

rādhā-kṛṣṇa-svarūpaya caitanyāya namo namaḥ

*Obeisances again and again
unto Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who is Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa*

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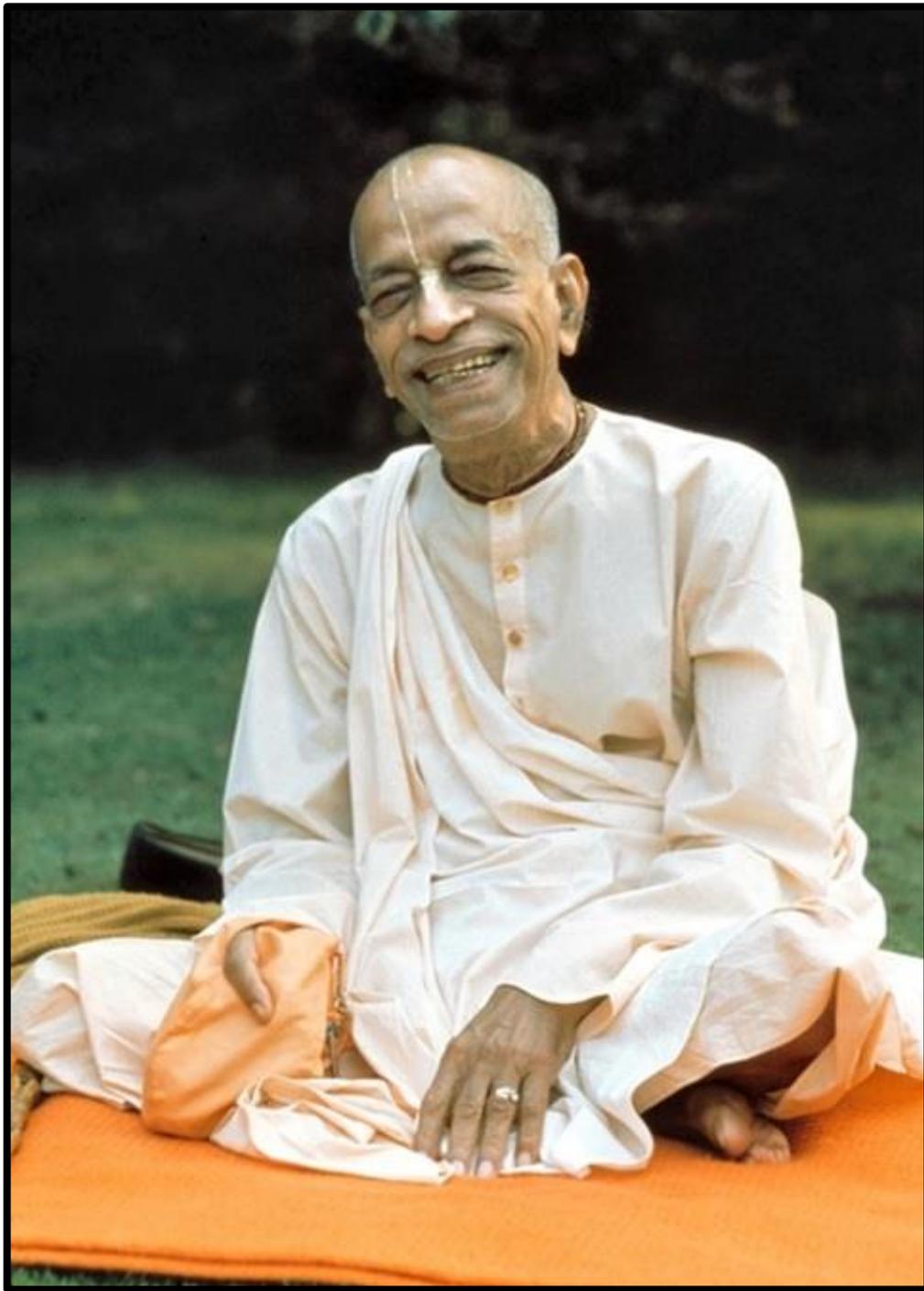
The Price of Causeless Mercy

— A Helping Hand for a Struggling Chanter —

Alone, I find I have no strength to chant the Holy Name of Lord Hari. I beg you therefore, please be merciful, and with a particle of faith give me the great treasure of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.

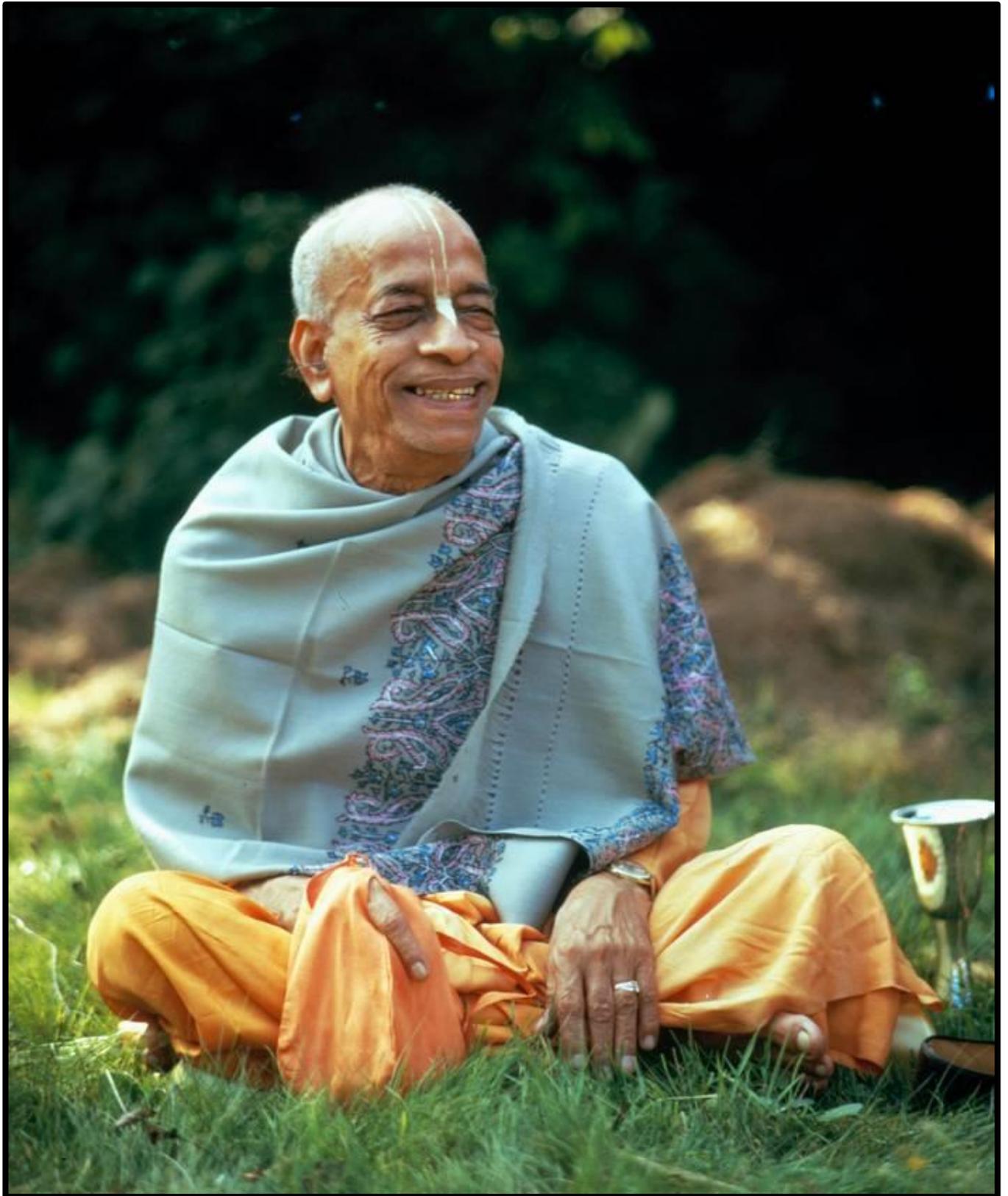
— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Ohe! Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura





***The Price of Causeless Mercy* is dedicated to
Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi, The Holy Name, and Their Eternally
Sold-out Associate and Servitor
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,
Founder-ācārya of the
International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness
who mercifully distributed the Holy Name to the whole Earth
planet and encouraged his followers to continue doing the same.**

— Presented by Śrīmatī Dāsī and team
ISKCON, Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma
Śrī Nityānanda Trayodaśī, 2019



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Śrī Maṅgalācaraṇa

Śrī Guru Praṇāma

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmilitam yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master who, with the torchlight of knowledge, has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance.

Śrī Rūpa Praṇāma

*śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣtam sthāpitam yena bhū-tale
svayam rūpaḥ kadā mahyam dadāti sva-padāntikam*

When will Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who has established within this material world the mission to fulfill the desire of Lord Caitanya, give me shelter under his lotus feet?

Maṅgalācaraṇa

*vande 'ham śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalam śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāms ca
śrī-rūpam sāgrajātam saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānvitam tam sa-jīvam
sādvaitam sāvadhūtam parijana-sahitam kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devam
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānvitāms ca*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and of all the other preceptors on the path of devotional service. I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇavas and unto the six Gosvāmīs, including Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and their associates. I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrī Advaita Ācārya Prabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and all His devotees, headed by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. I then offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and all the *gopīs*, headed by Lalitā and Viśākhā.

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine*

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

***namas te s̄arasvate deve gaura-vānī-pracāriṇe
nirviṣeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe***

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

***nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktisiddhānta-sarasvatīti nāmine***

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

***śrī-vārṣabhānavī-devī-dayitāya kṛpābdhaye
kṛṣṇa-sambandha-vijñāna-dāyine prabhava namaḥ***

I offer my respectful obeisances to Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-devī-dayita dāsa, who is favored by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and who is an ocean of transcendental mercy and the deliverer of the science of Kṛṣṇa.

***mādhuryojjala-premādhyā-śrī-rūpānuga-bhaktida
śrī-gaura-karuṇā-śakti-vidyāya namo 'stu te***

I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, the personified energy of Śrī Caitanya's mercy, who delivers devotional service which is enriched with conjugal love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, coming exactly in the line of revelation of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

***namas te gaura-vānī-śrī-mūrtaye dīna-tāriṇe
rūpānuga-viruddhāpasiddhānta-dhvānta-hāriṇe***

I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, who are the personified teachings of Lord Caitanya. You are the deliverer of the fallen souls. You do not tolerate any statement which is against the teachings of devotional service enunciated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

***namo-gaura-kiśorāya sākṣād-vairāgya-mūrtaye
vipralambha-rasāmbhode pādāmbujāya te namaḥ***

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who is renunciation personified. He is always merged in feelings of separation and love for Kṛṣṇa.

***namo bhaktivinodāya sac-cid-ānanda-nāmine
gaura-śakti-svarūpāya rūpānuga-varāya te***

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda, who is a transcendental energy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is a strict follower of the Gosvāmīs, headed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

***gaurāvirbhāva-bhūmes tvaṁ nirdeṣṭā saj-jana-priyaḥ
vaiṣṇava-sārvabhaumaḥ śrī-jagannāthāya te namaḥ***

I offer my respectful obeisances to Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who is respected by the entire Vaiṣṇava community and who discovered the place where Lord Caitanya appeared.

***śrī-rūpa śrī sanātana bhaṭṭa-raghunāth
śrī-jīva gopāla-bhaṭṭa dāsa-raghunāth***

All glories to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

***ei chay gosāir kori caraṇa vandan
jāhā hoite bighna-nāś abhiṣṭa-pūran***

I offer my obeisances to the feet of these six Gosvāmīs. By offering them my obeisances all obstacles to devotion are destroyed and all spiritual desires are fulfilled.

***vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sinḍhubhya eva ca
patitānāṁ pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ***

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

Śrī Gaurāṅga Praṇāma

***namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ***

O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden colour of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.

Śrī Pañca-tattva Praṇāma

*pañca-tattvātmakam kṛṣṇam bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam
bhaktāvatāram bhaktākhyam namāmi bhakta-śaktikam*

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

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Praṇāma

*he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho dīna-bandho jagat-pate
gopeśa gopikā-kānta rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te*

O my dear Kṛṣṇa, ocean of mercy, You are the friend of the distressed and the source of creation. You are the master of the cowherdmen and the lover of *gopīs*, especially Rādhārāṇī. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Śrī Rādhā Praṇāma

*tapta-kāñcana-gaurāṅgi rādhe vṛndāvanēśvari
vṛṣabhānu-sute devī praṇamāmi hari-priye*

I offer my respects to Rādhārāṇī, whose bodily complexion is like molten gold and who is the Queen of Vṛndāvana. She is the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu, and very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

sambandhādhideva Praṇāma

*jayatām suratau paṅgor mama manda-mater gatī
mat-sarvasva-padāmbhojau rādhā-madana-mohanau*

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

abhidheyādhideva Praṇāma

*dīvyad-vṛndāraṇya-kalpa-drumādhaḥ
śrīmad-ratnāgāra-simhāsana-sthau
śrīmad-rādhā-śrīla-govinda-devau
preṣṭhālībhiḥ sevyamānau smarāmi*

In a temple of jewels in Vṛndāvana, underneath a desire tree, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, served by Their most confidential associates sit upon an effulgent throne. I offer my humble obeisances unto Them.

prayojanāhideva Praṇāma

*śrīmān rāsa-rasārambhī vaṁśī-vaṭa-taṭa-sthitah
karṣan veṇu-svanair gopīr gopīnāthaḥ śriye 'stu nah*

Śrīla Gopīnātha, who originated the transcendental mellow of the *rāsa* dance, stands on the shore at Vamśīvaṭa and attracts the attention of the cowherd damsels with the sound of His celebrated flute. May they all confer upon us their benediction.

PAÑCA-TATTVA MAHĀ-MANTRA

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

HARE KṚṢṆA MAHĀ-MANTRA

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

Prayers to the Personification of *Sambandha, Abhidheya and Prayojana*

Sambandhādhideva Praṇāma

*jayatām suratau paṅgor mama manda-mater gatī
mat-sarvasva-padāmbhojau rādhā-madana-mohanau*

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In a temple of jewels in Vṛndāvana, underneath a desire tree, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, served by Their most confidential associates, sit upon an effulgent throne. I offer my humble obeisances unto Them.

Prayojanādhideva Praṇāma

*śrīmān rāsa-rasārambhī vaṁśī-vaṭa-taṭa-sthitaḥ
karṣan veṇu-svanair gopīr gopīnāthaḥ śrīye ‘stu naḥ*

Śrī Śrīla Gopīnātha, who originated the transcendental mellow of the *rāsa* dance, stands on the shore at Vaṁśivaṭa and attracts the attention of the cowherd damsels with the sound of His celebrated flute. May they all confer upon us their benediction.

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam
śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitaranam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varধানam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step. (1)

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālah
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as “Kṛṣṇa” and “Govinda,” by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them. My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting. (2)

*tṛṇād api su-nīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā māna-dena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

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

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmanisvare
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*

O Lord of the universe, I do not desire material wealth, materialistic followers, a beautiful wife or fruitive activities described in flowery language. All I want, life after life, is unmotivated devotional service to You. (4)

*ayi nanda-tanūja kiṅkaram
patitaṁ mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau
krpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūli-sadrśaṁ vicintaya*

O My Lord, O Kṛṣṇa, son of Mahārāja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of My own fruitive acts I have fallen into this horrible ocean of nescience. Now please be causelessly merciful to Me. Consider Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet. (5)

*nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā
pulkair nicitam vapuḥ kadā
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati*

My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name? (6)

*yugāyitam nimeṣeṇa
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam
śūnyāyitam jagat sarvaṁ
govinda-virahaṇa me*

My Lord Govinda, because of separation from You, I consider even a moment a great millennium. Tears flow from My eyes like torrents of rain, and I see the entire world as void. (7)

*āśliṣya vā pāda-ratām pinaṣtu mām
adarśanān marma-hatām karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampāto
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ*

Let Kṛṣṇa tightly embrace this maidservant who has fallen at His lotus feet, or let Him trample Me or break My heart by never being visible to Me. He is a debauchee, after all, and can do whatever He likes, but still He alone, and no one else, is the worshipable Lord of My heart. (8)

Śrī Nāmāṣṭaka

by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

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

O *Hari-nāma*! The tips of the toes of Your lotus feet are constantly being worshiped by the glowing radiance emanating from the string of gems known as the *Upaniṣads*, the crown jewels of all the *Vedas*. You are eternally adored by liberated souls, such as Nārada and Śukadeva. O *Hari-nāma*! I take complete shelter of You. (1)

*jaya nāmadheya muni-vṛnda-geya he
jana-rañjanāya param akṣarākṛte
tvam anādarād api manāg udīritaṁ
nikhilogra-tāpa-paṭalīm vilumpasi*

O *Hari-nāma*, O Name sung by the sages, O You who have assumed the form of transcendental syllables to bring bliss to Your devotees. Even if You are spoken only once, and even if You are spoken disrespectfully or in jest, You at once remove the many harsh sufferings of everyone. All glories to You! (2)

*yad-ābhāso ‘py udyan kavalita-bhava-dhvānta-vibhavo
dṛśam tattvāndhānām api diśati bhakti-praṇayinīm
janas tasyodāttaṁ jagati bhagavan-nāma-taraṇe
kṛtī te nirvaktuṁ ka iha mahimānaṁ prabhavati*

O sun of the Holy Name, even the dim light of Your early dawn (*ābhāsa*) gives the sight of pure devotion to they who are in ignorance, blind to the Truth. What learned person in this world is able to describe Your unsurpassed transcendental glories? (3)

*yad-brahma-sākṣāt-kṛti-niṣṭhayāpi
vināsam āyāti vinā na bhogaḥ
apaiti nāma sphuranena tat te
prārabdha-karmeti virauti vedah*

The *Vedas* declare that although meditation on impersonal Brahman cannot bring freedom from past *karma*, O Holy Name, Your appearance at once makes all suffering from *prārabdha karma* disappear. (4)

***aghadamana-yaśodā-nandanau nandasūno
kamala-nayana-gopī-candra-vṛndāvanendrāḥ
praṇatakaruṇa-kṛṣṇāv ity aneka-svarūpe
tvayi mama ratir uccair vardhatām nāmadheya***

O *Harināma*, I pray that my love for You in Your many forms, such as Aghadamana (Crusher of Aghāsura), Yaśodānandana (Son of Yaśodā), Nandasūnu (Son of Nanda), Kamalanayana (Lotus-eyed), Gopīcandra (Moon of the *gopīs*), Vṛndāvanendra (King of Vṛndāvana), Praṇatakaruṇa (Merciful to the surrendered souls) and Kṛṣṇa, may greatly increase. (5)

***vācyam vācakam ity udeti bhavato nāma svarūpa-dvayam
pūrvasmāt param eva hanta karuṇam tatrāpi jānīmahe
yas tasmin vihitāparādha-nivahaḥ prānī samantād bhaved
āsyenedam upāsya so ‘pi hi sadānandāmbhudhau majjati***

O *Hari Nāma*, in the material world You are manifest in two forms, (1) the Supreme Person described by the Holy Name, and (2) the sound vibration of the Holy Name. We know that the second form is more merciful than the first. Even a person who commits many offenses to the first form, may always become plunged into an ocean of bliss simply by serving the second with his voice. (6)

***suditāśrita-janārti-rāśaye
ramya-cid-ghana-sukha-svarūpiṇe
nāma gokula-mahotsavāya te
kṛṣṇa pūrṇa-vapuṣe namo namaḥ***

O *Nāma* who destroys the many sufferings of they who take shelter of You, O *Nāma* who is the form of delightful and intense spiritual bliss, O *Nāma* who is a festival of happiness for Gokula, O perfect and complete Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, I bow down and offer my respects to You. (7)

