounds sincerely. Also, one should better improve the quality of his chanting rather than try to increase his daily number of rounds for show. The name of the Lord should always be pronounced distinctly. Only by the grace of the

Lord can this be achieved. Thus one should pray to the Lord that he never falls victim to the wiles of the illusion of distraction, and that he can continue to taste the full nectar of the Holy Name.

The secret to success is humility

The devotee should make it a regular practice to spend a little time alone in a quiet place and concentrate deeply on the Holy Name. He should utter and hear the name distinctly. It is impossible for the *jīva* to single-handedly avoid and overcome the illusion of distraction. By the mercy of the Lord, however, this is accomplished with ease. Therefore it is essential to prayerfully beg for the Lord's grace with great humility, for this is the only means to salvation from this offense.

The necessity of developing enthusiasm

“O Lord Caitanya!” cried Haridāsa Ṭhākura. “You are an ocean of compassion! I wholeheartedly beg for Your mercy. Indeed, if I was unable to pray to You in this way, then no one would be more unfortunate than I.

“Those who attempt to take up devotional service on the merits of their individual intelligence and mental expertise will find that all their endeavors are fruitless. Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy is the prime cause of all successful work. One who does not aspire to obtain the Lord's mercy is indeed a very unfortunate soul.”

A note about the vow of *nirbandha*

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura advised that we concentrate deeply on the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya's teachings on this matter are found in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, *Madhya* 23.650:

“Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare. The Lord said, ‘This is the *mahā-mantra*; now go and do *japa* meditation, chanting these Holy Names a prescribed number of times (*nirbandha*) each day. You will achieve all desirable perfection from this chanting. Just chant the Holy Name constantly, because no rules or regulations can restrict chanting.’

The word *nirbandha* needs elaboration. The *sādhaka* should chant the *mahā-mantra* on a *japa-mālā* of 108 Tulasī beads. Four rounds on the beads makes a *grantha*. By gradually increasing his chanting, the *sādhaka* should aspire to chant 16 *granthas* or one *lakh* of Holy Names: this number is considered as *nirbandha*. If chanting is then even further increased to three *lakhs* of names, the devotee will always be immersed in the Lord's Holy Name. All the previous *ācāryas* and *mahājanas* have followed this instruction of Lord

Caitanya and attained perfection. Even now, anyone can attain perfection by proper chanting. Everyone, including the pure devotees, the salvationists, and the materialistic persons are eligible to chant the Holy Name of the Lord.

Two different moods of Kṛṣṇa-*prema* are visible in pure devotees, but the nectar of the Holy Name is relished in both of these moods, in the happiness of meeting the Lord and in the pangs of separation from the Lord.



One who wears the gem of *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* as a crown upon his head will certainly find shelter at Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's lotus feet.

Chapter Thirteen

To Maintain Material Attachments of ‘Me’ And ‘Mine’ is the Tenth Offense

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the life and soul of Śrīmatī Jahnavā-devī; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya, the Lord of Mother Sītā; all glories to all the devotees of Lord Caitanya. Drenched in tears of ecstatic love, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura went on to explain, in a choked voice, the last of the offenses to the Holy Name. “My Lord, this last *nāmāparādha* is the worst kind of offense; its presence stops the flow *Kṛṣṇa-prema*.”

Even after having taken spiritual initiation, most materially attached persons cannot fully give up bodily designations. They maintain a ‘me’ and ‘mine’ mentality that sidetracks them from the path of devotion. Bodily designations, e.g. ‘I am a *brāhmaṇa*’, ‘I am Vaiṣṇava’, ‘I am king’, or ‘I am a rich man’; and possessiveness, e.g. ‘This is my position, wealth, son, grandson and so on’, symptomize immaturity of realization and are deterrents to proper cultivation of devotional service. This is a terrible offense that is only gotten rid of when one surrenders to the Holy Name.

The necessity and symptoms of surrender to the Holy Name

Having given up first nine *nāmāparādhas*, every devotee must surrender completely to the Holy Name. According to the scriptures, the process of surrender (*śaraṇāgati*) has six limbs. It is impossible to explain them in detail here, but briefly they are as follows.

The vow to accept everything favorable for the execution of devotional service; likewise, to reject anything unfavorable; to be convinced that Lord Kṛṣṇa will always give protection; to depend wholly on Kṛṣṇa for everything; to always feel meek and humble; and to throw oneself at Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet in full self-surrender—these are the six limbs of surrender .

Devotional service is possible only while alive. Hence one must accept that which keeps the body and soul together, and not more. Life must be molded to facilitate devotional service. Therefore one should develop a taste for objects that are connected to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simultaneously, a natural distaste for deterrents to devotional service will also arise within the heart. Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes the only protector and maintainer, because no one is as dependable as He is. Knowing this, one should think, “As His eternal slave, I

am somehow also an insignificant member of Lord Kṛṣṇa's family. My only aspiration is to act according to His will."

One must then drop all false designations like *brāhmaṇa*, *śūdra*, father, husband, king, subject, master, donor, maintainer; and attachments to money, body, sons, wife etc. Instead, one should enter the mood of the paraphernalia of Lord Kṛṣṇa, thinking: "He is the real Master and Lord, and His will is imperative. I am ready to act only to fulfill Lord Kṛṣṇa's desire and will not even think about my own wishes. I will adjust my household affairs for the Lord's satisfaction. By His wish I will cross the material ocean. Only by His desire will I feel genuine compassion for the suffering souls. In times of both joy and sorrow I remain eternally Lord Kṛṣṇa's servitor. My moments of material enjoyment and my moods of renunciation are experienced only due to the Lord's will." When these feelings arise spontaneously, one achieves the stage of *ātmā-nivedanam* (surrender of the soul).

The consequences of not surrendering

One unable to accept the six limbs of surrender is a prisoner of false ego who always thinks in terms of 'me' and 'mine'. He proudly declares, "I am the master here. This household and family belong to me. The fruits of work are mine by right of labor, and I am their enjoyer, whether they be bitter or sweet. I am my own protector and maintainer. This woman is my wife, here is my brother, he is my son. By the sweat of my brow I earn my own living, and success is the reward of my endeavors."

Intoxicated with such egoism, these materialistic persons overestimate their own ability and intelligence. Scientists propagate their theories and develop technology to flaunt their denial of God. Among atheists, these are the worst demons. They take credit for the so-called advancement of scientific technology and for the material comfort it brings. But factually, it all happens by the Lord's will: this they completely fail to see.