***nārada-viṇojjīvana
sudhormi-niryāsa-mādhuri-pūra
tvam kṛṣṇa-nāma kāmam
sphura me rasane rasena sadā***

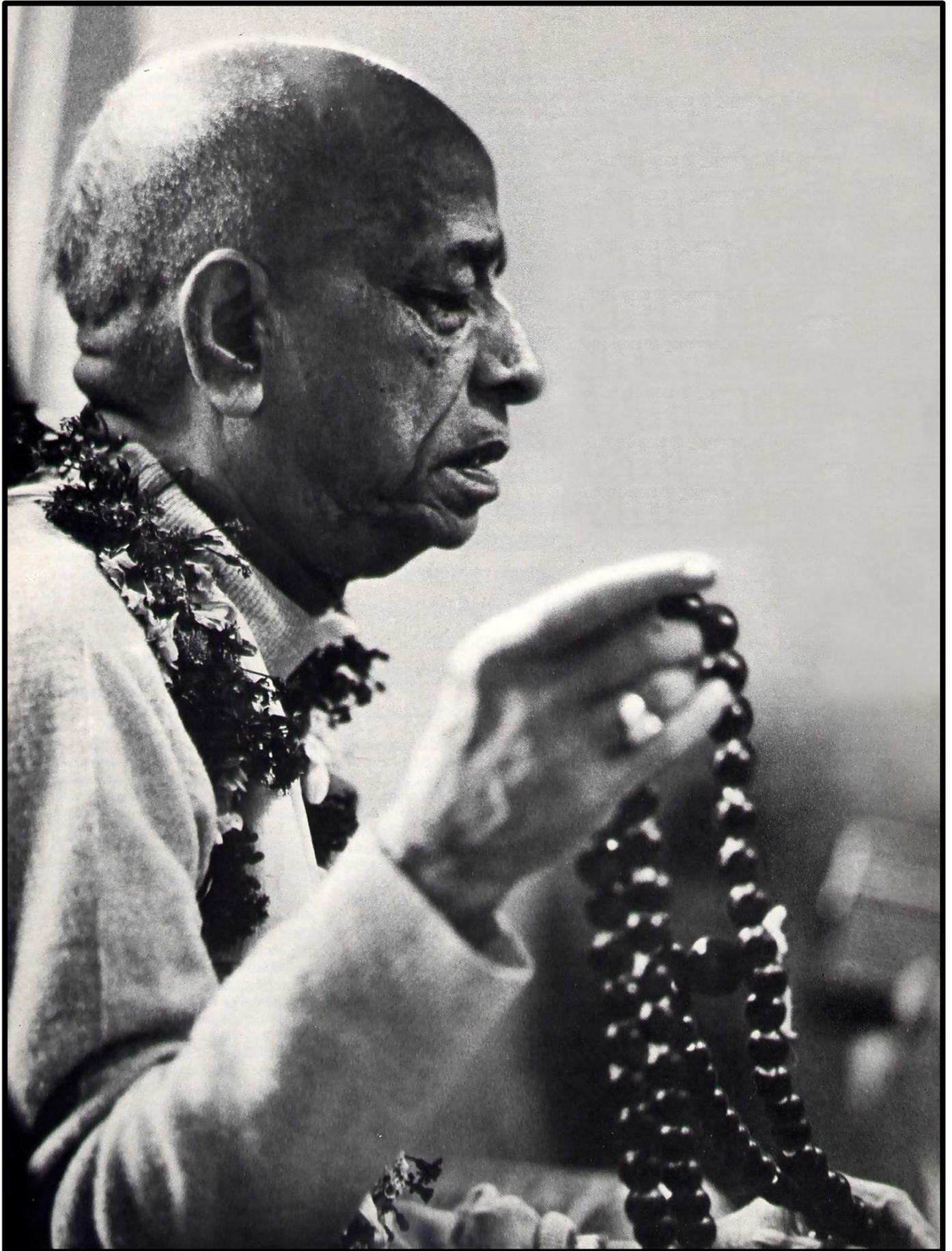
O life of Nārada’s *viṇā*, O essence of the torrential waves of nectarean sweetness, O Holy Name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, please eternally dance on my tongue. (8)

— Setting the Mood —

*na nāma-saḍṛśaṁ jñānaṁ na nāma-saḍṛśaṁ vratam
na nāma saḍṛśaṁ dhyānaṁ na nāma saḍṛśaṁ phalam
na nāma saḍṛśas tyago na nāma saḍṛśaḥ śamaḥ
na nāma saḍṛśaṁ punyaṁ na nāma saḍṛśī gatiḥ
nāmaiva paramā muktir nāmaiva paramā gatiḥ
nāmaiva paramā śāntir nāmaiva paramā sthitiḥ
nāmaiva paramā bhaktir nāmaiva paramā matiḥ
nāmaiva paramā prītir nāmaiva paramā smṛtiḥ
nāmaiva kāraṇaṁ jantor nāmaiva prabhur eva ca
nāmaiva paramārādhyaṁ nāmaiva paramo guru*

There is no knowledge, *vrata*, meditation, fruit, renunciation, sense control, pious act, or goal as great as that of *Nāma*. *Nāma* is the supreme liberation. *Nāma* alone is the supreme destination. *Nāma* is the supreme peace. *Nāma* is the supreme auspicious situation. *Nāma* is supreme devotion. *Nāma* is supreme intelligence. *Nāma* is supreme love and *Nāma* is the supreme remembrance. *Nāma* is the soul's reason for existence. *Nāma* is the Lord of the soul. *Nāma* is the most worshipable object. *Nāma* is the supreme *guru*.

— *Agni Purāṇa*, quoted in BVT's *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*,
Sixth Rainfall, Third Shower.



The Price of Causeless Mercy

— A Change of Heart —

The price of causeless mercy. Causeless mercy at a price? Isn't that a contradictory statement? It seems so. But let's explore things beyond the letters of an alphabet and far beyond a few title words on a page.

Vṛndāvana Magic

It was a typical Vṛndāvana summer day — relentless breathless scorching heat. I was on my way to the local store when the magic descended. There was not a cloud in the sky, but a sprinkling of rain fell – and it soon became a gentle but heavy downpour.

The monkeys were the first to respond. Their belligerent mood and loud screeching clearly told me they were swearing and cursing in their own very special language. Persistently they tried to shake the rainwater from their furry coats but soon decided it best to run for shelter. Motor cyclists sped by recklessly. Two pigs with lazy smiles on their dazed faces happily opted to stay in their refuse drain which was rapidly filling with water. The banyan tree with its stiff broad leaves stoically bore the brunt of the downpour, while the soft slender leaves of the *tamāla* tree danced joyfully in seeming abandon. Young children, drenched from head to toe, played in the rain, slid in the mud and eagerly opened their mouths to catch the welcome rain like thirsty *cātaka* birds. Mesmerized by the panoramic diversity unfolding before me, I couldn't help but think “The same rain is falling everywhere but everyone is responding very differently. The rain is not discriminating, but everyone else is. That's interesting!”

Gambhīra Mystery

Mahāprabhu's lips quivered in the ecstasy of jubilation as He sang the glories of the Holy Name. His effulgent body, stoked and fueled by *prema*, illumined the small dark room to reveal His two constant night companions. In great ecstasy He said to Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara in a faltering voice, “My ears are dying of thirst. Sing! Sing, My dear friend! Sing the glories of the all-merciful Holy Name.”

Singing meditatively and in a heart-melting *raga*, Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara soon placated His master's agitated heart. Then Mahāprabhu sang and tasted a song of His own:

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

Let there be all victory for the chanting of the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step. (CC Antya 20.12)

Suddenly Mahāprabhu’s mood dramatically changed and feelings of lamentation overwhelmed His heart. While He lamented, both agitation and ecstasy awoke in His mind, and He became very restless. In great humility and despondency He sang:

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smarāṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your Holy Name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as “Kṛṣṇa” and “Govinda,” by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them. My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your Holy Names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the Holy Name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting.

(CC Antya 20.16)

“O my Lord, you are so inconceivably kind but still I am so unfortunate – I am constantly offending you. Your causeless rain of mercy is falling everywhere, but I am an offender. I cannot access Your mercy. I cannot taste it. I am most unfortunate!”

After speaking in this way, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu embraced both Rāmānanda Rāya and Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara and pleaded with them “My dear friends, please tell Me. I am an offender, what should I do? Please both of you tell Me, what should I do?”

Then, in great humility, considering Himself a fallen soul rotting in the material world, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu broke down and sobbed uncontrollably. In great bitterness, He lamented His great misfortune. In a beautiful *rāga*, suitable to the time and mood, Rāmānanda Rāya and Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara sang the Holy Name in an attempt to alleviate their master’s pain and solace His heart. But Mahāprabhu continued to lament and the time that passed seemed like a millenia.

Then, all of a sudden, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu became more externally conscious and calm and considered His state of mind. He then said:

*ye-rūpe la-ile nāma prema upajaya
tāhāra lakṣaṇa śuna, svarūpa-rāma-rāya*

O Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Rāmānanda Rāya, hear from Me the symptoms of how one should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra to awaken very easily one’s dormant love for Kṛṣṇa.

(CC Antya 20.20)

*trṇād api su-nīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā māna-dena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

“One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the Holy Name of the Lord. (CC Antya 20.21)

“These are the symptoms of one who chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. Although he is very exalted, he thinks himself lower than the grass on the ground, and like a tree he tolerates everything in two ways. When a tree is cut down, it does not protest, and even when drying up, it does not ask anyone for water. The tree delivers its fruits, flowers and whatever else it possesses to anyone and everyone. It tolerates scorching heat and torrents of rain, yet it still gives shelter to others. Although a Vaiṣṇava is the most exalted person, he is prideless and gives all respect to everyone, knowing everyone to be the resting place of Kṛṣṇa. If one chants the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa in this manner, he will certainly awaken his dormant love for Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

(CC Antya 20.22-26)

Natural humility and eagerness then awoke in the mind and heart of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His tongue craved to taste the nectar of Nāma *rasa*. Accompanied by His dearest associates, He began to chant the Holy Name and remained absorbed in such sweet mellows until the first rays of light heralded in the appearance of a new day.



Are We Unfortunate Offenders?

In both *Jaiva Dharma* and *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes three stages of chanting:

- 1) *Nāma* as It Is — Pure offenseless chanting
- 2) *Nāmābhāsa* — A semblance of chanting Nāma (Sometimes called the clearing stage)
- 3) *Nāma-aparādha* — Offensive chanting

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is lamenting that He is chanting offensively and therefore is not being blessed with an attachment for chanting. Does that sound like us?

The root cause of all offenses is inattention while chanting. In effect, this means we are watering weeds, not the *bhakti-latā-bīja*. If we are seasoned *nāma-aparādhīs*, those weeds will be very conspicuous both in our mood and activity. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gives some idea of what they look like to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports are definitely worth reading.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says:

*kintu yadi latāra saṅge uṭhe ’upaśākhā’
bhukti-mukti-vāñchā, yata asaṅkhya tāra lekhā*

“Sometimes unwanted creepers, such as the creepers of desires for material enjoyment and liberation from the material world, grow along with the creeper of devotional service. The varieties of such unwanted creepers are unlimited.

***’niṣiddhācāra’, ’kuṭīnāṭī’, ’jīva-himsana’
’lābha’, ’pūjā’, ’pratiṣṭhādi’ yata upaśākhā-gaṇa***

“Some unnecessary creepers growing with the bhakti creeper are the creepers of behavior unacceptable for those trying to attain perfection, diplomatic behavior, animal-killing, mundane profiteering, mundane adoration and mundane importance. All these are unwanted creepers.

***seka-jala pāñā upaśākhā bāḍi’ yāya
stabdha hañā mūla-śākhā bāḍite nā pāya***

“If one does not distinguish between the bhakti creeper and the other creepers, the sprinkling of water is misused because the other creepers are nourished while the bhakti creeper is curtailed.”

— CC Madhya 19.158–160

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also tells us that if one hears and chants without trying to give up offenses one becomes materially attached to sense gratification. (CC Madhya 19.160 p)

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives another ready reality reckoner in *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Chapter 3. There he explains the benefits of chanting *nāmābhāsa*. Let’s read through some of them and take a private reality check.

Nāmābhāsa:

- 1) Destroys the influence of Kali.
- 2) Protects us from the influence of all disease.
- 3) Subdues all worries.
- 4) Frees us from fear and distress.
- 5) Keeps at bay all demoniac influences as well as all other obstacles.
- 6) Grants the chanter *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*.

Are we experiencing any of these? All of them? Or are we still struggling with *nāma-aparādha* and experiencing none of them?!



Nāma-aparādha: What’s the Essence of the Problem?

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu tells us we are not attached to chanting the Holy Name because we are chanting offensively. And the root cause of all offenses is inattention.

What’s the root cause of inattention?

It’s our material desires. Our minds are always preoccupied with plans to fulfill them, or lamenting and angry because our schemes have failed.

What's the root cause of our material desires?

Misidentification — we've forgotten we are Kṛṣṇa's eternal loving associates and servants and we think we are these temporary troublesome bodies.

Why is that such a big problem?

Let's do a very practical exercise to convincingly answer this question.

Step 1. Please read through the following chart.

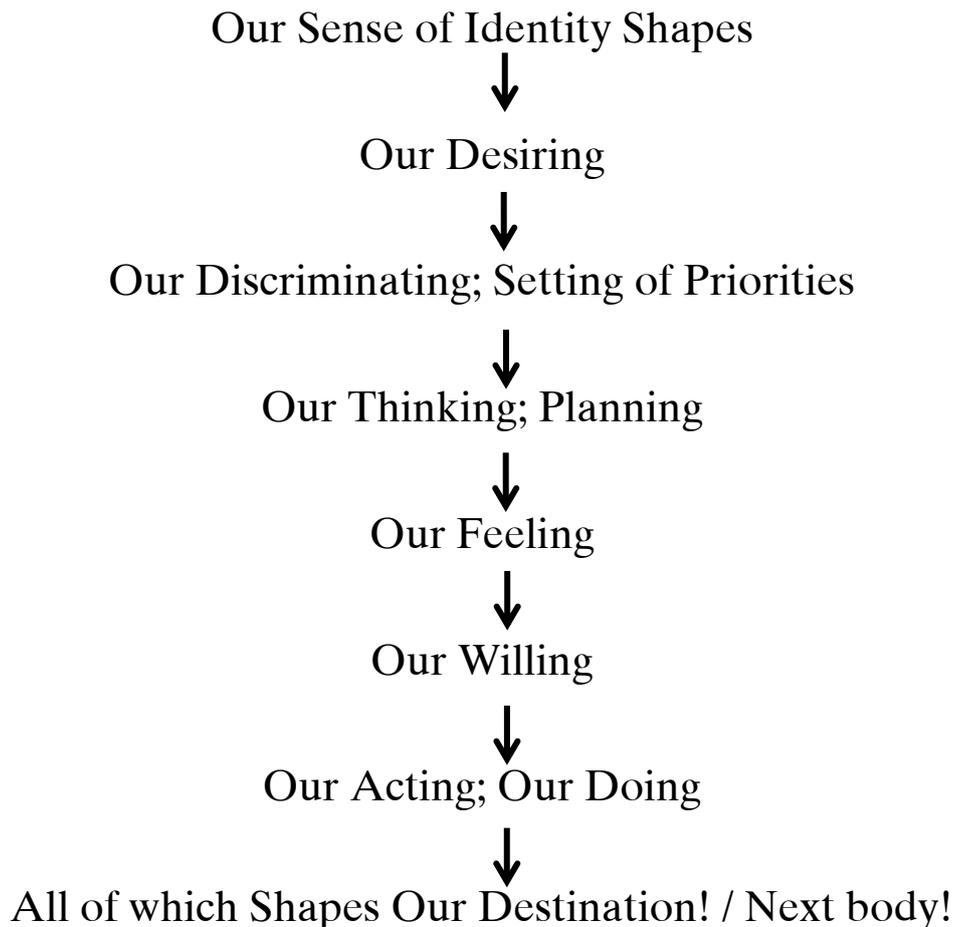
Step 2. Now please assume the identity of a hardworking but unsuccessful businessman and walk it through again.

Step 3. Now please assume the identity of a dedicated wife and mother and walk it through once again.

Step 4. Now think about your own strongest sense of identity and walk it through very consciously and carefully.

MISIDENTIFICATION

Māyadevī's Subtlest — and Deadliest! — Trap



As long as we are attached to these designations, we are attached to the body. But we are not these bodies, and realizing this is the first stage in spiritual realization.

— *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* Introduction

MISIDENTIFICATION

How Best to Avoid this Nasty Trap?!

It's a simple thing. As aspiring devotees, we need to consciously and proactively discriminate between our sense of true identity and our activity or service.

My **service** may be business. But I'm not a businessman — **I am Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant**. My **service** may be to take loving care of a husband and children. But I'm not a wife or mother — **I am Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant**.

It sounds so simple, but we're looking at a major paradigm shift — and old habits and misconceptions die hard. Practically speaking, that means we often need to remind ourselves of who we are and gently correct ourselves when we misidentify our role and service to be us. It will be a little uncomfortable at first, but with time it will not only become natural for us — it will also liberate us from so much of the anxiety, stress, fear and insecurity that arises from trying to be someone we are not!

Something to seriously think about, isn't it?

The sense of eternal servitorship to Kṛṣṇa makes one immune to all sorts of reactionary elements of work.

— Bg 4.18p

Nāma-aparādha: What's the Essence of the Solution?

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu told Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya that the qualities mentioned in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* Verse 3 are **the symptoms** of how we should chant to easily awaken *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

*trṇād api su-nīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā māna-dena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the Holy Name of the Lord.

So of what are these qualities symptomatic?

We are looking at the qualities of a servant — a realized servant of Śrī Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga.

A master isn't usually humble or tolerant — but a responsible servant must be. It is inherent to his nature — and his spirit of service.

In essence, we need to clear our misconceptions about who we are so that our innate conception of servitude to Śrī Kṛṣṇa can naturally reawaken and blissfully pervade our very being.

That's an enormous paradigm shift! Are we prepared to pay such a high price? *Harināma's* rain of mercy is causeless conscious and consistent – but do we really want it?

Maybe Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī can help us make the decision. The conception of service we are talking about is essentially a Vraja conception and it is very beautifully described by him in his *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

*krṣṇa-premera ei eka apūrva prabhāva
guru-sama-laghuke karāya dāsya-bhāva*

Love for Kṛṣṇa has this one unique effect: it imbues superiors, equals and inferiors with the spirit of service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. **(CC Ādi 6.53)**

*krṣṇa-dāsa-abhimāne ye ānanda-sindhu
koṭī-brahma-sukha nahe tāra eka bindu*

The conception of servitude to Śrī Kṛṣṇa generates such an ocean of joy in the soul that even the joy of oneness with the Absolute, if multiplied ten million times, could not compare to a drop of it. **(CC Ādi 6.44)**

*pitā-mātā-guru-sakhā-bhāva kene naya
krṣṇa-premera svabhāve dāsya-bhāva se karaya*

All the emotions, whether those of father, mother, teacher or friend, are full of sentiments of servitude. That is the nature of love of Kṛṣṇa. **(CC Ādi 6.82)**

*krṣṇa-sāmye nahe tānra mādhyāsvādāna
bhakta-bhāve kare tānra mādhyā carvaṇa*

The sweetness of Lord Kṛṣṇa is not to be tasted by those who consider themselves equal to Kṛṣṇa. It is to be tasted only through the sentiment of servitude. **(CC Ādi 6.103)**

*anyera āchuk kārya, āpane śrī-krṣṇa
āpana-mādhyā-pāne ha-ilā satṛṣṇa*

What to speak of others, even Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself becomes thirsty to taste His own sweetness. **(CC Ādi 6.107)**

*svā-mādhyā āsvādite karena yatana
bhakta-bhāva vinu nahe tāhā āsvādāna*

He tries to taste His own sweetness, but He cannot do so without accepting the emotions of a devotee. **(CC Ādi 6.108)**

An attractive and very sacred treasure isn't it?!

But the deciding question is — are we prepared to pay the price?

The Practicalities of Paying the Price

No goal can be successfully achieved by just thinking or talking about it. First and foremost, we need to know who we are – our desired sense of identity has to be clear and strong. Then we need to keep the goal clearly in mind. There needs to be appropriate conscious and consistent endeavor. And our mood needs to be in harmony with all this. We also need to be conscious of obstacles on our path and avoid them carefully. That’s a lot of needs!!!

But life doesn’t have to become complicated. We can begin just by adding a few chosen *mantras* to our daily service activity. We may already have our favorites, but I am offering just a few to help get us started.

It is best to remember and recite these upon rising from bed, before taking rest and whenever circumstances or negative emotions challenge our devotional sense of identity, our mood or our goal. They are also very useful pre-chanting meditations.

Who Am I? Meditations

*nāham vipro na ca nara-patir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro
nāham varṇī na ca gr̥ha-patir no vanastho yatir vā
kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramānanda-pūrnāmṛtābdher
gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ*

I am not a *brāhmaṇa*, I am not a *kṣatriya*, I am not a *vaiśya* or a *śūdra*. Nor am I a *brahmacārī*, a householder, a *vānaprastha* or a *sannyāsī*. I identify Myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the maintainer of the *gopīs*. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with brilliance. (CC Madhya 13.80)



*caitanyera dāsa muñi, caitanyera dāsa
caitanyera dāsa muñi, tānra dāsera dāsa*

I am a servant of Lord Caitanya, a servant of Lord Caitanya. I am a servant of Lord Caitanya, and a servant of His servants. (CC Ādi 6.86)



*aham tv akāmas tvad-bhaktas
tvam ca svāmy anapāśrayaḥ
nānyathehāvayor artho
rāja-sevakayor iva*

O my Lord, I am Your unmotivated servant, and You are my eternal master. There is no need of our being anything other than master and servant. You are naturally my master, and I am naturally Your servant. We have no other relationship. (ŚB 7.10.6)



Śrīla Prabhupāda also offers us a crystal clear understanding of what it means to be his follower and a member of his ISKCON in his purport to “the mad elephant offense” (CC Madhya 19.156p). It’s an amazingly powerful and transformational key.

He says, “.....a devotee must always remember to please his predecessor ācārya. The Gosvāmīs are represented by one’s spiritual master. One cannot be an ācārya (spiritual master) without following strictly in the disciplic succession of the ācāryas. One who is actually serious about advancing in devotional service should desire only to satisfy the previous ācāryas. Ei chaya gosāñi yāra, mui tāra dāsa. **One should always think of oneself as a servant of the servant of the ācāryas, and thinking this, one should live in the society of Vaiṣṇavas.**”

Remembering the Goal Meditations

*prema-dhana vinā vyartha daridra jīvana
'dāsa' kari' vetana more deha prema-dhana*

Without love of Godhead, My life is useless. Therefore I pray that You accept Me as Your servant and give Me the salary of ecstatic love of God. (CC Antya 20.37)



O Rādhā Kṛṣṇa, You are like two great oceans of mercy. Please be merciful to me. I take shelter of You and surrender unto You. Although I am a sinner and an offender, please engage me in Your divine loving service. (Sanat-kumāra Saṁhitā)



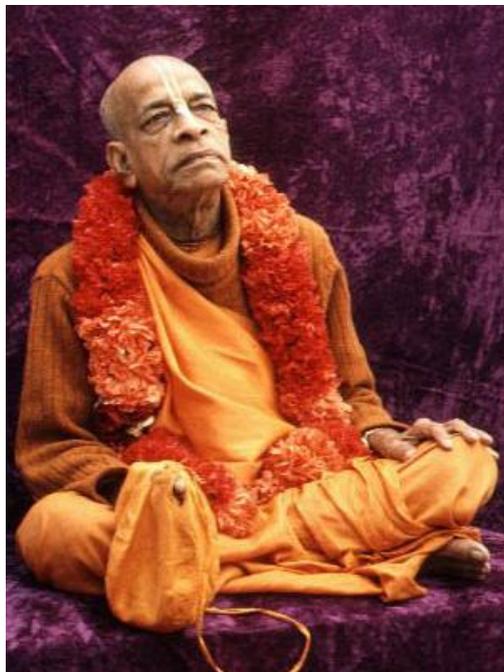
O fool! O rascal mind! This body is under constant attack from innumerable attachments and diseases, and death is certain. What remedial measures have you taken? Just drink the medicine of Kṛṣṇa’s name, which is the cure for all diseases!

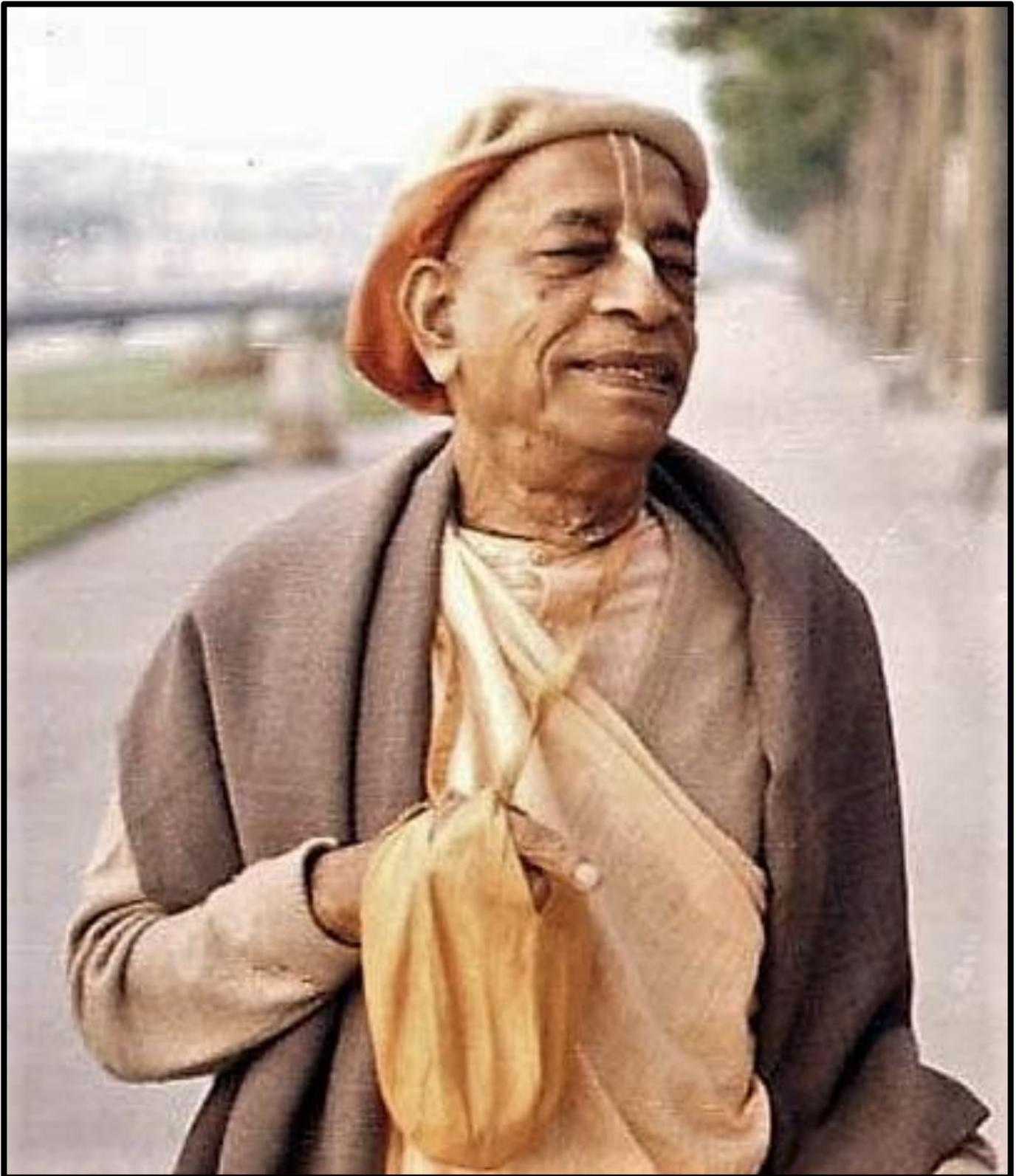
(Mukunda-mālā)



O mind, why are you giving up the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s names to talk of such things as family problems, security, and all? What can I say to You? Just chant the Holy Name!

(Mādhurya Kaḍambinī)





**The most powerful agent of advancement and transformation
is something far more basic and simple than any technique:
— It's a change of heart —**

Helpful Mood Meditations

*aham hare tava pādaika-mūla-
dāsānudāso bhavitāsmi bhūyaḥ
manaḥ smaretāsu-pater guṇāms te
grṇīta vāk karma karotu kāyaḥ*

O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, may I again be able to be a servant of Your eternal servants who find shelter only at Your lotus feet. O Lord of my life, may I again become their servant so that my mind may always think of Your transcendental attributes, my words always glorify those attributes, and my body always engage in the loving service of Your Lordship. **(ŚB 6.11.24)**



O Nāma, when will that day come when I will take on the mood and behavior of Your unalloyed eternal servant? Then all other distracting desires of my mind will automatically become totally exhausted, and I will be able to whole-heartedly render service unto You, my eternal Master. **(Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)**



O Kṛṣṇa! There is so much attraction within me. Why don't I have any attraction to You! I am attracted to so many things, but they are pulling me further and further away from You — they are simply distractions from You! Oh Kṛṣṇa, please enchant my heart and mind. Please bless me with the matchless gift of attraction only to You!



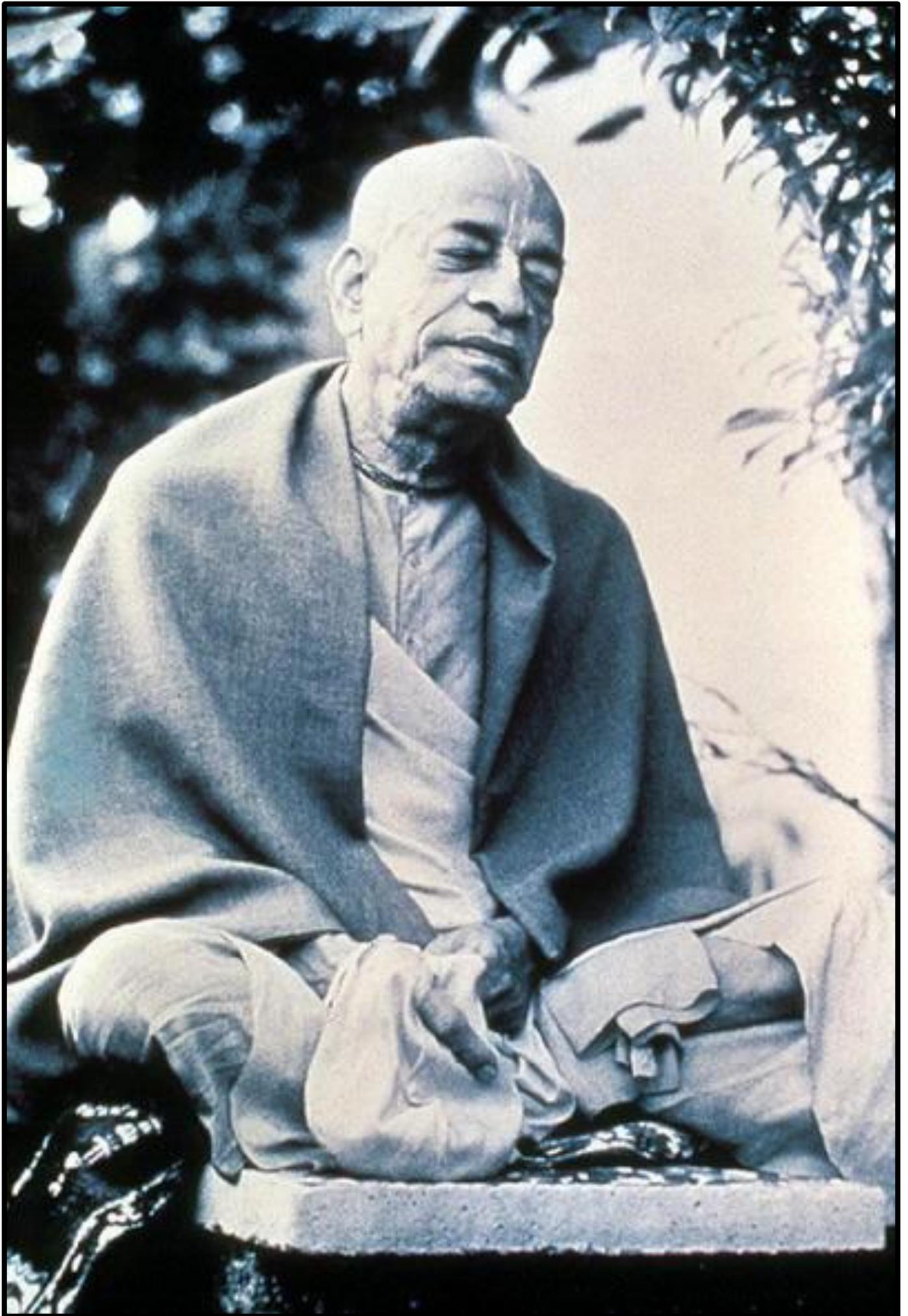
*daśa aparādha yena hṛdaye nā paśe
kṛpa kara mahāprabhu maji nāma rase*

Mahāprabhu, please be merciful to me so that the 10 offenses never touch my heart, and I can always remain absorbed in the *rasa* of the Holy Name.

(Harināma Cintāmaṇi 13.59)



And last but certainly not the least, we need to be very conscious of any obstacles on our path and carefully avoid them. We can best do that by taking Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings to heart and trying to apply them in our lives. Let's give it a try!



MAHĀPRABHU'S TRANSFORMATIONAL THERAPY

An applicational *mantra* that guarantees defense against offense

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

1st OFFENSE: To blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the Holy Name of the Lord.

Defense: A devotee who is sincerely trying to apply Śikṣāṣṭaka 3 in his life considers himself insignificant, fallen and in need of mercy. Therefore he will not be concerned with the faults of other devotees; nor blaspheme or envy them.

Prayer: When will Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu show His causeless mercy to me by allowing me to attain the shade of the lotus feet of all the Vaiṣṇavas? When will I be able to give up this false ego so deeply engrossed in sense gratification, and be able to properly honor them? Bhaktivinoda prays unto the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas, “O dear devotees, please be merciful and take this worthless person into your association.” (BVT)

2nd OFFENSE: To consider the names of the demigods like Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā to be equal to, or independent of the name of Lord Viṣṇu.

Defense: He never mistakes the position of the demigods because he knows that all living entities, including the demigods, are insignificant parts and parcels of his beloved Kṛṣṇa. They are His eternal servants and can grant no blessing without His sanction.

Prayer: O my dear mind, maintaining polite respect for the demigods, worship only Lord Hari. All the demigods are the dear friend of one who has actual devotion for Hari. (BVT)

3rd OFFENSE: To disobey the order of the spiritual master, or to consider him an ordinary person.

Defense: He will not act against the orders of his spiritual master because he is painfully aware that he possesses neither the transcendental power nor the intelligence to go back to Kṛṣṇa independent of Guru's mercy and shelter.

Prayer: Oh mind, make the teachings from the lotus mouth of my spiritual master one with my heart, and do not desire anything else. Attachment to the lotus feet of my spiritual master is the best means of spiritual advancement. By his mercy, all desires for spiritual perfection are fulfilled. (NDT)

4th OFFENSE: To blaspheme the Vedic literature, or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version.

Defense: Being painfully aware of his lack of realized knowledge, he studies humbly, in the mood of a disciple, the holy writings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *ācāryas*.

Prayer: O *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*! O my only friend! O my dear companion! O my teacher! O my greatest wealth! O my deliverer! O my good fortune! O my bliss! I offer my heartfelt obeisances unto You! (SG). Oh my Lord! Oh most compassionate Personality! Your two divine lotus feet are beautifully decorating the summit of all the scriptures. And when those lotus feet in turn decorate the heads of all the spiritual masters coming in the line of disciplic succession, then their beauty and splendor increases a hundred-fold. Seeing this truth, my heart has become fully satisfied. (BVT)

5th OFFENSE: To consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be imagination.

Defense: As a result of his offenseless mentality, he has actually experienced something of the potency of the Holy Name. Therefore he never considers His glories to be imaginary.

Prayer: All glories to the Holy Name, the storehouse of the nectar of divine bliss, who is none other than the Supreme Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To shower mercy on His devotees, He has descended in the form of sound, bestowing compassion upon all. Oh eternal Harināma, You possess all powers and bestow auspiciousness upon the *jīvas*. Coming only for our deliverance, You are the sole friend who can rescue us from the ocean of birth and death. All glories to You! (BVT)

6th OFFENSE: To give some mundane interpretation on the Holy Name of the Lord.

Defense: Fixed in being a humble servant of the Holy Name, he has some realization of *Nāma-tattva* and therefore never makes the mistake of whimsically interpreting the Holy Name.

Prayer: O Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa, You are transcendently blissful. You bestow all spiritual benedictions, for You are Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. O Holy Name, You are complete and the form of all transcendental mellows. You are not a material name under any condition and You are no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. All glories to You! (RG)

7th OFFENSE: To commit sinful activities on the strength of the Holy Name.

Defense: Identifying with the mood of *Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3, he does not so strongly identify with the body; nor with the desire to be materially happy or enjoy this world. Hence his tendency towards sinful activity is minimal, as is his interest in abusing the Holy Name and His mercy.

Prayer: Oh my Lord Hari! I am guilty of committing thousands upon thousands of sins. And so I have fallen into the belly of this terribly deep, dark and fearsome ocean of material existence. There is absolutely no shelter for me in this hellish place. And so I take shelter of Your two lotus feet. Please be kind to me and claim me as Your own. (BVT)

8th OFFENSE: To consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as one of the auspicious, ritualistic activities offered in the Vedas as fruitive activities, (karma-kāṇḍa).

Defense: He chants absorbed in the meaning of the *mahā-mantra* — “O Rādhā! O Kṛṣṇa! Please engage me in Your loving service”, and so there is no possibility of his committing this *aparādha*.

Prayer: O my dear mind! what can I say to you now? With high hopes of future happiness, I fell into the trap of fruitive actions and reactions. And now I am entangled in *māyā*'s spiderlike web. I am being destroyed by my own nonsense. How much trouble I have suffered because I failed to seriously worship the beautiful lotus feet of Hari! (BVT)

9th OFFENSE: To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the Holy Name.

Defense: He realizes that the Holy Name is the most precious gift he can give anyone, because the Holy Name is Kṛṣṇa. He therefore takes the responsibility of introducing *Nāma* to His rebellious servants very seriously, and does so very carefully and sensitively. To instil faith in the faithless, he always encourages *Nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

Prayer: Please tell me, when oh when will that day be mine? When will my offenses come to an end and a taste for purely chanting the Holy Name be infused within my heart by the power of divine grace? When will Lord Nityānanda be merciful to me and free me from the illusion of worldliness? When will He give me the shade of His lotus feet and bestow upon me the qualification to enter the market place of the Holy Name? (BVT)

10th OFFENSE: To not have complete faith in the chanting of the Holy Name and to maintain material attachments, even after understanding so many instructions on this matter.

Defense: He is always endeavoring to improve his chanting of the Holy Name; to weed out *anarthas* and avoid *Nāma-aparādha*. And so the Holy Name is pleased to bless him with strong faith and a natural detachment from “I”, “me” and “mine”, and matter.

Prayer: O merciful Lord! All that I am and have I now offer at Your lotus feet. I no longer consider even myself to be mine, for now I have become exclusively Yours. The false conception of thinking in terms of “I” and “mine” has finally left me. May it never again find a place to settle within my heart. (BVT)

If one chants the Holy Name in this manner he will certainly awaken his dormant love for Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

— Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, CC Antya 20. 26



Chanting the Holy Name adorned with these four blessed qualities is the highest success of human life. This is the message of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



This śloka was spoken for the sole purpose of focusing on how to avoid *nāma-aparādha* and *nāmābhāsa* in chanting.

— Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

Prayers for a Progressive Path

(1)

Practically Speaking,

The only thing standing between *Nāma-prema* and me is inattention.

Inattention means no attraction

No attraction means dead end *japa*

Dead end *japa* means:

— **No Rādhā-Śyāma**

— **No Vraja Dhāma**

Oh Mahāprabhu!

Please bless me with attraction

Attraction for Your *Harināma*

...Your Śyāma...and His Rādhā

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

(2)

O Harināma!

Please give me the

strength to always

condemn the thought

“Let me finish my rounds,

I have important things to do today.”

It’s so opposed to the

mood of developing my

loving relationship

with You.

***O Harināma!* Please give me pure attraction and attachment for You! Please allow me to serve You.**

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

(3)

O Harināma!

Please never take

seriously any

material desires

that pass through the

courtyard of my heart.

Please empower me

to also never

take them too seriously.

Please attract my mind and heart to You.

In this very special way help me to

finally close the door on my material

desires and attachments, never to open it again.

Kindly open the door to Your heart and Your world.

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

(4)

O Harināma!

If I have taste for You,

I'll have no taste for issues.

And if I have a taste for issues,

I'll have no taste for You!

***O Harināma!* Please bless me with *Nāma ruci*. Only then will the crow in my heart become a swan and happily glide on serene lake of my mind — a mind blissfully absorbed only in You!**

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

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

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

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

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

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
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Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*

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Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*

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

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

The Ultimate *Manah-śikṣā*

Oh my dear mind, please remember the Holy Name.
If I don't chant the Holy Name, my life will pass uselessly.

Oh my dear mind:

Like a bird without wings,
Like an elephant without teeth,
Like a wife without a husband,
Like a son without a father

* Such is a human being without *Harināma*!

Oh my dear mind:

Like a well without water,
Like a cow without milk,
Like the earth without clouds,
Like a tree without fruits

* Such is a human being without *Harināma*!

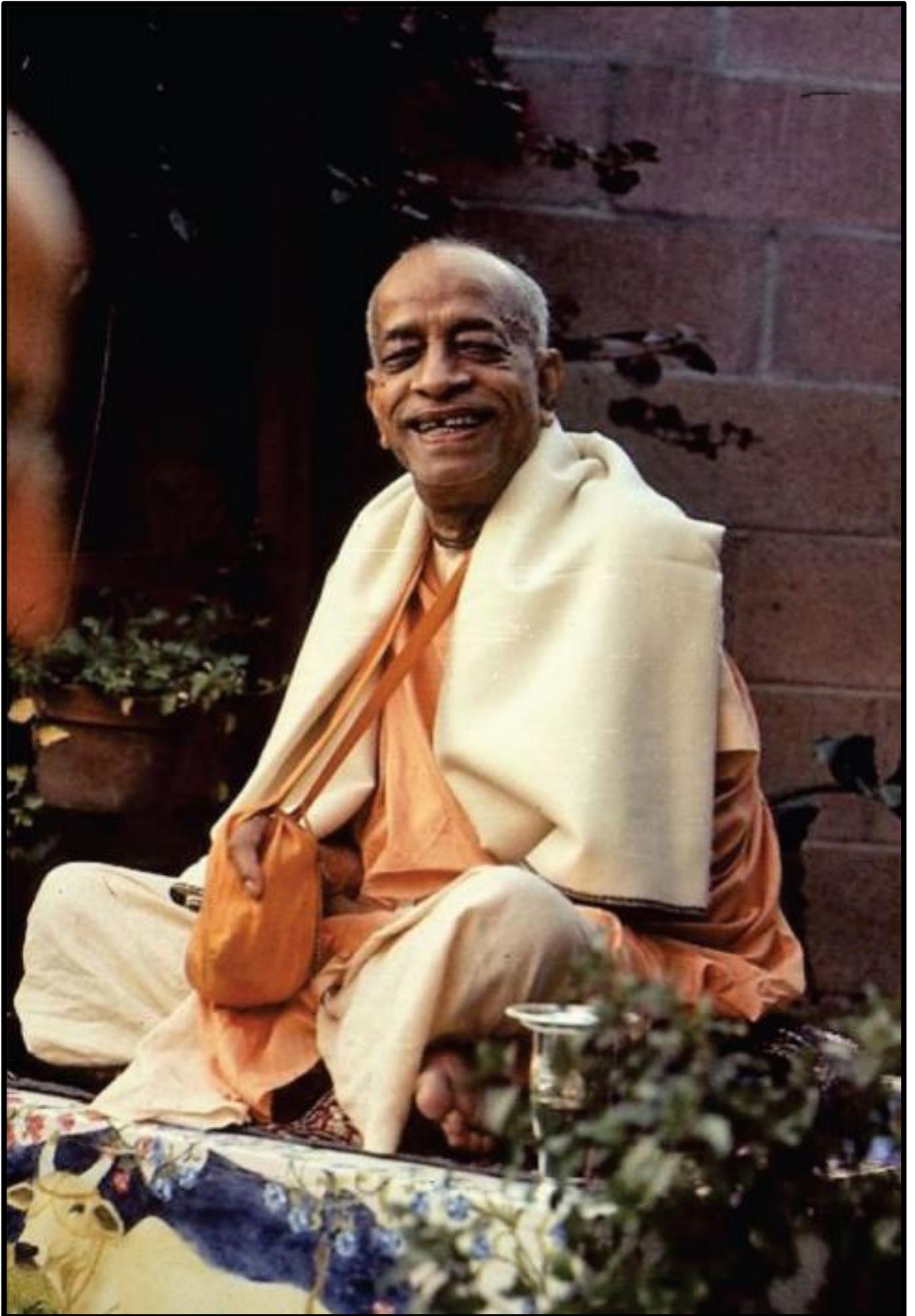
Oh my dear mind:

Like the night without a moon,
Like *pūjā* without *mantras*,
Like a temple without light,
Like a *paṇḍita* without *Veda*,

* Such is a human being without *Harināma*!