When the atheists hear the glories of the Holy Name they disbelieve them. Yet sometimes even they utter Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name due to the pressure of social custom. But since this kind of chanting is bereft of faith, they never experience bliss. Such are the stereotyped ways of cheaters who make a mere show of religion. By repeating Kṛṣṇa's name, even though in neglect, they earn a little piety, but they are deprived of the actual result of chanting: pure love of Godhead.

The cause of their offensiveness is material engrossment. They are so captivated by the illusory potency that they are blinded, and it is extremely difficult for them to get free of their offensive condition. Only one who

acquires a taste for pure devotional service becomes disgusted with material life; leaving it, he takes full shelter of the holy Name.

How to rid oneself of this offense

Leaving aside all material attachments and accepting voluntary poverty, one should humbly worship Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, taking full shelter of the chanting of the Holy Name. He should aspire for the association of devotees and serve them without material desires. Gradually his heart will become impregnated with attraction for the Holy Name. The egoistic mentality of 'me' and 'mine' will disappear and he will surmount the ocean of material nescience.

By hearing the glories of the Holy Name, the last traces of false ego will dissipate, and the symptoms of a pure devotee will then blossom in his heart, and he will take to the six processes of surrender. He who finds complete shelter in the Holy Name is a great soul, for he becomes the recipient of the great treasure of Kṛṣṇa-*prema*.

The symptoms of one who is free from the ten *nāmāparādhās*

In being warned to avoid the ten offenses to the Holy Name of the Lord, one is actually being ordered to positively implement the specific saintly qualities that render these *aparādhās* impossible. Therefore, one must: not criticize but serve the saintly Vaiṣṇavas; worship Kṛṣṇa as the Absolute Supreme Lord; give full respect to the spiritual master who initiates one into the Holy Name; regard the scriptures that reveal the glories of the Holy Name as preeminent; know within the heart that the Holy Name is eternally situated in pure transcendence; root out and destroy the desire to commit sins; preach the glories of the Holy Name only to the faithful; give up ritualistic pious activities entirely; chant with full attention and surrender fully to the Holy Name.

***Bhāva* is attained quickly when the chanting is free from offenses**

When one is thus free from offenses, he becomes the most fortunate soul in the three worlds. He acquires all good qualities and is eligible to receive Lord Kṛṣṇa's causeless mercy. Very quickly, his chanting awards him the divine fruit of *bhāva*, the first stage of *prema*. Thus the offenseless chanter is promoted from the *sādhana* or practice stage to *bhāva*, or spontaneous pure devotional service. From *bhāva* comes *prema*, which, according to the scriptures, is the mature fruit of pure devotion, the pinnacle of all perfection. Lord Caitanya personally guarantees that if any devotee chants the Holy Name free from offenses, he will quickly obtain Kṛṣṇa-*prema*.

Pure *bhakti* is priceless; other attainments are imitation

If one continues to chant with offenses, then in spite of many endeavors, he will never attain pure devotion. The fruitive worker or *karmī* enjoys heavenly bliss through *karma*; the *jñānī* obtains liberation as a result of empirical knowledge; but pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa-*prema*, which is very rarely attained, is had only through the proper execution of *sādhana-bhakti*.

The bliss of heaven and liberation is compared to mother-of-pearl (the shining inner surface of a pearl oyster shell), and pure *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa is the priceless gem pearl. It is the *jīva*'s prerogative and the success of his human birth to acquire pure devotion. If one sincerely and expertly practices *sādhana-bhakti*, he very soon receives the seed of pure devotion or *prema*. The meaning of expert practice is that one avoids the ten *nāmāparādhas*.

One must be greedy for pure *bhakti* to avoid offending the Holy Name

If one is sufficiently greedy for obtaining pure devotion, then he will chant free from the ten offenses. He must diligently avoid each of the offenses with feelings of deep repentance for having ever committed them. He should pray sincerely to the lotus feet of the Holy Name and chant with determination. Only then will he be blessed with the mercy of the Holy Name, which will destroy all of his offenses. No other activity or penance can possibly exculpate his offenses.

How to stop *nāmāparādha*

Offenses to the Holy Name of the Lord are dissolved only through constant chanting. When they are so destroyed, they can never reappear. Constant chanting means that, apart from a minimal time for rest and other bare physical necessities, one should chant throughout all hours of the day with intense contrition. No other penance or ritual is as effective as this. When the offenses are destroyed, the pure Holy Name blossoms within the heart. The pure name of Kṛṣṇa delivers *bhava* and finally *prema*.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura concluded, “O Lord Caitanya, I humbly pray at Your lotus feet that the ten offenses in chanting the Holy Name of the Lord never find a place in my heart. Please kindly grant that I may remain submerged in the nectar of the pure name.”



Bhaktivinoda, the servant of the devotees, is able to recite *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* in great delight only on the strength of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's causeless mercy.

Chapter Fourteen

Offenses in Devotional Service (sevāparādha)

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda, the life and soul of Śrīmatī Jahṅva-devī; all glories to Mother Sītā and Śrī Advaita Ācārya; all glories to Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura is Nāmācārya

Lord Caitanya said, “My dear devotee Haridāsa, the conditioned souls of Kali-yuga will greatly benefit from this elaborate explanation of the offenses against the Holy Name that you have given. You are indeed a great spiritual master and ācārya.”

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura is Nāmācārya, or the foremost spiritual authority on the chanting of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa. He practiced everything he preached. He taught the *jīvas* about *śuddha-nāma*, *nāmābhāsa*, and the glories of Kṛṣṇa’s name; he also instructed how one may stop committing *nāmāparādha*, all this by his own example.

Lord Caitanya continued, “I much relished your dissertation on the Holy Name. As an ācārya, you are exemplary and as a preacher, you are profound. You are always ornamented by the priceless gem of the Lord’s pure Holy Name. Rāmānanda Rāya taught me the sublime science of transcendental mellows, and now you have revealed the glories of the Holy Name. Kindly tell me something about the different kinds of offenses made in the execution of devotional service to the Deity.”

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura replied, “You are asking about a subject that is known to a servant of the Deity. All my time is taken up in serving the Holy Name. I don’t know how to reply, yet I cannot disregard Your instruction. I will speak whatever you make me say.”