Oh my dear mind. Oh my dear saintly one! Please give up lust, anger, illusion and greed. Chant the Holy Name and hear about Rādhā Śyāma. Nothing else in this world is yours.

— *Vrajavāsī bhajana*



The Price of Causeless Mercy

— A Labor of Love —

Why Must I Labor to Chant Offenselessly?

Why is *Nāma Aparādha* Such a Problem?

If we contemplate the ten offenses to the Holy Name it is not difficult to answer this question. Committing these offenses estranges us from those who can best assist us in fulfilling our desire to attain love for Kṛṣṇa – *guru, sadhu, śāstra* and the Holy Name Himself. Committing these offenses also cultivates in us a mindset that is highly unfavorable for making genuine advancement – we don't develop faith in the Holy Name and His potencies, nor in those who can best help us do so.

The word “*aparādha*” is composed of two syllables:

“*apa*” – against, to give up, without.

“*rādha*” – to please, success, a flow of affection.

In essence, the word “*aparādha*” means we carelessly and callously think and act in a way that is highly displeasing and causes pain to Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is non-different from His Holy Name. He is not impressed by our dealings with Him in His most merciful form, His *Nāmarūpa*. That is why Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura warns us that “**offenses against the Holy Name (*nāma aparādha*) are the most frightening of all kinds of sins and offenses. All other kinds of sins and offenses go away naturally and automatically as one utters *harināma*, but *nāma-aparādha* does not go away so easily.**” (Jaiva *Dharma*, Ch. 24). If we chant without vigilance, it may well take us many, many births to overcome these offenses to the Holy Name.

Why is that? If we offend someone, is he keen for our association? Is he favorably disposed and happy to see us when we approach him? The answer is obvious, isn't it?! If we chant with offenses, we don't receive any reciprocation from the Holy Name, and when there is no loving reciprocation in a relationship that relationship is strained, or may break. There is no taste, no attraction. If we are seasoned *nāma-aparādhīs*, it's highly likely that we don't experience any happiness from:

- hearing and chanting
- the *bhakti* process in general
- *sadhu-saṅga*
- our service dealings with Śrī Gurudeva

The world of Kṛṣṇa consciousness seems mechanical, ritualistic, dry and boring.

Such apathy is a clear indication that we are very diseased; we are seasoned *nāma-aparādhīs*. And the only remedy is to consciously and carefully chant, chant, chant the Holy Name. That's not easy! We need help. And who can best help us?

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu can help us best!

“Things that are very difficult to do become easy to execute if one somehow or other simply remembers Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. But if one does not remember Him, even easy things become difficult. To this Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu I offer my respectful obeisances.”

— CC Ādi 14.1

And so it's a good idea to humbly and daily offer the following prayer to Him to overcome the ten offenses to the Holy Name:

*daśa aparādha yena hṛdaye nā paśe
kṛpa kara mahāprabhu maji nāma rase*

O Mahāprabhu, please be merciful to me so that the 10 offenses never touch my heart, and I can always remain absorbed in the *rasa* of the Holy Name.

— *Harināma Cintāmaṇi* 13.59
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

So Now Let's Take a Look at the Ten Offenses As Most of Us Know Them

1. To blaspheme devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the Holy Name.
2. To consider the demigods, or their names, equal to or independent of Kṛṣṇa and His name.
3. To disobey the orders of the spiritual master, or to consider him an ordinary person.
4. To blaspheme Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version.
5. To consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be imaginary.
6. To give some interpretation of the Holy Name.
7. To commit sinful activity on the strength of the Holy Name.
8. To consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa an auspicious Vedic activity, i.e. *karma-kāṇḍa* mentality.
9. To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the Holy Name.
10. To not have complete faith in the chanting of the Holy Name, and to maintain material attachments, even after hearing so many instructions on the matter.

It is also an offense to chant inattentively, in fact, all other offenses are born of this offense.

The Scriptural Reference for the Ten Offenses

The Ten Offenses Against the Chanting of the Holy Name (*Padma Purāṇa, Brahma Khaṇḍa*)

*satām nindā nāmnah paramam aparādham vitanute
yataḥ khyātīm yātam katham u sahate tad-vigarahām
śivasya śrī-viṣṇor ya iha guṇa-nāmādi sakalam
dhiyā bhinnam paśyet sa khalu harināmā-hita-karah (25.15)*

satām-of great saintly persons; *nindā*-blasphemy; *nāmnah*-to the Holy Name; *paramam*-the worst; *aparādham*-offense; *vitanute*-calls forth; is, *yataḥ*-of it (the Holy Name); *khyātīm*-(they spread) the fame; *yātam*-(the activity) which has been committed by this; *katham u*-how at all?; *sahate*-can it be tolerated; *tad-vigarhām* such blasphemous activity.

Blasphemy of the great saintly persons who are engaged in preaching the glories of the Holy Name of the Lord is the worst offense at the lotus feet of the Lord and will never be tolerated by the Holy Name. (1)

śivasya-of Śiva; *śrī-viṣṇoḥ*-of Śrī Viṣṇu; *yaḥ*-who; *iha*-here in this material world; *guṇa*-the qualities; *nāma*-the name; *ādi*-and so on; *sakalam*-all together; *dhiyā* with the conception; *bhinnam*-separate; *paśyet*-he may see; *saḥ*-he; *khalu*-indeed; *harināma*-to the Holy Name; *a-hita-karah*-acting with offenses.

In this material world, the Holy Name of Viṣṇu is all auspicious. Viṣṇu's name, form, qualities and pastimes are all transcendental, absolute knowledge. Therefore, if one tries to separate the Absolute Personality of Godhead from His Holy Name or His transcendental form, qualities and pastimes, thinking them to be material, that is offensive. Similarly, to think the names of demigods such as Lord Śiva to be as good as the names of Lord Viṣṇu is also blasphemous. (2)

*guroḥ avajñā śruti-śāstra-nindanam
tathārtha-vādo hari-nāmni-kalpanam
nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir
na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ (25.16)*

guroḥ — towards the guru; *avajñā*—disrespect.

It is an offense to be disrespectful towards the spiritual master and thus not follow his instructions. (3)

śruti—of the *Upaniṣads*; *śāstra*—of the *Vedas*; *nindanam*—blasphemy.

To blaspheme the Vedic literature, the *Upaniṣads* or the four original *Vedas*, is also an offense. (4)

tathā—as well; *artha-vādaḥ*—to interpret its purpose.

Someone who gives an interpretation of the Holy Name also commits an offense. (5)

hari-nāmni—in reference to the Holy Name; *kalpanam*—to consider the descriptions to be imaginary or exaggerated.

It is also an offense to consider the glories of the Holy Name to be imagination or exaggeration. (6)

nāmnaḥ—of the Holy Name; *balād*—on the strength; *yasya*—for someone who; *hi*—indeed; *pāpa*—of sin; *buddhiḥ*—having a conception; *na*—never; *vidyate*—there is; *tasya*—for him; *yamaiḥ*—even by austerity and penance; *hi*—certainly; *śuddhiḥ*—purification.

To think that since the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* can counteract all sinful reactions one may therefore go on with all sinful activities and at the same time chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to neutralize them is the greatest offense to the lotus feet of the Holy Name. One who thinks in this way cannot be purified even by the most severe forms of penance and austerity. (7)

*dharmā-vratā-tyāga-hutādi-sarva-śubhā
kriyā-sāmyam api pramādaḥ
aśraddadhāne vimukhe 'py aśṛṇvati
yaś copadeśaḥ śiva-nāmāparādhaḥ (25.17)*

dharmā—religious performance or pious deeds; *vratā*—vows of penance and austerity; *huta*—*agnihotra-yajñas* or sacrificial offerings; *ādi*—etc; *sarva*—all; *śubhā*—auspicious; *kriyā*—activities described in the *karma-kāṇḍa* section of the *Vedas*; *sāmyam*—who considers to be equal; *api*—also; *pramādaḥ*—carelessness, inattention.

It is a great offense to consider the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* to be equal to the performance of religious ceremonies, following austere vows, practicing renunciation and fire sacrifices which are all materialistic auspicious activities. It is also an offense to be careless or inattentive while chanting the Holy Name. (8)

a-śraddadhāne—to the faithless; *vimukhe*—and reluctant; *api*—even; *aśṛṇvati*—who is unwilling to hear; *yaḥ*—one who; *ca*—and; *upadeśaḥ*—(gives) instruction; *śiva-nāma*—about the auspicious glories of the Holy Name; *aparādhaḥ*—he commits an offense.

It is an offense to preach the glories of the Holy Name to those who are reluctant to hear, to those who are atheistic and those who have no faith in the chanting of the Holy Name. (9)

***śrutvāpi nāma-māhātmyam yaḥ prīti-rahito 'dhamah
aham-mamādi-paramo nāmni so 'py aparādha-kṛt (25.18)***

śrutvā—having heard; *api*—even; *nāma*—of the Holy Name; *māhātmyam*—about the glories; *yaḥ*—who; *prīti*—of love; *rahitaḥ*—devoid; *adhamah*— the lowest; *aham mama*—I and mine; *iti*—thus; *paramah*—to consider (this conception) to be the supreme; *nāmni*—to the Holy Name; *saḥ*—he; *api*—also; *aparādha-kṛt*—he commits an offense.

That lowest among men who, even after hearing the glories of the Holy Name of the Lord, continues in the materialistic concept of life, thinking “I am this body, and everything belonging to this body is mine” (*aham mameti*), and does not show respect and love for the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is an offender of the Holy Name. (10)



Defense Against Offense

(Recommended Rectification and Suggested Defense for Each Offense)

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura suggests appropriate rectification for most of the offenses to the Holy Name in his ***Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi***, and we would like to now share them with you. However, **rectification isn't the best answer to *nāma-aparādha*. It doesn't free the heart from the tendency to offend.**

Mahārāja Parīkṣit expresses a relevant thought about this to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, He says,

“Sometimes one who is very alert so as not to commit sinful acts is victimized by sinful life again. I therefore consider this process of repeated sinning and atoning to be useless. It is like the bathing of an elephant, for an elephant cleanses itself by taking a full bath, but then throws dust over its head and body as soon as it returns to the land.”

(ŚB 6.1.10)

Śukadeva Gosvāmī's reply is very instructive and helpful. He says, *“My dear King, since acts meant to neutralize impious actions are also fruitive, they will not release one from the tendency to act fruitively. Persons who subject themselves to the rules and regulations of atonement are not at all intelligent. Indeed, they are in the mode of darkness. Unless one is freed from the mode of ignorance, trying to counteract one action through another is useless because this will not uproot one's desires. Thus, even though one may superficially seem pious, he will undoubtedly be prone to act impiously. Therefore real atonement is enlightenment in perfect knowledge, Vedānta, by which one understands the Supreme Absolute Truth.”* **(ŚB 6.1.11)**

In essence, prevention is better than cure. That means we need to be proactive and conscious in our attempts to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. And so we'll give you not only the recommended rectification, but also insights and practical assistance so that you can defend yourself against committing *nāma-aparādha* by cultivating a change of heart.



1st Offense: To blaspheme devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the Holy Name.

Rectification: *If at any time one accidentally abuses a Vaiṣṇava, he should touch that devotee's feet in a spirit of repentance: weeping, he should say, "Prabhu, forgive my offense. Even though I am a wicked blasphemer, please give me your Vaiṣṇava blessings." The devotee by nature is compassionate. He will be moved by your contrition and will forgive and mercifully embrace you.* — **HNC 4.93-94**



Defense (1): Be aware of the appropriate way to respect Vaiṣṇavas and practice it in your daily life. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us:

One should mentally honor the devotee who chants the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one should offer humble obeisances to the devotee who has undergone spiritual initiation [*dīkṣā*] and is engaged in worshiping the Deity, and one should associate with and faithfully serve that pure devotee who is advanced in undeviated devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of the propensity to criticize others.

— **Nectar of Instruction, Text 5**

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains the appropriate mindset for following this advice in his *Śaraṇāgati*:

*hari he!
saṅga-doṣa-sūnya, dīkṣitādīkṣita,
jadi tava nāma gā'ya
mānase ādara, koribo tāhāre,
jāni' nija-jana tāya*

O Lord Hari! If I see someone who is free from bad association, chanting Your Holy Name — whether he is initiated or uninitiated — I will show him respect within my mind, knowing him to be a devotee. (1)

*dīkṣita hoiyā, bhaje tuwā pada,
tāhāre pranati kori
ananya-bhajane, vijña yei jana,
tāhāre sevibo, hari!*

O Lord Hari! I offer my obeisances to a person who worships Your lotus feet after being properly initiated. And I will serve that exalted devotee who is expert in the science of unalloyed devotional service. (2)

*sarva-bhūte sama, ye bhaktera mati,
tāhāra darśane māni
āpanāke dhanya, se saṅga pāiyā,
caritārtha hoiluṅ jāni*

I will consider myself to be fortunate if I attain the *darśana* of a devotee who sees all living entities with equal vision. If I get his association, I will think that my life has become successful. (3)

*niṣkapaṭa-mati, vaiṣṇavera prati,
ei dharma kabe pā'bo
kabe saṁsāra-sindhu-pāra ho'ye,
tava braja-pure jā'bo*

When will I attain the mentality of treating Vaiṣṇavas without duplicity? When will I cross the ocean of material existence and go back Home to Your abode, Śrī Vṛndāvana? (4)

Defense (2) Know and appreciate the exalted qualities of a Vaiṣṇava and consciously endeavor to serve him and hear from him rather than criticize him. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives us very good advice in this regard:

The glories of the Holy Name are constantly on the Vaiṣṇava's tongue, so how can Kṛṣṇa tolerate someone who wantonly criticizes him?

A person who has abandoned other paths of piety or philosophy to worship Kṛṣṇa's name stands above all other human beings.

A pure, saintly Vaiṣṇava never blasphemes another's gods or scriptures, his only business is to take complete shelter of the Holy Name.

One should endeavor to take the dust from his lotus feet, irrespective of whether he is a householder or sannyāsī.

A Vaiṣṇava's advancement is measured by his affection for the Holy Name; one can subjectively understand one's own progress in the same way.

In assessing someone's status as a Vaiṣṇava, his class, social position, or wealth, learning, youth or beauty, power or followers, mean nothing.

Pure devotion through taking refuge in the Holy Name manifests as devotion to the devotees; chanting without feeling love for the devotees is an aberration.

Devotion cannot remain where there is blasphemy of devotees, therefore such an offense has dangerous ramifications.

An aspirant should give up blasphemy and serve the Vaiṣṇavas with affection, for this path is based on association with holy persons and serving them.

— **HNC 4.60-69**

Defense (3) Read “The Critic Takes the Karma” regularly to remind yourself of how suicidal it is to criticize Vaiṣṇavas. Consciously check yourself from criticizing others. Practice speaking favorably about Vaiṣṇavas until it becomes a habit — and a joy.

The Critic Takes the *Karma*

*sad vāsad vā parivado brāhmaṇasya na śāsyate
naraka-pratiṣṭhās te vai syur ya evaṃ kurvate janāḥ*

True or false, speaking ill of others is not proper for a *brāhmaṇa*. People who do this have hell for their abode. (i.e. they already living in hell.)

— Sanat-sujāta to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, *Mahābhārata*, *Udyoga Parva* 44.24.

*ākrośa-parivādābhyām vihiṃsanty abudhā budhān
vaktā pāpam upādatte kṣamamāṇo vimucyate*

The ignorant seek to injure the wise by malice and back-biting; by doing so the critic takes upon himself the load of the wise man's sins, which he, the wise man, casts off by forgiving the ignorant.

— Vidura to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, *Mahābhārata*, *Udyoga Parva* 34.74.

*ākruśyamāno nākrośen manyur eva titikṣitah
ākroṣṭāraṃ nirdahati sukṛtaṃ cāsya vindati*

A person being criticized should not retaliate [literally 'should not criticize in return']; for if endured, the pain (felt upon receiving such criticisms) will itself consume the critic and seize the results of his good deeds, (which in turn go to the one who tolerated the criticisms).

—Conversation between Dattātreya and the Sādhyas,
Mahābhārata, *Udyoga Parva* 36.5.

Additional advice from the *Śānti-Parva* of *Mahābhārata* (A conversation between Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīsmadeva):

*yudhiṣṭhira uvāca
vidvān murkha-pragalbhena mṛdus tīkṣṇena bhārata
ākruśyamānaḥ sadasi katham kuryād arindama*

Yudhiṣṭhira inquired, “What should a learned person, who is gentle by nature, do when publicly insulted by the harsh words of an arrogant fool?”115.1

*bhīṣma uvāca
śrūyatām pṛthivī-pāla yathaiṣo 'rtho 'nugīyate
sadā sucetāḥ sahate narasyehālpacetasaḥ*

“Listen O King to how this topic is generally described. In this world a wise man should always be tolerant of an ignorant person.”115.2

*aruṣyan kruśyamānasya sukṛtaṃ nāma vindati
duṣkṛtaṃ cātmano marṣi ruṣyaty evāpamarṣi vai*

“One who remains tolerant, not becoming angry, certainly attains the abuser’s pious credits. Indeed his own sins are transferred to that wrathful person.”115.3

*yad yad brūyād alpa-matis tat tad asyu sahet sadā
prākṛto hi praśaṁsan vā nindan vā kiṁ kariṣyati
vane kāka ivābuddhir vāsamāno nirarthakam*

“One should always tolerate whatever a foolish person says. After all, what is the value of praise or blame when uttered by a vulgar fool? Such a person is simply cawing like a crow in the forest.”115.7

*pratyakṣam guṇa-vādī yaḥ parokṣam tu vinindakah
sa mānavah śvaval loka naṣṭa-loka-parāyaṇah*

“A person who praises someone in his presence but criticizes him behind his back is no better than a dog. His chances for elevation to higher planets are completely spoiled in this world.”115.11



The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: *One should neither praise nor criticize the conditioned nature and activities of other persons. Rather, one should see this world as simply the combination of material nature and the enjoying souls, all based on the one Absolute Truth.*



Whoever indulges in praising or criticizing the qualities and behavior of others will quickly become deviated from his own best interest by his entanglement in illusory dualities.
—ŚB 11.28.1-2

Defense (4) Make the six loving exchanges with devotees as explained by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī a natural and heartfelt part of your life.

“Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting *prasāda* and offering *prasāda* are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another.” — NOI text 4

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us, “The International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness has been established to facilitate these six kinds of loving exchanges between devotees... The life of the Kṛṣṇa conscious society is nourished by these six types of loving exchanges among the members; therefore people must be given the chance to associate with the devotees of ISKCON because simply by reciprocating in the six ways mentioned above an ordinary man can fully revive his dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”
— NOI Text 4p



Defense (5) We have dedicated this life to trying to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. That means learning to appreciate not only Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name, form, qualities, and pastimes, but also His mood and dealings. We are so easily disturbed and offended by the way others speak and act, but what is Kṛṣṇa’s mood?

Characteristically, the Supreme Personality of Godhead does not take seriously an offense committed by a pure devotee. The Lord accepts whatever small service a devotee renders as being such a great service that He is prepared to give even Himself, what to speak of other benedictions. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as Puruṣottama, the greatest of all persons, has a pure mind. He is so gentle that even if His servant is implicated in a great offense, He does not take it very seriously. Indeed, if His servant renders some small service, the Lord accepts it as being very great. Even if an envious person blasphemes the Lord, the Lord never manifests anger against him. Such are His great qualities. — **CC Antya 1.107-108**

Something to seriously think about, isn’t it?



Defense (6) Collect your own selection of prayers to remind yourself of how dependent on mercy you are. Memorize them, chant them often and when you pray imbibe the mood of them. We will share two favorites with you to get you started!

“I am infected by the germs of material activity and am suffering from the boils of envy. Therefore, falling in an ocean of humility, I take shelter of the great physician Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.” — **CC Antya 5.1**

“I offer my respectful obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, by whose mercy even a lame man can cross over a mountain and a dumb man can recite Vedic literature.” — **CC Antya 1.1**



Defense (7) Regularly read, contemplate, and sing *bhajans* in glorification of the Vaiṣṇavas. Consciously try and imbibe the mood and mindset of these *bhajans*. There are many such *bhajans*. We would like to share a few of them with you.

Bhajana-lālasā

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

*hari he!
nīra-dharma-gata, jāhnavī-salile,
pañka-phena drṣṭa haya
tathāpi kakhana, brahma-drava-dharma,
se salila nā chāḍaya*

O Lord Hari! One may find mud and foam in the pure water of the Ganges, but still, the Ganges water does not give up its original, pure nature. (1)

*vaiṣṇava-śarīra, aprākṛta sadā,
svabhāva-vapura dharme
kabhu nāhe jaḍa, tathāpi ye ninde,
pade se viṣamādharme*

The body of a Vaiṣṇava is always transcendental, no matter in what kind of family he is born. His body should never be considered a product of matter. For this reason, whoever blasphemes a Vaiṣṇava commits a grave offense. (2)

*sei aparādhe, yamera yātanā,
pāya jīva avirata
he nanda-nandana! sei aparādhe,
yena nāhi hai hata*

As a result of offending a Vaiṣṇava, a person receives severe punishment from Yamarāja. O Son of Nanda Mahārāja, may I never commit such an offense. (3)

*tomāra vaiṣṇava, vaibhava tomāra,
āmāre karuna dayā
tabe mora gati, ha 'be tava prati,
pā 'ba tava pada-chāyā*

Vaiṣṇavas are Your property and so I seek their blessings. By their mercy, my mind will become inclined towards You and then I will surely attain the shade of Your lotus feet. (4)



Vaiṣṇava-mahimā

(Glorification of the Devotees)

From *Prārthanā* by Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura

*ṭhākura vaiṣṇava-pada, avanīra su-sampada
śuna bhāi hañā eka mana
āśraya laiṅyā bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje
āra saba mare akāraṇa*

The lotus feet of the saintly Vaiṣṇavas are the greatest wealth in this world. O my dear brothers! Please listen attentively. One who takes shelter of the Vaiṣṇavas and worships Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa never forsakes him. Others die without reason. (1)

*vaiṣṇava-carāṇa-jala prema-bhakti dite bala
āra keha nahe balavanta
vaiṣṇava-carāṇa-reṅgu mastake bhūṣaṇa binu
āra nāhi bhūṣaṇera aṅta*

The water that has washed the feet of a Vaiṣṇava gives divine strength to a person engaged in loving devotional service. Nothing else is more powerful than this. The dust of the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas upon my head is the only decoration needed at the time of death. (2)

*tīrtha-jala pavitra-guṇa likhiyāche purāṇe
se saba bhaktira pravacana
vaiṣṇavera pādodaka sama nahe ei saba
jāte haya vāñchita pūraṇa*

The purifying qualities of the water of holy places are mentioned in the *Purāṇas* and at every discourse on *bhakti*. However, the water from the feet of a Vaiṣṇava cannot be compared with water from even the holy places. One's desires are fulfilled by taking such water. (3)

*vaiṣṇava-saṅgete mana ānandita anukṣana
sadā haya kṛṣṇa-para-saṅga
dīna narottama kānde hiyā dhairya nāhi bāndhe
mora daśā kena haila bhāṅga*

By associating with Vaiṣṇavas, one feels blissful discussing topics of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Becoming impatient due to forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, Narottama Dāsa thus laments. (4)



ei-bāra karuṇā kara vaiṣṇava gosāñi
NDT, op.cit.

*ei-bāra karuṇā kara vaiṣṇava gosāñi
patita-pāvana tomā bine keha nāi*

O Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmī, please be merciful to me now. Except for you, there is no one who can purify the fallen souls. (1)

*jāhāra nikaṭe gele pāpa dūre jāya
emana dayāla prabhu kebā kothā pāya*

Where can anyone find such a merciful personality by whose mere audience all sins go far away? (2)

*gaṅgara paraśa haile paścāte pāvana
darśane pavitra kara-ei tomāra guṇa*

After bathing in the waters of the sacred Ganges many times, one becomes purified, but just by sight of you, the fallen soul becomes purified. This is your great quality. (3)

*hari-sthāne aparādhe tāre harinām
tomā sthāne aparādhe nāhika erhāna*

The Holy Name can deliver one who commits an offense to Lord Hari, but if one commits an offense to you, there is no means of deliverance. (4)

*tomāra hṛdaye sadā govinda-viśrām
govinda kahena - mama vaiṣṇava parāṇ*

Govinda is always resting in your heart, so Govinda says, “The Vaiṣṇavas are My heart.”(5)

*prati-janme kari āśā caraṇera dhūli
narottame kara dayā āpanāra bali*

I desire the dust of your holy feet in every birth I take. Please consider Narottama Dāsa yours, and be kind upon him. (6)



Defense (8) Read, contemplate and sing *Śrī Vaiṣṇava śarana* as a daily practice.

Śrī Vaiṣṇava Śaraṇa

(Surrender to the Vaiṣṇavas)

By Śrī Devakīnandana Dāsa Ṭhākura

*vṛṇḍāvana-vāsī jata vaiṣṇavera gaṇa
prathame vandanā kori sabāra caraṇa*

First of all I offer my obeisances to the feet of all the Vaiṣṇavas living in Vṛṇḍāvana. (1)

*nīlācala-vāsī jata mahāprabhura gaṇa
bhūmite poḍiyā bandoṅ sabāra caraṇa*

Falling to the ground, I offer my obeisances to the feet of all of Mahāprabhu’s followers who reside in Jagannātha Purī. (2)

*navadvīpa-vāsī jata mahāprabhura bhakta
sabāra caraṇa bandoṅ hoiyā anurakta*

With deep loving attachment, I honor the lotus feet of all those devotees of Mahāprabhu who live in Navadvīpa. (3)

*mahāprabhura bhakta jata gauḍa deśe sthithi
sabāra caraṇa bandoṅ koriyā praṇati*

I pray and offer my obeisances to the feet of all those followers of Mahāprabhu who live anywhere in Bengal. (4)

*je deśe je deśe boise gaurāṅgera gaṇa
ūrdhva-bāhu kori’ bandoṅ sabāra caraṇa*

With upraised arms I pray to the feet of all of Gauranga's followers, in whichever country they may live. (5)

*hoiyāchena hoibena prabhur jata dāsa
sabāra caraṇa bandoṅ dante kori' ghāsa*

With a straw between my teeth. I pray to the lotus feet of all of Mahāprabhu's servants, as many as have been or ever will be. (6)

*brahmāṇḍa tārīte śakti dhara jane jane
e veda purāṇe guṇa gāya jebā śune*

Everyone has heard the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas* sing the glories of the Vaiṣṇavas, each and every one of whom possess the power to deliver the entire universe. (7)

*mahāprabhura gaṇa saba patita-pāvana
taiṅ lobhe mui pāpi loinu śaraṇa*

Since all the devotees of Mahāprabhu are the deliverers of the fallen souls. I have eagerly come to take shelter of their lotus feet, even though I am a most sinful person. (8)

*vandanā korite mui koto śakti dhori
tamo-buddhi-doṣe mui dambha mātra kori*

What power do I possess to glorify the Vaiṣṇavas? My doing so is simply a display of my arrogance, a product of my ignorant mind. (9)

*tathāpi mūkerā bhāgya manera ullāsa
doṣe kṣami mo-adhame koro nija dāsa*

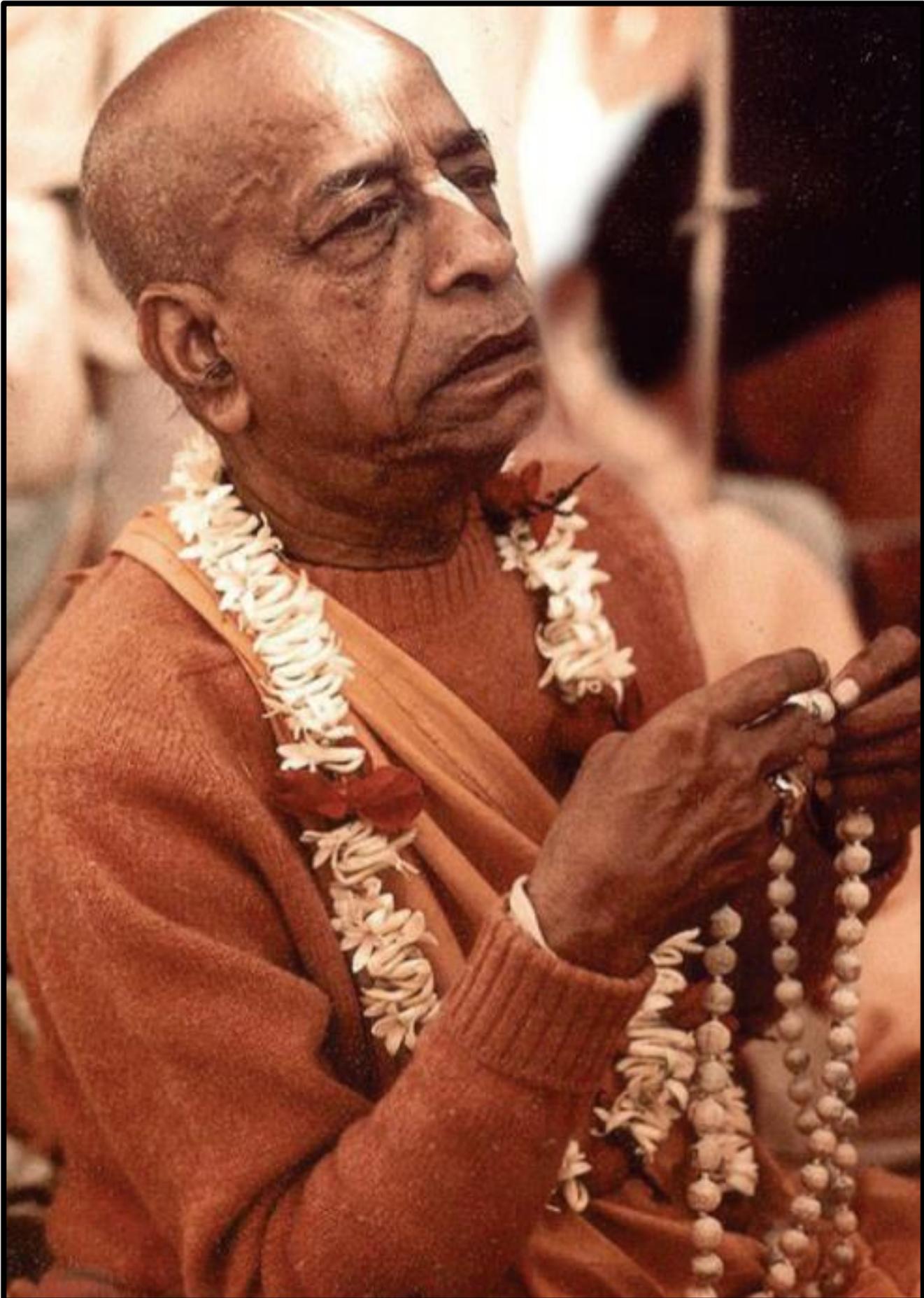
Yet this dumb fallen soul will consider himself fortunate and become happy if all of you forgive my offenses and accept me as your servant. (10)

*sarve vāñchā siddhi hoy, jama-bandha chuṭe
jagate durlabha hoiyā prema-dhana luṭe*

Those who take shelter of the Vaiṣṇavas see all their desires fulfilled and they can easily escape the punishment of Yamarāja. They can then plunder the treasury of love of God which is extremely rare in this material world. (11)

*manera vāsanā pūrṇa acirāte hoyā
devakīnandana dāsa ei lobhe koyā*

All the desires of such devotees are quickly fulfilled. Greedy for their mercy, Devakīnandana Dāsa glorifies the Vaiṣṇavas. (12)



Śrī Devakīnandana dāsa Ṭhākura

The great Vaiṣṇava poet Devakīnandana dāsa Ṭhākura was born in the village Kumārahaṭṭa, or Hālisahara, in Bengal. Other than his birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family, nothing is known about his parents. His initiating spiritual master was Śrīla Puruṣottama Dāsa, who was the son of Sadāśiva Kavirāja. Like his father, Puruṣottama Dāsa was a great devotee of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu.

Although Devakīnandana Ṭhākura is well known as the author of “*Sanskṛtavaiṣṇavabhidhana*” (*Vaiṣṇava* dictionary in Sanskrit), he is particularly famous for his “*Vaiṣṇava-vandanā*”. Composed of 386 lines, and of the Bengali verse form known as *payāra*, this *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā* mentions the name of every important contemporary follower of Mahāprabhu as well as some of Mahāprabhu’s important predecessors. It is greatly valued amongst devotees and scholars for its devotional and historical importance.

According to the family tradition of Śrīla Puruṣottama Dāsa, Devakīnandana Dāsa was formerly known as Gopāla Cāpāla. After offending Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, (as described in CC Ādi 17.38-59), Mahāprabhu instructed Gopāla Cāpāla that to be forgiven for his offense he would have to take shelter of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita. Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita in turn instructed him to take shelter of Puruṣottama Dāsa. Puruṣottama Dāsa gave him initiation and the name Devakīnandana Dāsa. He then ordered him to worship and pray to the Vaiṣṇavas and in that way become freed from his offenses. Taking this order on his head, Devakīnandana travelled throughout the country collecting the names of all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to include in his *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā*.

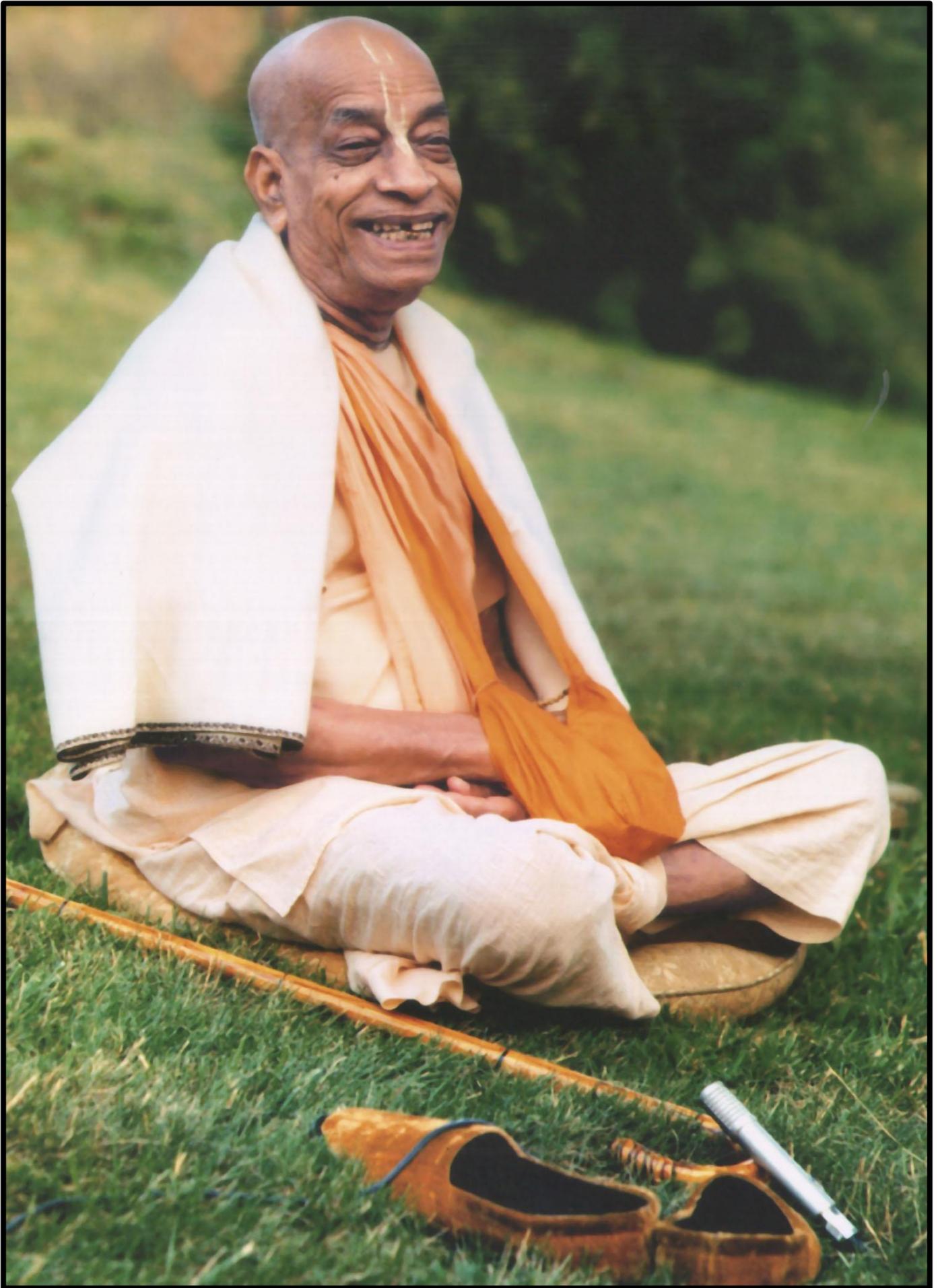
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is famous as *kali-bhaya-nāśana*, the destroyer of all fear caused by the age of Kali, has instructed;

“What I say is the truth. If a person who has committed blasphemy stops blaspheming others and instead praises Lord Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas, then all of that person’s sins and offenses will be destroyed. That is the right way to destroy them. Millions of rituals of atonement will not destroy them.”

(*Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Antya 3.456-458)

Bearing in mind the above instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, many *Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavas* make it their daily practice to recite Devakīnandana Ṭhākura’s *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā*, or at least the final portion of it known as *Śrī Vaiṣṇava-saraṇa*. This prayer is seen as a means to help purify one of offenses to Vaiṣṇavas as well as to prevent *Vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*.

—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta, Vol. 6



Ohe! Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura

from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's "Śaraṇāgati"

ohe!
vaiṣṇava ṭhākura, doyāra sāgara,
e dāse korunā kori'
diyā pada-chāyā, śodho he āmāya,
tomāra caraṇa dhoṛi

Oh Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura! Oh ocean of mercy! Please be merciful to me, your humble servant. Purify me by giving the shade of your lotus feet. Your feet I humbly hold.

chaya vega domi', chaya doṣa śodhi',
chaya guna deho' dāse
chaya sat-saṅga, deho' he āmāre,
bosechi saṅgera āse

Please help me to control the six urges, purify me of the six faults, and please instill in your servant the six good qualities. Oh, give me the six kinds of holy association! I have sat down here in the hope of having your company.*

ekakī āmāra, nāhi pāya bala,
hari-nāma-saṅkīrtane
tumi kṛpā kori', śraddhā-bindu diyā,
deho' kṛṣṇa-nāma-dhane

Alone, I find I have no strength to chant the holy name of Lord Hari. I beg you therefore, please be merciful, and with a particle of faith give me the great treasure of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

kṛṣṇa se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāro,
tomāra śakati āche
āmi to' kāṅgāla, 'kṛṣṇa' 'kṛṣṇa' boli',
dhāi tava pāche pāche

Kṛṣṇa is yours, you are able to give Him to me, for such is your power. I am indeed wretched and fallen, simply running after you crying "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!"

chaya vega* - **the six urges: speech, mind, anger, tongue, belly, and genitals.

chaya doṣa - **the six faults:** overeating or collecting more funds than required, over-endeavoring for material objectives, unnecessarily talking of mundane affairs, being too attached or too neglectful of scriptural rules and regulations, associating with worldly-minded people, and lusting after mundane achievements.

chaya guna - **the six good qualities:** enthusiasm, patience, confidence, determination to perform activities favorable to devotional service, the resolution to abandon the association of non-devotees, and the discipline required to always follow in the footsteps of predecessor *ācāryas*.

chaya sat-saṅga - **the six activities of spiritual association:** giving and receiving gifts, accepting and offering *prasādam*, revealing one's inner thoughts, and posing confidential questions regarding devotional service.

2nd Offense: To consider the demigods or their names equal to or independent of Kṛṣṇa and His Name.

Rectification:

Anyone who out of temporary illusion or madness takes another to be Viṣṇu should repent by meditating on Viṣṇu's true nature.

By remembering Viṣṇu, all offenses are dissolved, but one should take care that the same error is not repeated.

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.

Kṛṣṇa is an ocean of mercy and the friend of the devotees; He always forgives the devotee's previous errors.

I vow to avoid the company of those who worship many gods and revere the devotees who worship Lord Kṛṣṇa exclusively.

— HNC 5.81-84

Defense (1) Keep association with devotees who are conversant with Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, who have faith in his books and who are trying to live them.