Varieties of sevāparādha

Offenses in devotional service (*sevāparādha*) are numerous. In some scriptures, thirty-two such offenses are listed, and in others, fifty. By definition, *sevāparādha* is always related to Deity worship. Learned devotees identify four classifications of *sevāparādha*, which are: those pertaining to persons engaged in Deity worship; those pertaining to the installation of

Deities; those pertaining to persons taking *darśana* of the Deity in the temple; and those that generally apply in all cases.

Thirty-two *sevāparādhas*

The list of thirty-two offenses in Deity worship is as follows: 1) entering the temple with shoes on; 2) alighting from a vehicle before the Deity; 3) not observing the festival days; 4) forgetting to offer obeisances and prayers to the Deity; 5) offering worship to the Deity in an unclean or contaminated state; 6) offering obeisances on one hand; 7) circumambulating before the Deity; 8) extending the feet towards the Deity or sitting on one's haunches before the Deity; 9) sleeping or reclining in the presence of the Deity; 10) eating before the Deity; 11) speaking lies before the Deity; 12) speaking out loudly before the Deity; 13) talking with others before the Deity; 14) using abusive language before the Deity; 15) giving charity or giving thanks to others before the Deity; 16) quarrelling before the Deity; 17) crying, howling or shedding false tears before the Deity; 18) criticizing someone before the Deity; 19) covering oneself with a blanket or quilt before the Deity; 20) praising someone before the Deity; 21) using obscene language before the Deity; 22) belching or passing air before the Deity; 23) offering substandard paraphernalia in the service of the Deity in spite of having better; 24) eating or drinking unoffered food; 25) not offering seasonal fruits and vegetables; 26) offering the Deity contaminated food, or food first eaten by someone else; 27) sitting with one's back to the Deity; 28) acting immodestly before the Deity, as by sitting directly in front of the Deity; 29) respecting or worshiping someone else before the Deity; 30) not glorifying and offering obeisances to one's spiritual master before the Deity; 31) glorifying oneself before the Deity; 32) slandering the demigods before the Deity.

More offenses listed in other scriptures

Other scriptural sources have listed additional offenses:

It is offensive to eat the food of materialists; to touch the Deity of Hari in darkness; to touch the Deity without proper rituals; to open the altar doors without an accompanying performance of music and song for the pleasure of the Lord; to offer food to the Lord that has been seen by a dog; to speak during Deity worship; to leave the altar during Deity worship; to offer *ārati* without putting a flower garland on the Deities; to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa with unattractive or non-fragrant flowers; to offer worship to Lord Kṛṣṇa without first cleansing the face and mouth; to offer worship to the Deity after sexual relations; to touch a woman during her menstrual period; to touch fire during Deity worship; to pass air before the Deity; to offer worship wearing dirty or contaminated clothes; to offer worship while angry; to offer worship directly

after having been at a cremation grounds, or having touched a dead body or seen a dead body's face; to offer worship while suffering from indigestion or dysentery; to eat garlic and onions; to chew betel and tobacco; to touch the Deity after having had a massage with oil; to offer flowers from an unclean pot; to worship at an inauspicious time; to worship while sitting on the bare floor; to touch the Lord with the left hand while bathing the Deity; to offer old or already offered fruits or flowers; to boast during worshipping; to spit habitually; to worship the Deity after having applied smudged or horizontal (i.e. three-lined) *tilaka*; to enter temple without washing the feet; to offer the Deity food cooked by a non-Vaiṣṇava; to do *pūjā* in front of a non-Vaiṣṇava; to not worship Viṣvaksena (in place of Ganeṣa) before the *pūjā*; to see or speak to a Śiva or Durgā worshipper; to bathe the Deity with water touched by the fingernails; to use water for worship into which sweat has fallen; to make oaths before the Deity; to step over the Deity's *prasāda*.

***Sevāparādha* is to be avoided those serving the Deity;
nāmāparādha is to be avoided by all devotees**

One who is engaged in Deity worship must carefully avoid the *sevāparādhas*, and all Vaiṣṇavas must strictly abstain from the *nāmāparādhas* and relish the taste of pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The devotee himself is the best judge of which offenses in *sevā* to be vigilant about, according to the service he is engaged in. But the responsibility of avoiding *nāmāparādha* is applicable to every Vaiṣṇava at all times.

**On the path of *bhava-sevā*, or spontaneous devotional service,
nāmāparādha must be nonexistent**

Especially, that devotee who worships the Lord in a secluded place in the ecstasy of separation from the Deity must be free of the ten offenses against the Holy Name. In *bhāva-sevā*, service is performed in the mind; there is not even opportunity for *sevāparādha*. Only when the devotee on this path is completely free of *nāmāparādha* can he attain *bhāva*, spontaneous loving devotional service to Kṛṣṇa.

Constant meditation upon the Holy Name of the Lord is the *sādhana* practice in *bhāva-sevā*, the offenseless stage of devotional service. By the grace of the Lord, each of the nine limbs of *sādhana-bhakti* finally culminates in the *prema* of the pure Holy Name. One who has ascended to this stage of

realization may then fully submerge himself in the nectar of chanting the Holy Name, leaving aside other services.²⁰



It is on the strength of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura’s instructions that a lowly person without means can recite the *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*.

²⁰ Lord Caitanya instructed Śrīla Raghunātha das Gosvāmī on the worship of Śrī Govardhana Śīlā thusly (as recorded in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya* 6.294-304):

“This stone is the transcendental form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Worship the stone with great eagerness. Worship this stone in the mode of goodness like a perfect *brāhmaṇa*, for by such worship you will surely attain ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa without delay. For such worship, one needs a jug of water and a few flowers from a Tulasī tree. This is worship in complete goodness when performed in complete purity. With faith and love, you should offer eight soft Tulasī flowers, each with two Tulasī leaves, one on each side of each flower.”

‘After thus advising him how to worship, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally offered Raghunātha das the Govardhana-Śīlā with His transcendental hand. As advised by the Lord, Raghunātha das worshiped the Śīlā in great transcendental jubilation. Svarūpa Dāmodara gave Raghunātha das two cloths, each about six inches long, a wooden platform and a jug in which to keep water. ‘Thus Raghunātha das began worshiping the stone from Govardhana, and as he worshiped he saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Maharaja, directly in the stone. Thinking of how he had received the Govardhana-Śīlā directly from the hands of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Raghunātha das was always overflowed with ecstatic love. The amount of transcendental bliss that Raghunātha das enjoyed simply by offering water and Tulasī is impossible to achieve even if one worships the Deity with sixteen kinds of paraphernalia.