Defense (2) Read and study, preferably in devotee association, *Bhagavad-gītā As it Is* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Defense (3) Be respectful to all demigods, knowing them to be Kṛṣṇa's empowered servants and His parts and parcels.



3rd Offense: To disobey the order of the spiritual master, or to consider him to be an ordinary person.

Rectification:

If one should disrespect the Nāma-guru because of the influence of bad association or unauthorized scriptures, he should renounce that association and teaching and fall down at the spiritual master's feet and beg forgiveness. The spiritual master will be merciful and forgive him, and compassionately bless him with love for Kṛṣṇa's name.

— HNC 6.57-59

Defense (1) Associate with devotees who have firm faith in guru, who are well versed in the science and art of *guru-tattva* and who are true *sādhus*.

Defense (2) Understand who "Guru" is and learn to appropriately respect him. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura speaks very clearly about this in his *Harināma Cintāmaṇi*. Let's see what he has to say.

The Guru Principle

Both the śikṣā guru and the dīksā guru are Kṛṣṇa's servants. Both are manifestations of Kṛṣṇa's power which reside eternally in Vraja. Never think that the spiritual master is an ordinary mortal; the guru is Kṛṣṇa's potency, Kṛṣṇa's beloved, our eternal master. On who devotes himself to the guru in this consciousness frees himself from the material predicament on the strength of that devotion. — HNC 6.31.33

The Proper Etiquette

Before worshiping Kṛṣṇa, one must first worship the guru. One offers the spiritual master Kṛṣṇa's prasāda. One should worship Kṛṣṇa with the guru's permission, and one should chant the Lord's names while remembering the guru.

How One Must Have Faith in the Guru

One who shows disrespect to the guru commits an offense — an offense that impedes his advancement in spiritual life. Anyone who is equally devoted to the guru, Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas and takes shelter of the Holy Name is a pure devotee and is quickly delivered. One whose faith in his guru is unshakeable will reach the goal of Kṛṣṇa prema on the strength of chanting the Pure Name.

When to Reject a Guru

Nevertheless, it may happen that for some reason the spiritual master falls into bad company and becomes bereft of qualification. At the time the disciple accepted the guru, he was highly exalted, but by committing offenses he loses his spiritual understanding. He becomes inimical to the Vaiṣṇavas and loses all taste for chanting, and gradually succumbs to the desire for wealth and women. The disciple should leave such a guru and if Kṛṣṇa is merciful, he will find out a Sad Guru and take up chanting the pure Name.

The Guru and Disciple Should Test Each Other Before Establishing An Ongoing Relationship

*The spiritual master must be strict with unworthy disciples, while a disciple who takes shelter of an unqualified guru becomes worthless. As long as both of them remain stable in their qualifications, there is no question of either one of them breaking off their relationship. The guru-disciple relationship is a permanent one. If both maintain their purity and sincerity, their eternal relationship is never broken. However, if the spiritual master becomes contaminated, the disciple should immediately repudiate him. Similarly, the spiritual master should repudiate the disciple who is insincere and fallen. If either of them fail to do so, they will fall down. The evidence for such repudiation of a guru by disciple or disciple by spiritual master is given elsewhere.**

*The following verse from the *Mahābhārata* (5.178.24) is quoted in Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti sandarbha* 238; *guror apy avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānataḥ/utpatha-pratipannasya parityāgo vidhīyatell* "If the spiritual master has been contaminated, can no longer discriminate between what is to be done and what is not to be done, and has taken up the path of wickedness, then he must be abandoned." In *Jaiva Dharma*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes that there are two valid reasons for

leaving a *guru*. The first is if at the time of being initiated, the disciple had not properly examined the spiritual master for his worthiness and later found him to be ineffectual. The second is if the spiritual master's nature changes and due to bad association, he becomes a *Māyāvādī*, or becomes envious of the Vaiṣṇavas.

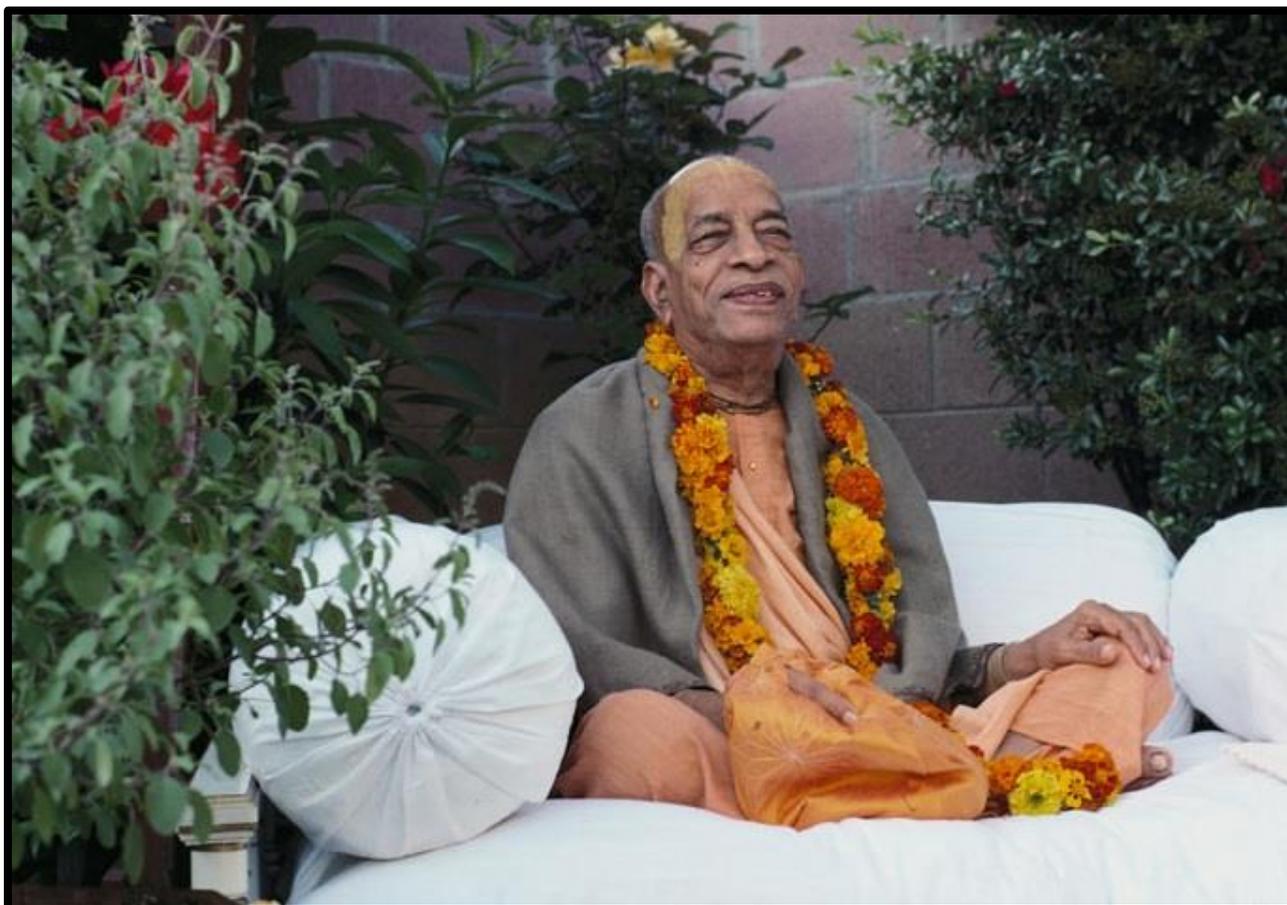
One Should Only Take Shelter of a Guru After Testing Him

One who shows disrespect for a bonafide spiritual master is the most sinful offender anywhere in the world. One should therefore take particular care from the very beginning that he has taken a pure devotee for his spiritual master. The scriptural injunction is that both the spiritual master and his disciple should test each other prior to cementing their relationship by initiation. If one thinks beforehand, "May I never have to suffer the distress of leaving my guru," this difficulty will never arise. If a guru has no devotion, his disciple will be just like him, so one should take care to examine the guru to see if he is pure. The offense against a pure devotee guru is a terrible thing, so disastrous that it can ruin both man and demigod alike. One must be very careful.

How to Properly Honor the Spiritual Master

One should never step on or over the guru's seat or bed, his shoes, vehicle, footstool, bathwater, or his shadow. One should not worship another person, think someone else to be his equal, initiate, explain, or give orders in the guru's presence. Whenever and wherever the disciple sees the spiritual master, he should fall on the ground and offer prayers. The guru's name must be uttered with reverence and one should never show indifference to his commands. One should eagerly honor the remnants of his meals and never say anything displeasing to him. One who acts in this way will attain all perfection through chanting the Holy Name, so say the scriptures.

— HNC 6.34-56



Please Don't Disrespect Śrīla Prabhupāda

Please don't disrespect Śrīla Prabhupāda or minimize his position in your spiritual life. He is the Founder-ācārya of ISKCON and our primary śīksā guru. His instructions are actually the primary instructions that should guide and shape our lives. Our bona fide source of reference is: guru, śāstra, and sādhu. In reality Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us all three of these. How grateful and respectful we should be towards him!

This small section is designed to help us avoid inadvertently offending Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Holy Name by disrespecting or disregarding him. It may also be helpful if your beloved Gurudeva has departed from this mortal world.

Guru is Beyond Birth and Death (Excerpts from *My Revered Spiritual Master* His Holiness Gour Govinda Mahārāja)

A Vaiṣṇava never dies. He is beyond birth and death.

*na karma-bandhuṁ janma
vaiṣṇavānām ca vidyate
viṣṇur anucaratvaṁ hi
mokṣam āhur manīṣiṇaḥ*

A Vaiṣṇava does not take birth under the jurisdiction of karmic law. His birth and disappearance are transcendental. The wise have declared that the servants of Viṣṇu are eternally engaged in the liberated service of the Lord and therefore are free from the laws of material nature.
—**Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.113**

Because devotees are the dear servants of Lord Viṣṇu, they are not ordinary human beings. One should not think otherwise, or else one will commit a great *aparādha*, offense. As the Supreme Lord and his innumerable incarnations appear and disappear, so does Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura.

For a Vaiṣṇava there is no death. When he is physically present, the duty of his followers and disciples is to obey his orders and serve his body, *vapu-sevā*. When he goes to the spiritual abode, entering into *nitya-līlā*, he lives in his *vāñī* – instructions. Then the disciples and followers should remember his instructions, read his books, remember his teachings, and act accordingly – thereby serving him.



Devotee: Since guru's discipline is required to control the mind, how can the disciple get that discipline after the guru passes away?

Gour Govinda Mahārāja: Ah! You are a fool! The guru is always with the disciple. The guru's passing away is only apparent. The guru is always there. "I am eternally

his disciple, and he is eternally my guru.” Such relationship is there. His passing away is only apparent. He is always with us. We have such a loving relationship. Although he is not present here, although he’s gone back home, back to Godhead, from that Vraja-bhūmi, eternal Goloka Vṛndāvana, he has his eye on his dear disciple and takes care of him.

caksu-dāna dila yei, janme janme prabhu sei

“One who has opened my eyes, he is my master life after life.”

So why not in this life?!

If the guru passes away, he still has his eye on his dear disciple. He takes care of him. He appears in the form of *sādhu* and *sāstra*. Wherever the disciple is staying, if some qualified *sādhu-vaiṣṇava* is nearby, the guru empowers him and teaches through him. That is how guru is there. That is how he is *nitya*, eternal. This is the meaning of, “I am eternally his disciple, and he is eternally my master.” Fools cannot understand.

The stupid mind starts speaking, “Oh! My guru is no more. He is gone, gone. Now I can act anyway I like. I can do anything.” Now you become a hippy with long hair, a big moustache, and drink liquor: “Oh, my guru has passed away. He is no more. Prabhupada is no more.” They are fools. So many of Prabhupāda’s disciples are doing like this. Seeing them, my heart cracks. Fools! Fools!

The guru is always there. He always takes care of one who is serious. If you are really crying for the help of guru, he is always there. “Oh, my guru has gone, I am independent now. I can do anything I like.”

Then you have become servant of your stupid mind – “*go-dāsa*.”

The instruction of *guru* is also *guru*. You’ll get *guru-kṛpā* through his instructions, his *vāṇī*. One who is very, very eager and very, very inquisitive, prays to his spiritual master, “O my spiritual master, you have departed. You are not physically present, so I cannot understand. I am such an ignorant fool. I have no qualification. Though your instructions are there, I cannot understand what you have said. Please help me.”

So guru will also come, but not in the same form. He may come in the form of a *sādhu*, a very dear devotee, who is also very dear to your spiritual master. Through him this will be revealed. Doubts will be cleared. Through him you will be able to understand *tattva*, purport. You should think, “My guru is teaching me, he is speaking to me in this form.”

Don’t think, “My guru is not here. He has departed. What shall I do?” Pray fervently to your spiritual master. He must help you. We have personal experience. We have been helped in this way.

Also, the great *mahājanas*, *ācāryas*, they have also said this. This is an eternal process. Kṛṣṇa is eternal, and his teachings are eternal. The process is also eternal. It is always going on. But we should be very, very inquisitive. Inquisitiveness must be there.

One should not feel desperate. There is nothing pessimistic in this process. It is all optimism.



Guru, the spiritual master, is the representative of Kṛṣṇa. He is a very dear devotee of Kṛṣṇa who is *caitya-guru*, seated in the heart as supersoul. The spiritual master is always there. Don't think that he is not physically present, that he is not there. He is there. He is always there. If you have developed love for the spiritual master, if you have developed that eye, then you can see him, you can talk to him. And he is also present in the form of books, *vāñī-rūpa*; his instructions are there.



Devotee: You have to give us your blessings, Mahārāja.

Gour Govinda Swami: I have this blessing, “Get the blessings of my *guru-mahārāja*, Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupādaḥ Mahārāja. Be a member of ISKCON, the society he founded worldwide. Serve him. Remain in the society. Serve guru and Gaurāṅga.” This is my blessing. Nothing else. This is everything. Thank you.



4th Offense: To blaspheme Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version.

Why is it an offense to the Holy Name to blaspheme the *Vedas*?

The four *Vedas*, 108 *Upaniṣads* and the eighteen *Purāṇas* emanate from the breathing of Kṛṣṇa, so they are perfect transcendental knowledge beyond the four defects of conditioned souls. The principal sound in the *Vedas* is *om*, which is a name of Kṛṣṇa. The *Vedas* state that the Holy Name is the spiritual form of the Lord in the material world in Kali-yuga. Throughout the *Vedas*, the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names are described and glorified as the principle process of self-realization. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in particular emphasizes the glories of chanting the Holy Name in its beginning, middle and end. In fact, the closing verse in this greatest of works is a glorification of Kṛṣṇa and His Holy Name:

*nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ yasya, sarva-pāpa pranāśanam
pranāmo duḥkha-śamana, taṁ namāmi hariṁ param*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Hari, the congregational chanting of whose Holy Names destroys all sinful reactions, and the offering of obeisances unto whom relieves all material suffering. — ŚB 12.13.23

Since the *Vedas* are full of glorification of Kṛṣṇa's Holy Names, it is a grave offense to criticize them, because then the Holy Name is automatically also criticized.

It is also dangerous to blaspheme Vedic literature because it obviously means we'll disregard it. *Bhagavad-gītā* explains the problems that arise from this and how to avoid such a dilemma.

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

Rectification: If one inadvertently blasphemes the Vedic scriptures, he should sincerely repent and offer his obeisances in particular to *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. With great respect he should offer flowers and *tulasī* leaves to them and, if possible, circumambulate Them while chanting Their glories. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* not only contains the essence of all the *Vedas*, it is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa Himself and will be merciful to a truly repentant offender.

Defense: One should consciously endeavor to strengthen his faith and understanding that if he simply follows those scriptures which glorify Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his life will be auspicious and successful. And topmost of such scriptures is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. A very powerful way to build faith is to hear from authority about the glories and truth of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in particular, and to glorify this wonderful scripture as His pure devotees do. Let’s do both of these things right now!

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s Instructions on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*, *Antya-khaṇḍa*, Chapter Three)

The Lord began to explain the essence of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. “Listen, O learned *brāhmaṇa*, interpret the *Bhāgavatam* only in the light of *bhakti*, devotion. Do not enter into any other process. The beginning, middle, and end of the *Bhāgavatam* establish that devotional service to the Supreme Lord is eternal, absolute, and infallible. Devotional service is the only reality, The Absolute Truth.

At the time of the total dissolution of the cosmic creation, when everything is completely annihilated, only the reality of devotional service remains unaffected and perfect. The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, does not give devotional service to everyone, but He easily offers liberation to an aspirant whilst hiding the science of unalloyed devotion. Only through his personal grace, does He elevate someone to the path of *bhakti*.

“The philosophical conclusions on the path of *bhakti*, available in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, have no parallel in any other scripture. Just as all the incarnations of the Lord, like Matsya, Kurma, and so on are self-manifest, appearing and disappearing on Their own sweet will; similarly the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not a text composed by ordinary mortals. Being transcendental, the *Bhāgavatam* also appears and disappears only by the will of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavatam* having previously disappeared has once again appeared on the tongue of Śrīla Vedavyāsa by the causeless mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The esoteric truth about the Supreme Lord is inconceivable, as is the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This is the verdict of all the scriptures.

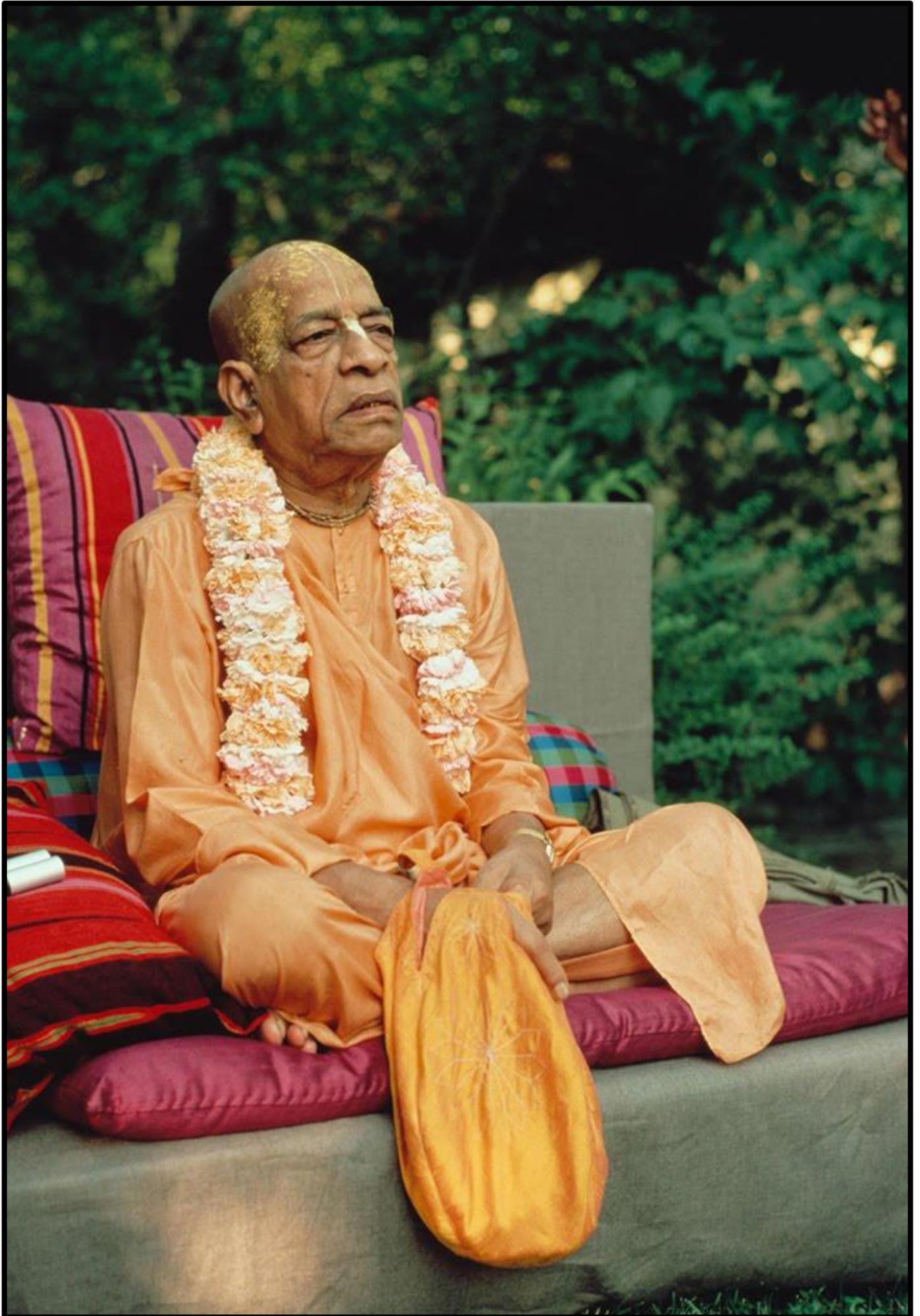
“If one proudly claims to know and understand the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* then he is certainly ignorant about its real conclusions. On the other hand, if one is submissive and admits his lack of understanding, then the essence of the *Bhāgavatam* will indeed be revealed to him. The *Bhāgavatam* is saturated with divine *kṛṣṇa-prema*. It is in fact the body of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for it contains the confidential pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Vedavyāsa, after having compiled the many different *Purāṇas* and *Vedas* was still feeling a vacuum within himself, but when he finally spoke the *Bhāgavatam*, he became completely satisfied at heart. However, sometimes even someone engaged in trying to expound upon this great scripture might find himself in a dilemma, so be very careful.

“Therefore, the only way you must explain the entire *Bhāgavatam* is through *bhakti*. In this way, you can clear away your offenses and you will experience sublime bliss in your heart. All scriptures conclude that devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate destination. Especially the *Bhāgavatam* is imbued with the transcendental, supra-mundane exchanges of mellow with Kṛṣṇa. Now return and study the *Bhāgavatam* well, and explain to everyone that devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the highest ambrosia.”

Devānanda Paṇḍita fell flat on the ground at the Lord’s lotus feet, thinking of himself as the most fortunate soul. After surrendering his body, mind, and words to the Lord, and offering repeated obeisances, he returned to his home. Thus, Gaurasundara instructed everyone about the actual position of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* actually teaches *bhakti* alone, so if one does not expound the path of devotional service whilst teaching the *Bhāgavatam*, then he uselessly wastes words and energy and earns the fruit of offense.

One who understands that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is a treatise dedicated fully to the science of devotional service becomes a recipient of the special grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The presence of *Bhāgavatam* in any house makes the house sanctified and free from all in-auspiciousness. Worshiping the *Bhāgavatam* is equivalent to worshiping Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Hearing and reading the *Bhāgavatam* is unalloyed devotional service. There are two meanings of the word ‘*Bhāgavata*’: One is the ‘Book-*Bhāgavata*’ and the other is the ‘Person-*Bhāgavata*’ who is the personification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. By daily worshiping, studying, and hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one is elevated to become a ‘Person-*Bhāgavata*’.

On the other hand, if a sinful person without a proper attitude reads the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, then due to a lack of proper understanding, he will criticize and offend Śrī Nityānanda. **Śrī Nityānanda is the embodiment of the essence and divine mellows of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.** One who perfectly understands this is truly an intelligent and fortunate soul. Śrī Nityānanda is continuously explaining the purport of the *Bhāgavatam* with His thousand mouths even now. Although Śrī Nityānanda is unlimited, He is not able to fully complete his dissertation upon the *Bhāgavatam*, which is unlimited, transcendental, and contains the conclusions of the path of *bhakti*. Thus, the Lord taught everyone the real essence of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, using his discussions with Devānanda Paṇḍita as the means.



The Essence of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā, Chapter 25)

“The essence of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam — our relationship with the Supreme Lord, our activities in that connection and the goal of life — is manifest in the four verses of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam known as the *catuḥ-ślokī*. Everything is explained in those verses. (102)

[Lord Kṛṣṇa says:] ‘I am the center of all relationships. Knowledge of Me and the practical application of that knowledge is actual knowledge. Approaching Me for devotional service is called *abhidheya*. (103)

“By rendering devotional service, one gradually rises to the platform of love of Godhead. That is the chief goal of life. On the platform of love of Godhead, one is eternally engaged in the service of the Lord.” (104)

“A person advanced in devotional service sees within everything the soul of souls, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Consequently he always sees the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the cause of all causes and understands that all things are situated in Him.” (129)

“All the *gopīs* assembled to chant the transcendental qualities of Kṛṣṇa very loudly, and they began to wander from one forest to another like madwomen. They began to inquire about the Lord, who is situated in all living entities, internally and externally. Indeed, they even asked all the plants and vegetables about Him, the Supreme Person.” (130)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu continued, “Thus one’s relationship with the Lord, activities in devotional service, and the attainment of the highest goal of life, love of Godhead, are the subject matters of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.” (131)

“This is one’s eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now please hear about the execution of devotional service. This principle pervades each and every verse of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.” (135)

“[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] ‘Being very dear to the devotees and *sādhus*, I am attained through unflinching faith and devotional service. This *bhakti-yoga* system, which gradually increases attachment for Me, purifies even a human being born among dog-eaters. That is to say, everyone can be elevated to the spiritual platform by the process of *bhakti-yoga*.’ (136)

“[The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, said:] ‘My dear Uddhava, neither through *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* [the mystic *yoga* system to control the senses], nor through impersonal monism or an analytical study of the Absolute Truth, nor through study of the *Vedas*, nor through austerities, charity or acceptance of *sannyāsa* can one satisfy Me as much as by developing unalloyed devotional service unto Me.’ (137)

“Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives direct information of the mellow derived from service to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is above all other Vedic literatures.” (150)

“The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the essence of all Vedic literatures, and it is considered the ripened fruit of the wish-fulfilling tree of Vedic knowledge. It has been sweetened by emanating from the mouth of Śukadeva Gosvāmī. You who are thoughtful and who relish mellows should always try to taste this ripened fruit. O thoughtful devotees, as long as you are not absorbed in transcendental bliss, you should continue tasting this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and when you are fully absorbed in bliss, you should go on tasting its mellows forever.” (151)

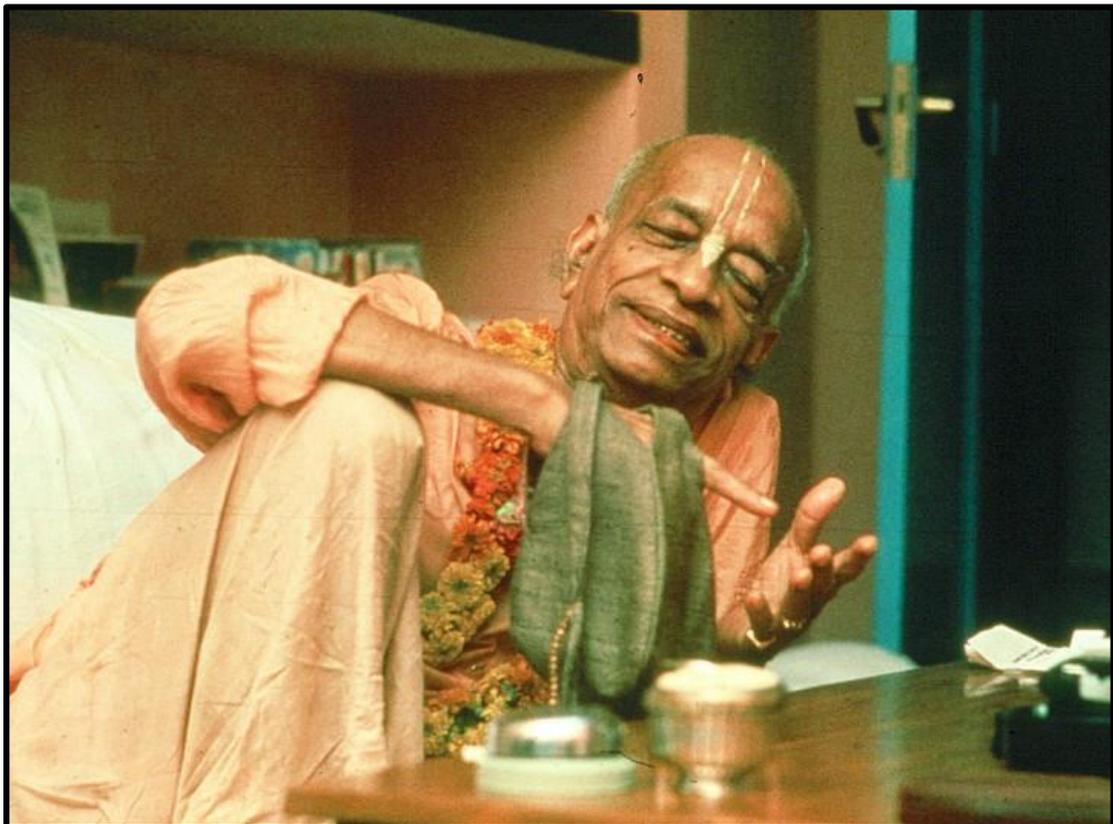
“We never tire of hearing the transcendental pastimes of the Personality of Godhead, who is glorified by hymns and prayers. Those who enjoy association with Him relish hearing His pastimes at every moment.” (152)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, “Study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* very scrutinizingly. Then you will understand the actual meaning of the *Brahma-sūtra*.” (153)

To deliver all fallen souls, the Lord traveled from country to country. He personally tasted the transcendental pleasure of devotional service, and He simultaneously spread the cult of devotion everywhere. (264)

Kṛṣṇa consciousness means understanding the truth of Kṛṣṇa, the truth of devotional service, the truth of love of Godhead, the truth of emotional ecstasy, the truth of transcendental mellows and the truth of the pastimes of the Lord. (265)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has personally preached the transcendental truths and mellows of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are identical, for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the sound incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (266)



Glorification of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
From Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava

sarva-śāstrābdhi-pīyūsa
sarva-vedaika-sat-hala
sarva-siddānta-ratnādhyā
sarva-lokaika-drk-prada

sarva-bhāgavata-prāna
śrīmad-bhāgavata-prabho
kali-dhvāntoditāditya
śrī-kṛṣṇa-parivartita

O *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*! O nectar churned from the ocean of all the Vedic scriptures! O most precious transcendental fruit of the *Vedas*! O You who are enriched with the jewels of all spiritual philosophical conclusions! O You who grant spiritual vision to all the people of the world! O life-breath of the Vaiṣṇava devotees! O Lord, You are the sun which has arisen to dispel the darkness of Kali-yuga. You are Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has kindly returned to be with us!

paramānanda-pāthāya
prema-varṣy-akṣarāya te
sarvadā sarva-sevyāya
śrī-kṛṣṇāya namo stu te

O *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*! I offer my respectful obeisances unto You. By reading You one attains transcendental bliss, for You syllables rain pure love of Kṛṣṇa upon the reader. You are always to be served by everyone, for You are a most merciful incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

mad-eka bandho mat-saṅgin
mad-guro man-mahā-dhana
man-niṣṭāraka mad-bhāgya
mad-ānanda namo stu te

O *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*! O my only friend! O my dear companion! O my teacher! O my greatest wealth! O my deliverer! O my good fortune! O my bliss! I offer my heartfelt obeisances unto You!

asādhu-sādhuta-dāyinn
ati-nīcico-tāraka
hāna muñca kadācin mām
premnā hart-kaṇṭhayoḥ sphura

O *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*! O giver of saintliness to the unsaintly! O lifter of the very fallen! Please don't ever leave me! Please become manifest in my heart and my throat, accompanied by Kṛṣṇa *prema*!





5th Offense: To consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be imaginary.

Rectification: This offense is born of ignorance and prejudice. The best way to rectify is to humbly and sincerely approach Vaiṣṇavas who are knowledgeable and realized in *Nāma-tattva*, and hear from them and serve them. Their mercy will be a good source of spiritual strength and give proper understanding of the glories of the Holy Name.

Defense (1): Regularly read about the glories of the Holy Name, and of the lives of great Vaiṣṇava saints who have dedicated their lives to the service of the Holy Name.

Defense (2): Regularly read, contemplate and sing *bhajans* glorifying the Holy Name. Do this alone and in the association of other serious and sincere devotees. There are many very beautiful and inspiring *Nāma bhajans*. We'd like to share a few of them with you now.

Harināma, tuwā aneka svarūpa Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Gītāvalī*

*Harināma, tuwā aneka svarūpa, yaśodā-nandana,
ānanda-varadhana, nanda-tanaya rasakūpa*

O *Harināma*, You possess unlimited forms, such as Yaśodā's beloved son, He who increases the bliss of Gokula, the son of Nanda, and the deep well of *rasa*. (1)

*pūtanā-ghātana, ṭṛṇabarta-hana, śakata bhañjana gopāla,
muralī-vadana, agha-baka-mardana, govardhana-dhārī rākhāla*

You are the slayer of the Pūtanā and Ṭṛṇāvarta demons, He who breaks the cart, the protector of the cows, the player of the flute, the destroyer of the Agha and Baka demons, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, and a cowherd boy. (2)

*keśī-mardana, brahma-vimohana, surapati-darpa-vināśī,
ariṣṭa-pātana, gopī-vimohana, yāmunā-pulina-vilāśī*

You kill the Keśī demon, bewilder Brahmā and break the pride of Indra. You kill Ariṣṭāsura, enchant all the young *gopīs*, and perform playful pastimes along the banks of the Yamunā. (3)

*rādhikā-rañjana, rāsa-rasāyana, rādhā-kuṇḍa-kuñja-bihārī
rāma, kṛṣṇa, hari, mādharma, narahari, matsyādi-gaṇa-avatārī*

You delight Śrīmatī Rādhikā and bring the nectar of life to the *rasa* dance. You sport in the *kuñjas* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. You are the reservoir of pleasure, attractive to all beings. You remove inauspiciousness and are the husband of the goddess of fortune, the half-man half-lion Nṛsimhadeva, and the source of all the other incarnations, including the fish Matsya. (4)

*govinda, vāmana, śrī-madhusūdana, yādava-candra, vanamālī
kāliya-śātana, gokula-rañjana, rādhā-bhajana-sukha-śalī*

You give pleasure to the cows. You are the dwarf *brāhmaṇa* incarnation, the slayer of the Madhu demon, the moon of the Yadu dynasty. You wear beautiful garlands of fresh forest flowers, punish the Kāliya serpent, give delight to Gokula, and rejoice in the worship of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. (5)

*ityādika nāma, svarūpe prakāma, bāduka mora rati rāge,
rūpa-svarūpa-pada, jāni'nija sampada, bhaktivinoda dhorī' māge*

Understanding Your glories, Bhaktivinoda clasps the lotus feet of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and offers this prayer, “O *Harināma*, by Your sweet will You manifest in the all these forms and in many others as well. Please let my love and attachment for them ever increase.” (6)



Jaya Jaya Harināma **Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Gītāvalī**

*jaya jaya harināma, cidānandāmṛta-dhāma, para-tattva akṣar-ākāra
nija-jane krpā kori', nāma-rūpa avatarī, jīve doyā korile apāra*

All glories to the Holy Name, the storehouse of the nectar of divine bliss, who is none other than the Supreme Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To shower mercy on His devotees, He has descended in the form of sound, bestowing compassion upon all. (1)

*jaya hari kṛṣṇa-nāma, jaga-jana-suviśrāma, sarva-jana-mānasa rañjana,
muni-vṛnda nirantara, je nāmer samādara, kori gāya bhariyā vadana*

All glories to the many names of Hari and Kṛṣṇa. He is the shelter for all living entities, granting freedom from *saṁsāra* and giving unending bliss. Always singing the Holy Name very honorably, the saints experience their hairs standing on end. (2)

*ohe kṛṣṇa-nāmākṣara, tumi sarva-śakti-dhara, jīvera kalyāṇa-vitarāṇe
tomā binā bhava-sindhu, uddhārite nāhi bandhu, āsiyācho jīva-uddhāraṇe*

O eternal *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, You possess all powers and bestow auspiciousness upon the *jīva*. Coming for our deliverance, You are the sole friend to rescue us from the ocean of birth and death. (3)

*āche tāpa jīva jata, tumi saba koro hata, helāya tomāre ek-bāra
ḍāke yadi kaun jana, ho'ye dīna akiñcana, nāhi dekhi anya pratikāra*

The *jīva* is burning up in worldly miseries. But if he chants Your Name just once, feeling very meek and lowly, possessing nothing and seeing no other remedy for relief, You are unable to neglect him. You easily remove all his sorrows. (4)

*tava svalpa-sphūrti pāya, ugra-tāpa dūre jāya, līṅga-bhaṅga hoyā anāyāse
bhaktivinoda koya, jaya harināma jaya, paḍe' thāki tuwā pada-āśe*

If You manifest in the heart, then all sorts of sufferings are banished. You destroy the influence of the material body and establish one in his *svarūpa*. Bhaktivinoda says, “O *Harināma*, all glories to You. I perpetually fall at Your lotus feet.” (5)



Doyāla Nitāi Caitanya Bole **Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Gītāvalī**

*doyāla nitāi caitanya bole nāca re āmara mana
nāca re āmara mana, nāca re āmara mana*

O my mind, chant ‘*doyāla nitāi caitanya*’, and just dance! O my mind, dance! (1)

*(emon, doyāla to nāi he, māra kheyē prema deya)
(ore) aparādha hūre jābe, pābe prema-dhana
(o nāme aparādha-bicāra to nāi he)
(takhon) kṛṣṇa-nāme ruci ha'be, ghucibe bandhana*

Bestowing *prema*, such a merciful personality as Nityānanda Prabhu is not to be found anywhere. When one overcomes offenses, then *prema* can come, but Caitanya-Nitāi do not consider offenses. And once taste for *kṛṣṇa-nāma* comes, bondage to the material world ends. (2)

*(kṛṣṇa-nāme anurāga to ha'be he)
(takhon) anāyāse saphala ha'be jīvera jivana
(kṛṣṇa-rati binā jivana to miche he)
(śeṣe) vṛndāvane rādhā-śyāmera pā'be daraśana
(gaura-kṛpā hab'le he)*

When there is deep love for *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, then easily one's life becomes successful. Without attachment to Kṛṣṇa, life is simply false. But by the mercy of Gaurasundara one can obtain the vision of Rādhā-Śyāma at the end of life. (3)



Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Bol **Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Gītāvalī**

*rādhā-kṛṣṇa bol' bol bolo re sobāi
(ei) śikhā diyā, sab nadiyā phirche nece' gaura-nitāi
(miche) māyār bośe, jāccho bhese, khāccho hābudubu, bhāi*

Everyone, chant, chant, chant ‘Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu are dancing, roaming throughout Navadvīpa and instructing all.

“O brothers! Take this Holy Name of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. You have uselessly come under the control of *māyā*, sometimes floating and sometimes drowning in the ocean of material happiness and distress. (1)

(jīva) kṛṣṇa-dāsa, e viśvāsa, korle to' ār duḥkho nāi
(kṛṣṇa) bolbe jabe, pulaka ha'be jhorbe ānkhi, boli tāi

But if you can realize just one time that “I am the servant of Kṛṣṇa,” no more miseries will come. Then if you utter *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, your body will shiver in ecstasy and tears will flow from your eyes. (2)

(rādhā) kṛṣṇa bolo, saṅge calo, ei-mātra bhikṣā cāi
(jaya) sakala bipod bhaktivinoda bolena, jakhon o-nāma gāi

Bhaktivinoda says. “O brother! I beg you to chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma* with the Vaiṣṇavas. In an instant all dangers will fly far away.” (3)



Kabe Ha'be Bolo **Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śaraṇāgati**

kabe ha'be bolo se-dina āmār
(āmār) aparādha ghuci', śuddha nāme ruci,
kṛpā-bale ha'be hrdoye sañcār

Please tell me, when will that day be mine? When will my offenses end and a taste for purely chanting the Holy Name be infused within my heart by the power of divine grace? (1)

trṇādhika hīna, kabe nije māni',
sahiṣṇutā-guṇa hrdoyete āni'
sakale mānada, āpani amāni,
ho'ye āswādibo nāma-rasa-sār

Considering myself lower than a blade of grass, bringing the quality of forbearance into my heart, showing respect to all, myself being freed from all false pride — when will I taste the essence of the nectar of the Holy Name? (2)

dhana jana āra, kobitā-sundari,
bolibo nā cāhi deho-sukha-kari
janme-janme dāo, ohe gaurahari!
ahaitukī bhakti caraṇe tomār

Wealth, following, beautiful women, as described in worldly poetry — I do not want any such bodily pleasures. O Lord Gaurahari, please give me unmotivated devotion to Your lotus feet, birth after birth. (3)

*(kabe) korite śrī-kṛṣṇa- nāma uccāraṇa,
pulakita deho gadgada bacana
baibarṇya-bepathu ha'be saṅghaṭana,
nirantara netre ba'be āsru-dhār*

When, while articulating the divine name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, will my body be thrilled in ecstatic rapture and my words be choked with emotion. When will palor and ecstatic trembling occur, and when will streams of tears flow constantly from my eyes? (4)

*kabe navadvīpe, suradhunī-taṭe,
gaura-nityānanda boli' niṣkapate
nāciyā gāiyā, berāibo chuṭe,
bātulera prāya chāriyā bicār*

When, in the land of Navadvīpa, on the banks of the Ganges, will I run about guilelessly calling, “O Gaura! O Nityānanda!” dancing and singing like a madman, giving up all external considerations? (5)

*kabe nityānanda, more kori' doyā,
chārāibe mora viṣayera māyā
diyā more nija- caraṇera chāyā,
nāmera hāṭete dibe adhikār*

When will Lord Nityānanda be merciful to me and release me from the illusion of worldliness? Giving me the shade of His lotus feet, when will He allow me to enter the marketplace of the Holy Name? (6)

*kinibo, luṭibo, hari-nāma-rasa,
nāma-rase māti' hoibo bibaśa
rasera rasika- caraṇa paraśa,
koriyā mojibo rasa anibār*

I shall buy and plunder the mellows of the name of Hari, and becoming thoroughly intoxicated by those mellows of the Holy Name, I shall become stunned. By touching the feet of those great souls who are able to relish those mellows, I will be constantly immersed in the sweet nectar of the Holy Name. (7)

*kabe jībe doyā, hoibe udoya,
nija-sukha bhuli' sudīna-hṛdoya
bhaktivinoda, koriyā binoya,
śrī-ājña-ṭahala koribe pracār*

When will there be an awakening of compassion for all fallen souls, and when will this Bhaktivinoda, forgetting his own happiness, with a meek heart set out to propagate by humble entreaty the sacred order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu? (8)



Tomāre Bhuliyā
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śaraṇāgati

hari he!
tomāre bhuliyā, avidyā-pīḍāya,
pīḍita rasanā mora
kṛṣṇa-nāma-sudhā, bhālo nāhi lāge,
viṣaya-sukhate bhora

O my Lord Hari! Because of forgetting You, my tongue has become embittered with the disease of ignorance. I cannot relish the sweet nectar of Your Holy Name, for I have become addicted to the taste of worldly pleasures. (1)

prati-dina jadi, ādara koriyā,
se nāma kīrtana kori
sitapala jeno, nāśi' roga-mūla,
krame swādu hoyā, hari!