‘After Raghunātha das had thus worshiped the Govardhana-Śīlā for sometime, Svarūpa Dāmodara spoke to him as follows: “Offer the Govardhana stone eight *kaudis* worth of the first-class sweetmeats known as *khaja* and *sandesh*. If you offer them with faith and love, they will be just like nectar.”’

Chapter Fifteen

The Bhajana of Confidential Worship of the Holy Name (bhajana-praṇālī)

All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and Lord Gauraṅga; all glories to Lord Nityānanda; all glories to Śrī Advaita Ācārya, the Lord of Mother Sītā; all glories to all the devotees of Lord Caitanya. One who rejects all other processes of elevation and simply immerses himself in the chanting of the Holy Name is truly a magnanimous soul and is glorious in all respects.

Lord Caitanya said, “My dear Haridāsa, simply on the strength of your wonderful devotion, you are conversant with all knowledge. All the Vedic philosophical conclusions about the Absolute Godhead, the jīva, *māyā*, the pure name of the Lord, *nāmābhāsa* and *nāmāparādha* are revealed in your speech. It is therefore rightly said that the *Vedas* gleefully dance upon your tongue.” The Lord, fully satisfied with His devotee, now desired to hear the precepts of *nāma-rasa*, the rare spiritual science of the sweet mellows of the Holy Name, from the mouth of Śrīla Haridāsa.

Lord Caitanya continued, “Now please instruct Me about *nāma-rasa*. How can a *jīva* become eligible to receive it?” Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura then prayed at the Lord’s lotus feet, submitting with intense *prema* that whatever he would speak on this subject would be inspired by the Lord Himself.

The true *rasa*

In the *Vedas* the Supreme Personality of Godhead is called *rasa*. This *rasa* or the nectar of transcendental love permeates the spiritual Kingdom of God. Worldly poets dabble in a *rasa* that is totally mundane. Factually, theirs is not *rasa* but a perversion of it.

The *rasa* that is transcendental and ever situated in pure goodness, beyond the jurisdiction of the twenty-four elements of material nature, is in truth the real *rasa*. It is unknown even to the *ātmārāmās*, the self-satisfied mystics who have surpassed material nature but are yet unable to perceive transcendental variegatedness. *Rasa* is eternal, full of cognizance and ever-blissful, ever sheltered at Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.

The Supreme Absolute Truth exists as *śaktiman* or the Energetic and *śakti* or the Energy. Qualitatively, *śaktiman* and *śakti* are the same, though differences between the two are to be appreciated. *Śaktiman* is always the Supreme Controller, willful and independent; *śakti* always displays His full and

supreme potency. His *śakti* or potency manifests in three ways: the *cit* potency or the spiritual nature, the *jīva*, and *māyā* or the material nature. The *cit* potency reveals the Supreme Truth, His name, abode, pastimes and beauty. Lord Kṛṣṇa is that Supreme Truth. His exquisite dark complexion, *śyāma*, is His beauty. Goloka is His abode and the place of His pastimes. His name, abode, form, qualities and pastimes are ever-existent features of the non-dual spiritual substance, and the display of these transcendental varieties is the function of His *cit* potency.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original form of all transcendental qualities. His eternal divine nature is His spiritual potency. There is no inherent difference between the form of Kṛṣṇa and His divine nature. Yet spiritual variety (*rasa*) creates an impression of difference, which is exhibited in the spiritual world.

***Māyā-śakti* is the external potency**

The reflection of the spiritual potency is called *māyā-śakti* or material nature. She is also known as the external potency. She has produced this material world or *Devi-dhāma* as ordered by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

There are two types of *jīva-śakti*

The marginal region (*taṭasthā*) of the spiritual potency manifests the *jīva-śakti*. The *jīva* is eternal and inconceivably one with and yet simultaneously different from the Supreme Lord. He is Lord Kṛṣṇa's spiritual energy and is therefore meant to be part of the transcendental paraphernalia of the Lord's service.

There are two categories of *jīvas*: *nitya-baddha* and *nitya-mukta*, or eternally conditioned and eternally liberated souls. The eternally liberated *jīva* is entitled to render eternal devotional service. The eternally conditioned *jīva* is engrossed in material activities. He can also be said to be of two types: extroverted and introspective.

The introspective *nitya-baddha jīvas* are searching for the Absolute Truth. The extroverted *jīvas* are totally absorbed in the external features of gross matter and thus are far removed from Kṛṣṇa. They simply want to exploit things meant for Lord Kṛṣṇa's service for their own enjoyment. The more fortunate and pious *jīvas* amongst the introspective ones come into contact with devotees and in their association take to the chanting the Lord's Holy Name, which transports them through the portals of the spiritual world. The less fortunate introspective *jīvas* are attracted to the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* by which they worship various demigods or finally merge into the impersonal Brahman.

The flowering of *rasa*

The Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the bud of the flower of *rasa*, which is the essence of pure transcendence. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa, *rasa* is propagated in the material world in the form of His Holy Name.

With the first opening of the bud of the Holy Name comes the realization of the enchanting Śyāmasundara form of Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana. The Lord's sixty-four transcendental qualities are like the irresistible fragrance from the partially blossomed flower.

When this flower comes into full bloom, it manifests the eternal and confidential pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa known as the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, or the eightfold loving affairs of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. And although this manifestation is transcendental, it still appears in the material world.

The *bhakti-śakti*

Latent within the *jīva* are the miniscule spiritual potencies of *ahlāda* (bliss) and *samvit* (knowledge). With the flowering of *rasa*, the *svarūpa-śakti* (the internal potency of the Lord Himself) descends to contact and revive these tiny spiritual potencies of the *jīva*; all this is effected by the causeless mercy of the Holy Name. The *svarūpa-śakti* descends as Bhakti-devi, who embodies the full mixture of the *hlādinī* and *samvit* potencies. This mixture is called the *bhakti-svarūpa-śakti*, the potency of the form of pure devotion. When his latent bliss and knowledge are infused with this *bhakti-svarūpa-śakti*, the spontaneous loving attitude required for entering the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* appears in the heart of the chanter of the Holy Name.

The churning of *rasa*

Thus one reaches a state of perfection known as *sthāyi-bhāva*, or permanent emotion, which is also known as *rati*. Four *bhāvas* combine to transform *rati* to *rasa*. The four *bhāvas* are: *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *sāttvika*, and *vyabhicārī* (or *sañcārī*).

Vibhāva, the element that excites loving sentiment, has two subdivisions: *ālambana* and *uddīpana*. *Ālambana* or the root is again of two parts: the *viśaya* (subject) and the *aśraya* (recipient). The devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the *aśraya*, and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself is the *viśaya*. Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental beauty and qualities are known as *uddīpana* or the impetus. Thus where there is *ālambana* (the root relationship of the devotee and Kṛṣṇa) and *uddīpana* (the impetus of the realization of Kṛṣṇa's form and qualities), *līlā* and *rasa* can occur.

Anubhāva (the external symptoms of the internal permanent emotion) is what results from *vibhāva*, or the effect of *ālambana* and *uddīpana*. When these emotions become more intense, they are transformed into *sāttvika-bhāva* (loving emotions that cannot be checked). At this same time *sañcārī-bhava* (emotions that set into motion the progress of *rasa*) come into play.

Rasa is like a machine. *Rati*, or permanent emotion, is the axle of this machine. Once the machine starts moving by the combined energy of the four *bhāvas*, the permanent emotion (*sthāyi-bhava*) is then converted into *rasa*. The devotee, who is the *aśraya* (like a shelter or container), relishes that *rasa*. And that *rasa* is the *Vraja-rasa* or the spiritual mellow of *Vṛndāvana*. That *rasa* is the essence of everything, and is for the *jīva* the highest goal. The *Vedas* expound four goals: *dharma*, *ārtha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*; but in fact the pinnacle of all these perfections is *rasa*. The fully realized and perfected beings are entitled to taste that *rasa*.

Elevation via the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*

Amongst the introspective *jīvas*, he who is attracted to pure devotional service is the most evolved. The *jīva* can take up the path of *bhakti* only after he has accrued sufficient *sukṛti* or piety from previous births. When such a *jīva* develops strong faith or *śraddhā*, he comes into contact with a pure devotee spiritual master. By the grace of the spiritual master, he is initiated into the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* -the Holy Names of the Divine Couple.

Though this *jīva* is blessed with *śraddhā*, his desire for material gain poses an obstacle on his path of progress. The spiritual master graces the *jīva* with a disciplinary process suitable for overcoming this obstacle. Thus he gains spiritual strength from chanting. Chanting on Tulasī beads and meditating on a fixed number of Holy Names every day is the best form of worship, and will surely lead to success. Therefore, in the beginning, a little time should daily be spent in seclusion for full concentration upon the Holy Name. In degrees, as chanting increases, a more profound relationship with the Holy Name is developed, and the material impediments fall away.

The path of *bhakti* features two important engagements, one of which is Deity worship, the other chanting and meditating upon the Holy Name. Although both engagements are expedient, chanting and meditating on the Holy Name is preferred by the more deeply serious devotees.

Many elevated pure devotees at times chant aloud the Holy Names on their beads, and then at other times meditate upon Kṛṣṇa's pastimes on the beads. The advantage of performing *kīrtana*, or audibly chanting the *mahā-mantra* on the beads, is that three kinds of devotional service—hearing, chanting

and remembering—are accomplished simultaneously. Of course, all the nine limbs of devotional service reside in the Holy Name; of them, hearing, chanting and remembering are the best. Chanting automatically manifests the other limbs of devotional service, like *pada-sevanam*, *dāsyam*, *sakhyam*, *ātmā-nivedanam*, and so on. Thus the process of Deity worship is automatically accomplished by the devotee surrendered to the Holy Name. But the devotee attracted to Deity worship will have to acquire attraction for hearing and chanting in order to attain complete perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Who is eligible to chant the Holy Name?

Three kinds of *jīvas* are captivated by external material phenomena: the gross materialists, the *karmīs* and the *jñānīs*. They are therefore extroverts all, chasing after false hopes for happiness in the realm of fleeting appearances. The gross materialist endeavors for sensual delights. The *karmī* aspires for ephemeral heavenly bliss in the hereafter. The *jñānī* is wholly concerned with how to mitigate his existential suffering. After surpassing these stages, the *jīva* becomes truly introspective, seeking entrance into the realm of the internal spiritual energy. The introspective *jīvas* are divided into three categories: *kaniṣṭha*, *madhyama*, and *uttama* (neophyte, intermediate, and advanced).

The neophyte devotee rejects demigod worship and worships only Kṛṣṇa, but with certain material motivations due to lack of *sambandha-jñāna*. Simple and naive, he is not offensive; he is just self-preoccupied. Therefore, although such neophytes are not considered to be pure Vaiṣṇavas, they are certainly to be accepted as Vaiṣṇava-*prāya* or resembling Vaiṣṇavas.

The intermediate or *madhyama* devotee is pure and is very firmly situated in faith. The *uttama* or advanced devotee is completely indifferent to material things and is fully surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. The pure name avails Himself to those who have exclusive faith in Kṛṣṇa.

Step-by-step advancement in hearing, chanting, and remembering

The order of discipline (*sādhana-krāma*) for realizing the identity of the Holy Name with the Lord is as follows. The devotee must in the beginning discard the ten offenses and simply absorb himself in the Holy Name by chanting constantly. He should distinctly pronounce the Holy Name and meditate upon the transcendental sound vibration. When his chanting is steady, clear and blissful, he will be able to meditate upon the Śyāmasundara form of the Lord. With chanting beads in hand, he should thus seek out the

transcendental form of the Holy Name, which will appear when his vision is pure.

Another method he may employ to see this form is to sit in front of the Deities, drink the beautiful sight of the Lord with his eyes and meditate upon the Holy Name. After reaching the stage where the Holy Name and the form of the Lord become one, he must then absorb the transcendental qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa into his meditation. Thus the Holy Name and the qualities of Kṛṣṇa merge to become one through constant chanting.

Next, he goes on to practice the remembrance of particular pastimes of the Lord. This remembrance, called *mantra-dhyāna māyī upāsanā*, facilitates further absorption into the Holy Name. This *līlā-smāranam* or pastime meditation also gradually become one with the Holy Name, form, and qualities.

At this point, the first rays of *nāma-rasa*, or the transcendental mellow of the Holy Name, dawn on the horizon of perception. Chanting the name in great delight, the devotee sees Kṛṣṇa surrounded by cowherd boys and girls under a desire tree at the Yoga-Pīṭha. Progressively, the devotee's practice of *līlā-smāranam* intensifies to the point where he begins to meditate on the most confidential pastimes of the Lord known as the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, or the eightfold pastimes of Radha-Kṛṣṇa. When he reaches maturity in this meditation, *rasa* rises in full glory.

The *svā-rasikī* process of worship

Aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā smāranam is also known as *svā-rasikī* worship. In this stage of *bhajana*, one is awarded the opportunity to accordingly serve Kṛṣṇa in the times and places of his pastimes. Now the devotee realizes the full grace of his spiritual master, who, in his eternal spiritual form (*siddha-svarūpa*), guides the disciple to a *sakhī* (confidential *gopī*) who in turn introduces him into the pastimes of the Lord. Of all the *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu, is the most excellent. She embodies the highest spiritual sentiment, *mahābhāva*. Serving Kṛṣṇa under Her leadership is the supreme spiritual experience.

The five main *rasas* or spiritual mellows are: *śānta* (neutrality), *dāsya* (servitorship), *sākhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parenthood), and *śṛṅgāra* or *mādhurya* (conjugal). Of these, *śṛṅgāra* or conjugal is the highest. Devotees eligible to enter the conjugal *rasa* are the recipients of the special mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

In the conjugal *rasa*, Lord Kṛṣṇa has many *yutheśvarīs* or female group leaders; but everyone prefers Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. She is the direct manifestation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti* or spiritual potency, and all the other *Vraja-gopīs*

are Her expansions. She is the Absolute embodiment of all the *rasas*. It is therefore the goal of devotional service to enroll in Her *yūtha* or group. Service to Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vraja is impossible without first taking shelter of the Vraja-*gopīs*. One should furthermore aspire to enter Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's camp and serve directly under Lalita-devī.

When the material coverings are removed, the spiritual goal is achieved

As the devotee becomes disciplined in *rasa*, the gap between *sādhana* (practice) and *bhajana-siddhi* (perfection of worship) closes. Soon, the servitor's spiritual form begins to take shape. By the mercy of the *yutheśvarī*, he becomes easily overpowered by attraction to Lord Kṛṣṇa. This strong spiritual attraction eradicates the gross and subtle material concepts of form that captured him when he turned away from Kṛṣṇa. Thus the *jīva* gains entrance into Vraja in his original spiritual form.

Up to this point, the *jīva*'s progress in spiritual life can be framed in words. Beyond it, there are even higher stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that are indescribable. These will be revealed by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. The cultivation of the conjugal loving relationship with the Lord is the highest mode of service; by this, ever-increasing Kṛṣṇa-prema will be experienced. By adopting the *bhauma-vraja-rasa*, or the *vraja-rasa* revealed on this material plane in Vṛndāvana-dhāma, one becomes eligible to enter such conjugal love.

Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya said, "Therefore one should accept the mood of the *gopīs* in their service. In such a transcendental mood, one should always think of the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. After thinking of Śrī-Śrī Radha-Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes for a long time and after getting completely free from material contamination, one is transferred to the spiritual world. There the devotees attain an opportunity to serve Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as one of the *gopīs*. Unless one follows in the footsteps of the *gopīs* he can not attain the service of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja. If one is overcome by knowledge of the Lord's opulence, he can not attain the Lord's lotus feet even though he is engaged in devotional service." (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 8.228-230)

The devotee who is inclined to cultivate the conjugal *rasa* must accept the form of a *gopī* under the guidance of a superior *vraja-gopī*. One can become a *gopī* when eleven transcendental sentiments adorn the heart. They are: 1) *sambandha* (relationship), 2) *vayasā* (age), 3) *nāma* (name), 4) *rūpa* (form), 5) *yūtha-praveśa* (entrance into a group), 6) *veśa* (attire), 7) *ajñā* (instructions), 8) *vāsa-sthāna* (place of residence), 9) *sevā* (service), 10) *parākāṣṭhā* (excellence), 11) *pālya-dāsī-bhava* (the mood of a kept maidservant).

Five stages of consciousness are ascended in *bhāva-sādhana*

The cultivation of these eleven *gopī* sentiments develops through five stages. They are: 1) *śravana-daśā* (the stage of hearing), 2) *vāraṇa-daśā* (the stage of acceptance), 3) *smārana-daśā* (the stage of remembering), 4) *apāna-daśā* (stage of application), and 5) *sampati-daśā* (stage of inheritance).

Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya says, ‘One who is attracted by the ecstatic love of the *gopīs* does not care about the regulative principles of Vedic life or popular opinion. Rather, he completely surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa and renders service unto Him.’ ‘In this liberated stage the devotee is attracted by one of the five humors (*rasas*) in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. As he continues to serve the Lord in that mood, he attains a spiritual body to serve Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana.’ (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 8.220, 8.222) So saying, Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya instructs us to first attain the form and mood of a *vraja-gopī* in order to obtain service in the conjugal relationship.

When a *sādhaka* devotee, having heard about Lord Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, is attracted to the conjugal mellow, he should take further instruction on *rasa* from a realized, saintly spiritual master. This is called the stage of hearing or *śravana-daśā*. When the *sādhaka* devotee anxiously and eagerly accepts the conjugal mellow, *vāraṇa-daśā* commences. Then, by pure remembrance of the sentiments of *rasa*, he desires to practice them: thus he reaches the third stage, *smārana-daśā*. When he is able to perfectly invoke these sentiments of *rasa*, he attains *apāna-daśā* or *prāpti-daśā*. Finally, when he can separate himself from all his temporary material designations and is steadily fixed in that original spiritual identity for which he yearns, he has reached *sampati-daśā*: the inheritance of his spiritual identity.

Bhajana* from the stage of *śravana-daśā* to *smārana-daśā

If, after having tested the disciple, the spiritual master determines that he is eligible to perform *bhajana* and serve in the *śṛṅgāra-rasa*, he then confidentially informs the disciple about his eternal spiritual form as a *mañjarī* in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s camp, under the supervision of Śrī Lalita-devī. The spiritual master teaches the disciple how to develop the eleven sentiments of the *gopīs*, how to meditate on the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, and how to properly be established in both.

So that he may fully understand them, the *sādhaka* is shown his *siddha-deha* or spiritual identity, viz. his spiritual name, form, qualities, service and so on. The spiritual master also discloses who the parents of the *sādhaka*’s *mañjarī* identity are, at which house she was born, who her husband is, and so on. At this point, the disciple must spurn all Vedic religious pursuits and simply be a fully surrendered maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the camp leader;

thereafter, the *guru* will reveal in detail the disciple's eternal service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. The *sādhaka* (now a female *sādhakī*) embraces these revelations in *vāraṇa-daśā*. He enters into *smāraṇa-daśā* when he actually remembers them for himself. In this way, the *sādhaka* prepares himself for spiritual birth as a *gopī* in Vraja.

A digression on the subject of *ruci*

But in the beginning the spiritual master and disciple must together sort out the disciple's natural inclination (*ruci*) for *rasa*. If the disciple finds his natural taste coincides with the identity indicated by the spiritual master, he should so inform his *guru* and embrace that identity as his life and soul. But if the disciple does not have a natural taste for the selected identity, he must frankly reveal this to his spiritual master, who will give him another identity. If the disciple has a taste for the new identity, he should accept it. His inherent nature will then manifest itself.

Ruci or taste is the natural devotional propensity born out of *bhakti-sukṛti*, or previous devotional service. It may therefore be long standing or only recently developed. But in either case *ruci* is natural to the soul. When this inclination is determined by the spiritual master, it must be confirmed by the disciple. If the inclination is not fixed, the spiritual master's instructions on *rasa* will not take effect.

Those who are not attracted to the *śṅgāra-rasa*, preferring *dāsyā*, *sākhya* or *vātsalya*, must likewise receive instructions from the spiritual master on these relationships in order to get the fruit of their devotion, or else return to a life of *anārthas*. The great devotee Śyāmānanda at first was not aware of his own *siddha-ruci* or permanent devotional propensity; he was made to embrace the *sākhya-rasa* or the mood of friendship. Later, by the grace of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, he attained his real position.

If an inappropriate *ruci* is falsely attached to the *sādhaka*, it is compared to the *gopī*-identity's acceptance of a husband. But by the grace of his spiritual master, the *sādhaka* at last attains Kṛṣṇa's service in the *parakīya-rasa* or paramour relationship. *Rasa* comes to a full bloom only in the *parakīya* mood. The summit of Lord Caitanya's teachings is that the *parakīya* attitude is the permanent feature of the pastimes of the Lord, both in their appearance [when Kṛṣṇa descends to Vrajabhūmi] and their disappearance [into the invisible Vraja of the transcendental world].

The conjugal *rasa* is completely transcendental

Śṅgāra-rasa is totally devoid of even an iota of materialism. The transcendental *jīva*, in order to enjoy and exchange pure *rasa*, becomes a

transcendental gopī and renders devotional service to the transcendental personalities of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental realm of Vṛndāvana. There is not the slightest tinge of the mundane man-woman relationship in Vṛndāvana. Only the purest essence of conjugal love is manifested in the perfected identity of the soul. And realization of this is available only from a pure devotee spiritual master. Other than by his grace, this inconceivable truth can never be understood. It is beyond the realm of speculation and pedantic scrutiny. Its realization is extremely rare.

The transition from *smāraṇa-daśā* to *apāna-daśā* is crucial

Perfection eludes the disciple if he does not elevate himself from the stage of *smāraṇa-daśā* to *apāna-daśā*. The confidential process of *apāna-daśā* is most exalted, devoid of the false posturing of *karma*, *jñāna* or *yoga*. Externally, the devotee engages himself fully in the chanting the Holy Name, leading a renounced and simple life. Internally, he keeps the splendid flames of *rasa* burning with pure intensity all the time.²¹

Those *sādhakas* who are prone to a pompous external display of devotion or who fail to steady and properly direct their internal spiritual aspirations are unable to elevate themselves from the platform of *smāraṇa* to *apāna-daśā*. Thus the *sādhaka* may linger, unaccomplished, through many lifetimes of devotional practice.

This path of worship or *bhajana* is the simplest, but if the purity of the *bhajana* is in any way disfigured by a tinge of the contaminated desires for recognition, distinction or preference, then the *sādhaka* is thrown off the path of *vraja-sādhana* or *bhajana* in the mood of *Vraja*. One must approach the spiritual master with simple humility and learn this pure process properly.

By always remembering that he is pure spirit soul, part and parcel of the Absolute Whole, that he has a transcendental original form that is all-perfect, that He has forgotten his perfect spiritual state and come under the clutches of *māyā*, that he is offensive to Lord Kṛṣṇa, being inebriated with the false designations of his gross body, but by the mercy of his spiritual master he can regain knowledge of his real self the method for the reawakening of the disciple's original identity can be quickly accomplished.

Two methods of *sādhana*: *vaidhī* and *rāgānuga*

There are two methods of *sādhana-bhakti*: one is *vaidhī* (rules and regulations) and the other is *rāgānuga* (spontaneous). In the beginning, these two methods

²¹ Refer to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 4.50, purport, for further elaboration on this topic.

appear to be contradictory, but upon comprehension of their real purpose, the differences between them are dissolved. The *vaidhī* method of *sādhana* arises from respect for the regulations of scripture. *Rāgānuga-sādhana* is born out of an intense attraction for the activities of the residents of Vraja. The first is the usual method, whereas the second is extremely rare and confidential.

To the stage of *apāna-daśā* via *vaidhī-sādhana*

The *vaidhī-bhakta* cross-checks all his activities of service to Kṛṣṇa with scriptural injunction. Thus his beginning faith (*śraddhā*) for the process of devotional service leads him step-by-step to *niṣṭhā* (firm faith), then to *ruci* (taste or attraction), then *āsakti* (attachment). When he reaches the first stage of spontaneity and slight *bhāva*, he discards his dependence upon scriptural directives as an impediment to his progress. After this, he is elevated to the stage of *apāna-daśā*, where the difference between devotees following *vaidhī* and *rāgānuga* disappear.

To the stage of *sampati-daśā* via *rāgānuga-sādhana*

In the *smārana-daśā* stage of *rāgānuga-sādhana*, the eleven sentiments of the *gopīs* are first remembered by the *sādhaka*; these sentiments must adorn his emotions before he can remember the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*.

There are five levels of remembrance in *smārana-daśā*. Initially, his remembrance will not be steady; this level is called *smārana*. Sometimes he remembers the sentiments, his position and his service, and at other times he forgets. But by steady practice of *smārana*, gradually he reaches permanency of remembrance, or *dhāraṇa*. As one meditates on every aspect of the subject of remembrance, part by part, minutely, *dhāraṇa* develops into fixed meditation, this is *dhyāna*. When *dhyāna* becomes continual, it is called *anusmṛti*. Following *anusmṛti* is the fifth level of remembrance, *samādhi*, when the devotee has no interest in anything other than perfect absorption in the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

From the *samādhi* level of *smārana-daśā*, the crucial ascension to *apāna-daśā* or the stage of application takes place. For one who is not adept, elevation through the five stages of *smārana-daśā* to *apāna-daśā* may require many yugas of effort; for a dexterous *sādhaka*, reaching *apāna-daśā* is accomplished quickly.

In the *apāna-daśā* stage, identification with the psychophysical body is reduced to insignificance. His spiritual identity (*svarūpa*) becomes more and more predominant. Intermittently, it manifests and he experiences sublime ecstasy in rendering devotional service to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. These experiences develop until he spends long periods of time in Vraja

interacting with the residents in his *vraja-svarūpa*, seeing the *dhāma* and the transcendental pastimes within.

The devotee's constant *nāma-bhajana* inevitably brings about a face to face meeting with Lord Śyāmasundara. By the Lord's merciful will, all trace of the devotee's subtle body of mind, intelligence and false ego are extinguished with the demise of the gross body of five elements. Thus he enters the *sampati-daśā* stage.

This is when the devotee's pure spiritual form fully manifests, free of material coverings. In the mood of pure bhava, he takes up his eternal service to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental dhāma. He thus becomes a *sādhana-siddha* or a perfected soul now reinstated in his *svārūpa* through practice of *sādhana* and *bhajana*. He now serves the Lord in the company of the *nitya-siddhas*, the eternal associates of the Lord who were never conditioned.

Summary

The Holy Name is the greatest and yet the easiest obtainable spiritual treasure. This treasure is obtained by the *jīva* who chants with faith and devotion, not caring for *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*. That *jīva* quickly and easily ascends to the highest perfection by following the method of *nāma-bhajana* described above.

This method is the best of methods, better even than other methods of *bhakti*. The basic requirement for successful accomplishment of *nāma-bhajana* is that the *sādhaka* must totally shun bad association and engage in the practice of devotional service in the company of saintly devotees of the Lord. Pure love of Kṛṣṇa is the expression of unalloyed devotional service. Only a pure devotee's heart has the inclination and capability of receiving prema; the non-devotee's heart denies it. Prema refuses to enter the heart of one who does not keep the company of pure devotees. The *jīva*'s decision to accept either good or bad association has a powerful and lasting influence on his destiny.

There are three essential traits that must be cultivated to obtain success in chanting the Holy Name of the Lord: saintly association, isolation from the disturbances of mundane life, and determined, confident enthusiasm.

After saying this, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura declared himself to be very low and materially engrossed, bereft of good association and always engaged in self-deception. Although Śrīla Haridāsa is himself a *nitya-siddha* associate of the Lord, he expressed himself in this humble way. Humility is the ornament of *prema*.

The Lord's special favor upon Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura

Śrīla Haridāsa continued, “O Lord, kindly shower upon me Your causeless mercy (*ahaitukī-kṛpā*). I pray that You grant me entry into the realm of *bhakti-rasa*.” Saying this, Śrīla Haridāsa fell unconscious in loving ecstasy, fully self-surrendered at the Lord's lotus feet.

Ahaitukī-kṛpā means ‘causeless mercy’. By saying this, Śrīla Haridāsa implied that he was spiritually unaccomplished and therefore had no hope for the kind of mercy Lord Kṛṣṇa bestows upon His pure devotees. In his mood of utter helplessness he simply prayed for Lord Caitanya's unconditional grace.

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura is famous for *nāma-bhajana* and his teachings on the glories of the Holy Name, yet he is also the recipient of Lord Caitanya's special mercy. He is such an authority on the philosophy of *nāma-rasa* that once, when Lord Caitanya was relishing the topics of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā* with Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya in the courtyard of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's *bhajana-kuṭīra*, Śrīla Haridāsa repeatedly expounded at length on the glories of *nāma-rasa* to the rapt attention of the other exalted persons present.

Lord Caitanya was moved by divine loving emotions upon hearing Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura's plea for mercy. Lifting Śrīla Haridāsa up in His embrace, the Lord then spoke in confidence to him. “O Haridāsa! Listen attentively to what I have to say. The truth about the Holy Name will be hidden by mischievous rascals who will create a dark shroud of ignorance over the entire world. At that time, these excellent and unrivalled instructions of yours about chanting in the association of saintly persons shall be understood only by a remaining handful of devotees.”

What did Lord Caitanya mean by ‘mischievous rascals’? The prime candidates for this appellation are the various upstart sects like the *sahajiyās*, *āulas*, *bāulas* and so on, who propagate bogus mundane doctrines disguised as Mahāprabhu's own teachings; they indeed conceal from the world the pure philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness expounded by the Lord Himself in His *Śikṣāṣṭaka*.

The Lord continued, “The true path of the Holy Name will be followed by saintly souls who are totally detached from material life. They will chant the Holy Name with *bhāva* and will therefore be known as *rasika-bhaktas*. Their *bhāva* will be that of separation; by their chanting they will relish the pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the eight principal *gopīs*.

“The *jīva* is blessed with pure *bhakti* only on the strength of his *sukṛti*, or piety and faith. Not everyone is entitled to have such devotion, but in order to instill such devotion in the hearts of the faithful, I have descended to

propagate the chanting of the Holy Name as the religion for this age. The chanting of the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare—is factually the *jīva*'s inherent and eternal religion.

“My dear Haridāsa, in the accomplishment of this mission I depend upon your help, and thus I am hearing from you the glories of the Holy Name.”



The *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, this touchstone of the Lord's Holy Name, is an unfathomable mine of divine nectar. Whoever tastes it is truly fortunate and is blessed by Kṛṣṇa; he is a great soul and always blissfully serves Lord Kṛṣṇa in spontaneous loving devotion. I am a fallen soul; I clasp his feet and humbly pray that the remnants of this nectar should be distributed profusely, thus spreading divine bliss to everyone.



Thus Ends *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*