If I sing that Holy Name of Yours aloud every day with warm affection, then as sugar candy taken medicinally destroys the very disease which makes it taste bitter (jaundice), so Your Holy Name, O Lord Hari, will cure my spiritual disease and allow me to gradually taste Your sweetness. (2)

durdaiva āmāra, se nāme ādara,
nā hoilo, doyāmoya!
daśa aparādha, āmāra durdaiva,
kemone hoibe kṣoya

How great is my misfortune that I feel no appreciation for Your Holy Name, O merciful Lord! In such a lamentable state, how will I be freed from committing the ten offenses to the Holy Name? (3)

anudina jeno, tava nāma gāi,
kramete kṛpāya tava
aparādha jā'be, nāme ruci ha'be,
āswādibo nāmāsava

If I sing Your name every day, then gradually by Your mercy the ten offenses will disappear, taste for Your Holy Name will grow within me, and then I shall relish the intoxicating nectar of that name. (4)



Bhojana-lālase rasane āmāra

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Gītāvalī*

*bhojana-lālase rasane āmāra,
śunaha vidhāna mora
śrī-nāma-yugala rāga-sudhā-rasa,
khāiyā thākaha bhora*

O my tongue! You are very greedy to relish palatable food. Now please hear my advice to you. Always remain deeply absorbed in drinking the nectarean sweetness of the transcendental names of the divine young couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. (1)

*nava-sundara piyūṣa rādhikā-nāma
ati-miṣṭa manohara tarpana-dhāma*

The name of Rādhā is ever-fresh, beautiful, very sweet and enchanting. It is the abode of full satisfaction. (2)

*kṛṣṇa-nāma madhurādbhuta gādha dugdhe
atīva yatane kara miśrita lubdhe*

With great care and affection you should blend the name of Śrī Rādhā with an extraordinarily sweet nectarean milk; the Holy Name Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (3)

*surabhi rāga hima ramya tañhi āni
aharaha pāna karaha sukha jāni'*

Now, please add the fragrance of transcendental attachment, which is cooling and delightful, into that mixture. Drink this nectar day and night, to experience actual happiness. (4)

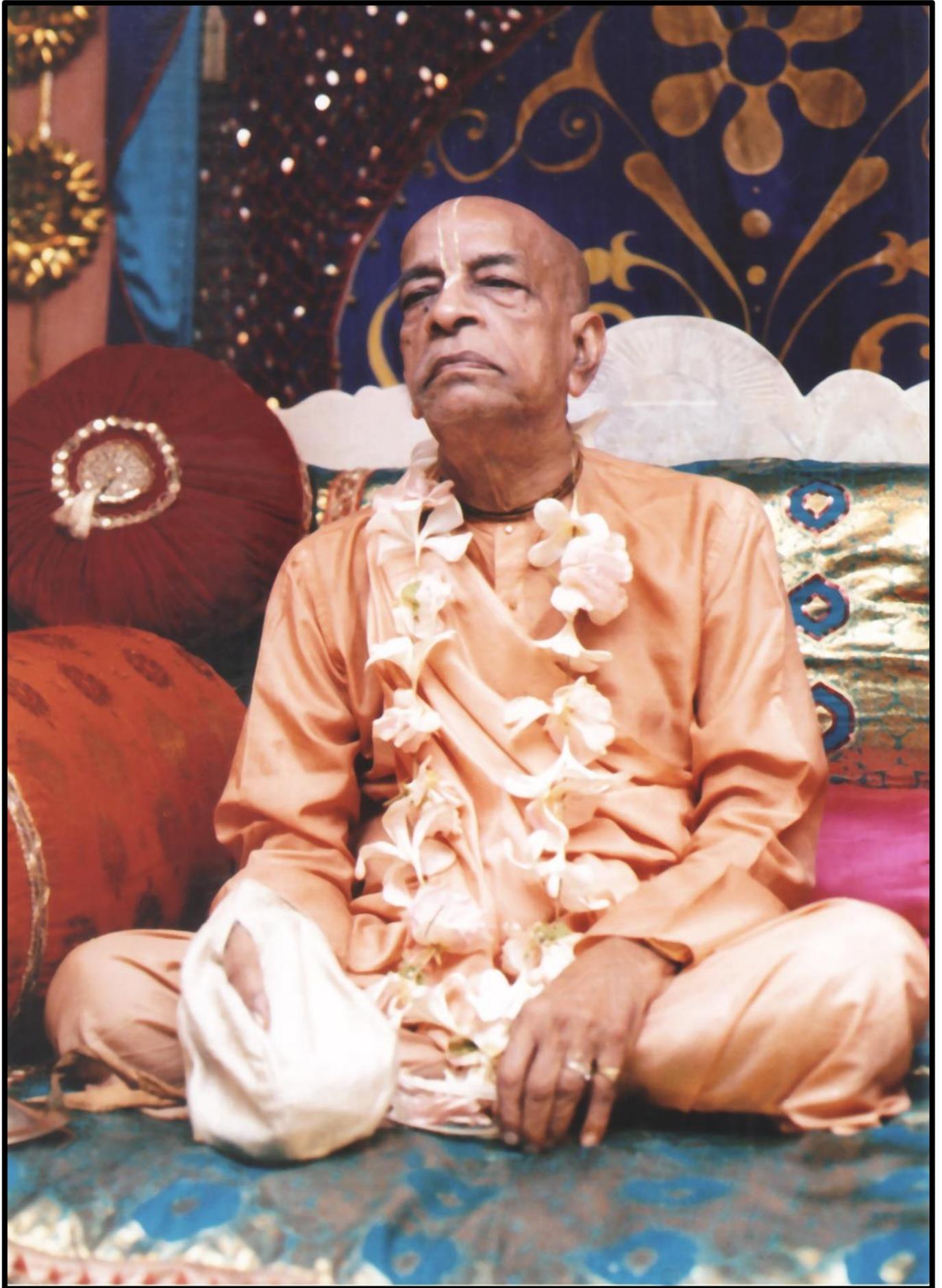
*nāhi rabe rasane prākṛta pipāsā
adbhuta rasa tuwā pūrāoba āśā*

If you do this, you will no longer have any thirst for material enjoyment because the wonderful transcendental taste of ecstatic love will fulfill all your desires. (5)

*dāsa-raghunātha-pade bhaktivinoda
yāca-i rādhā-kṛṣṇa-nāma pramoda*

Falling at the lotus feet of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura begs to become fully absorbed in ecstasy while chanting the Holy Names of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. (6)





6th Offense: To give some interpretation of the Holy Name.

Rectification and Defense: Like the fifth offense, this offense is born of ignorance and prejudice. And so the rectification and defense system is also the same.



7th Offense: To commit sinful activity on the strength of the Holy Name.

Rectification: Here we are not talking about an accidental falldown. We are talking about premeditated, intentional sinning on the strength of the Holy Name. This is a very heavy offense and indicates a very low, cheating mentality. The only hope of rectification lies in the association and mercy of advanced Vaiṣṇavas.

Defense (1) A very beautiful and powerful defense is given by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. He says,

“Even if by some error you should commit this offense, you can still be purified by remaining in the company of pure Vaiṣṇavas.

The temptation to commit sin is like a highway robber, always ready to pounce; but the Vaiṣṇavas are like bodyguards who protect the traveller.

As soon as you call out aloud, appealing to your guardians by name, the highwaymen flee, fearing the imminent arrival of the police.

The Vaiṣṇavas will reassure you saying, “Brother! Sister! Have no fear, I am here to protect you. Have confidence in me.”

— HNC 9.49-52

Defense (2): Develop an honest and deep sense of humility by reading, contemplating and singing Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Śaraṇāgati*. We’ll share two of these *bhajans* with you to give an insight into their very powerful and transformational beauty. These are song (4) and (5) from the *Dainya* (humility) section.

Song (4)

*āmāra jīvana, sadā pāpe rata,
nāhiko puṇyera lesa
parere udvega, diyāchi je koto,
diyāchi jīvere kleśa*

My life is ever given to sin, in it there is not a particle of good. I have caused others great anxiety, and have troubled all souls. (1)

*nija sukha lāgi, pāpe nāhi ḍori,
doyā-hīna swārtha-paro
para-sukhe duḥkhī, sadā mithya-bhāṣī,
para-duḥkha sukha-karo*

For the sake of my own enjoyment I have never hesitated to perform sinful acts. Devoid of all compassion, I am concerned only with my selfish interests. Perpetually speaking lies, I become dejected upon seeing others happy, whereas the misery of others is a source of great delight for me. (2)

*aśeṣa kāmanā, hr̥ki mājhe mora,
krodhī, dambha-parāyaṇa
mada-matta sadā, viṣaye mohita,
himsā-garva vibhūṣaṇa*

There are limitless material desires within the core of my heart. I am wrathful, fond of exhibiting arrogance, intoxicated by vanity, and bewildered by worldly affairs. I wear the cherished ornaments of envy and egotism. (3)

*nidraālasya hata, sukārye virata,
akārye udogī āmi
pratiṣṭha lāgiyā, śāthya-ācaraṇa,
lobha-hata sadā kāmī*

Ruined by laziness and sleep, I resist all pious deeds, yet am very enthusiastic to perform wicked acts. For the sake of worldly fame and reputation I engage in the practice of deceitfulness. I am victimized by my own greed, being always lustful. (4)

*e heno durjana, saj-jana-varjita,
aparādhi nirantara
śubha-kārya-śūnya, sadānartha-manāh,
nana duḥkhe jara jara*

A vile and wicked man such as this, rejected by godly people, is a constant offender. Devoid of all good works, forever inclined toward evil, he is worn out and wasted by various miseries. (5)

*bārdhake ekhona, upāya-vihīna,
tā'te dīna akiñcana
bhaktivinoda, prabhura caraṇe,
kore duḥkha nivedana*

Now in old age, deprived of all means of relief, and thus humbled and poor, Bhaktivinoda submits his tale of grief at the feet of the Supreme Lord. (6)



Song (5)

*(prabhu he!) śuno mor duḥkher kāhinī
viṣaya-halāhala, sudhā-bhāne piyaluri,
āb avasāna dinamāṇi*

Lord! Please hear the story of my sadness. I drank the deadly poison of worldliness, pretending it was nectar, and now the sun is setting on the horizon of my life. (1)

*khelā-rase śaiśava, podhaite kaiśora,
gowāoluri, nā bhelo vivek
bhoga-baśe yauvane, ghara pāti' bosiluri,
suta-mita bāḍhalo anek*

I spent my childhood in play, my youth in academic pursuit, and in me there arose no sense of discrimination. In young manhood I set up a household and settled down to the spell of material enjoyment while my children and friends quickly multiplied. (2)

*vṛddha-kāla ālo, saba sukha bhāgalo,
pīdā-baśe hoinu katar
sarvendriya durbala, kṣīna kalevara,
bhogāghāve duḥkhita antar*

Old age soon arrived, and all joys consequently departed. Subjected to the torments of disease, I am troubled and weak. All my senses are feeble now, my body is racked and exhausted, and my spirits are downcast in the absence of former sense pleasures. (3)

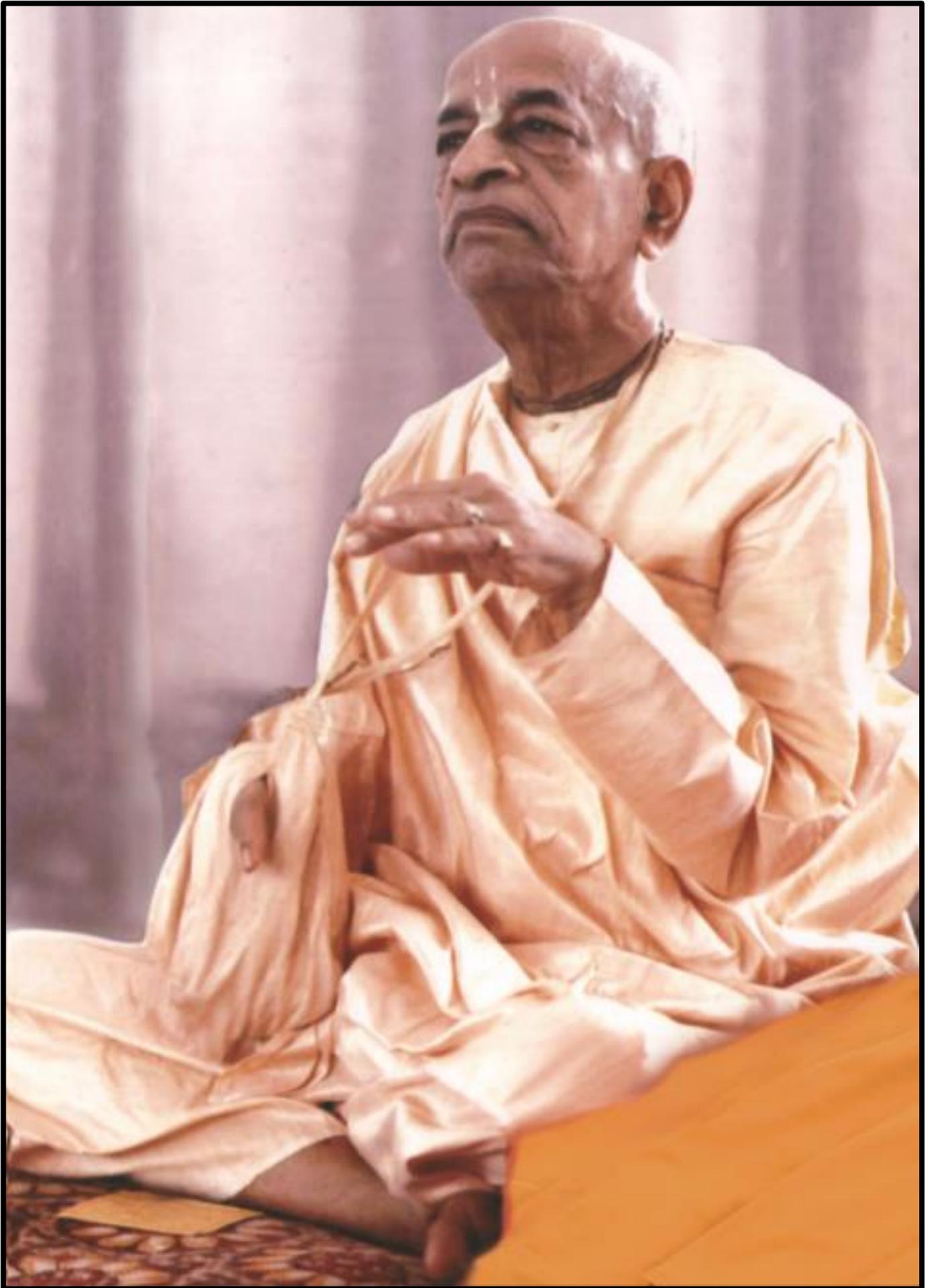
*jñāna-lava-ḥīna, bhakti-rase vañchita,
āra mora ki have upāy
patita-bandu, tuhuri, patitādhama hāma,
kṛpāya uṭhāo tava pāy*

Devoid of even a particle of enlightenment, cheated of the mellows of devotion – what help is there for me now? O Lord, You are the friend of the fallen. I am certainly fallen, the lowest of men. Please, therefore, in Your mercy lift me to Your lotus feet. (4)

*vicārite ābahi, guna nāhi pāobi,
kṛpā koro, choḍato vicar
tava pada-paṅkaja- sīdhu pibāto,
bhaktivinoda karo pār*

Were You to judge me now, You would find no good qualities. Have mercy and judge me not. Cause me to drink the honey of Your lotus feet and thereby deliver this Bhaktivinoda. (5)





8th Offense: To consider chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa an auspicious Vedic activity, i.e. *karma-kāṇḍa* mentality.

Rectification: The Holy Name is Śrī Nandanandana Himself. The chanting of the Holy Name is both the means to perfection and the goal. It can never be equated with acts of mundane piety or religiosity. To think that way indicates a lack of knowledge and understanding of *Nāma-tattva*. Obviously, the remedy is association with advanced devotees of the Holy Name. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that this offense is born of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha* and the rectification he gives poses a real challenge to our false ego. He says,

He should approach a lower caste householder who is very dedicated to the Name, take the dust of his feet, and smear it over his body. He should eat the remnants of his food and drink water that has washed his feet, then his mind will be sanctified and able to chant the Pure Name. Kālidāsa released himself from his past offenses in this way and then attained Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's direct blessings. All the world sings this truth.

— HNC 11.49-51

Defense: Discreetly honor the remnants of Vaiṣṇavas, and the dust and *caraṇāmṛta* from their lotus feet, whenever and wherever possible. The potency and result of doing this is very clearly explained in *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*. Honoring the remnants of the food of Vaiṣṇavas is so valuable that it induced Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to offer Kālidāsa His supreme mercy. Therefore, giving up hatred and hesitation, try to honor the remnants of the food of Vaiṣṇavas, for you will thus be able to achieve your desired goal of life.

The remnants of food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa are called *mahā-prasādam*. After this same *mahā-prasādam* has been taken by a devotee, the remnants are elevated to *mahā-mahā-prasādam*.

The dust of the feet of a devotee, the water that has washed the feet of a devotee, and the remnants of food left by a devotee are three very powerful substances. By rendering service to these three, one attains the supreme goal of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa. In all the revealed scriptures this is loudly declared again and again. Therefore, my dear devotees, please hear from me, for I insist again and again: please keep faith in these three and render service to them without hesitation. From these three one achieves the highest goal of life, ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa. This is the greatest mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The evidence is Kālidāsa himself.

— CC Antya 16.57-63



9th Offense: To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the Holy Name.

Rectification: Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that here we are primarily concerned with the guru who gives *Nāma-dikṣā* to faithless followers. This is highly detrimental for the guru, the disciple and the *sampradāya*. The rectification is for the guru to first instil faith and then initiate. There should be vigilance in this regard.

Defense: Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura recommends loud widespread *Harināma* as the appropriate defense. He says,

Instruct only the faithful person in the chanting of the Holy Name, but fill every land with the glorification of the Holy Name. Propagate faith in the Holy Name by loudly singing His glories. When the jīvas get such faith, they will be able to recognize a bonafide guru and will take initiation in the Holy Name from him. Then they will easily obtain love of Godhead, kṛṣṇa-prema. With thieves, prostitutes, cheaters, and other sinful people you should first implant faith in their hearts and encourage them to give up their sinful ways. When they have obtained such firm faith, they can be given initiation; You can only save the world if you distribute the Name in this way.

— HNC 10.23-27



10th Offense: To not have complete faith in the chanting of the Holy Name and to maintain material attachments, even after hearing so many instructions on the matter.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura tells us that this is the worst offense to the Holy Name because preoccupation with the temporary gives absolutely no chance for Kṛṣṇa *prema* to gradually develop. Rather it gives rise to inattention while chanting, which is the root cause of all other *Nāma-aparādhas*.

Rectification and Defense:

- 1) Associate with devotees who are attached to the Holy Name.
- 2) Cultivate the six-fold process of surrender in the association of advanced devotees.

Inattention: It is also an offense to chant inattentively. In fact, all other offenses are born of this offense.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura tells us,

*“Some people give up all the offenses and chant constantly, but still do not experience the awakening of prema. When I see this, I know that the offense of inattentiveness is interfering with their attainment of prema bhakti. The root meaning of **pramāda** is inattentiveness; from it arise all the other anarthas. The wise should know that there are three kinds of inattention: Indifference (**audāsīnya**), lethargy (**jāḍya**) and distractedness (**vikṣepa**). One who by some good fortune develops faith takes up chanting the Holy Name. One who carefully chants the fixed number of Holy Names while meditating will quickly develop an enthusiasm for chanting. As long as one does not have such an enthusiasm, one should take care to attentively chant the Holy Name regularly.*

One who is careless cannot fix his mind. All people are conditioned to be attached to sense objects, so when meditating on the Holy Name, their minds flit from one object to another. When one’s taste is for something else, one becomes indifferent to the Holy Name. Thus even though he chants every day, his mind is not absorbed in the Name of Hari. The mind goes off in one direction, while the Name is in another. How then can

he benefit, O most virtuous Lord? He completes chanting a lakh of Names on his japa mālā, but he does not get even a drop of ecstatic taste for the Holy Name. This is the result of inattentiveness while chanting, O Lord. This flaw is difficult to eradicate from hearts attached to sense objects.”

— HNC 12.4-15

Let's take a close look at this offense and how we can best deal with it.



PRAMĀDA

**It is also an offense to chant inattentively.
In fact, all other offenses are born of this offense.**

Inattentiveness and negligence are synonymous. Negligent chanting sows the seeds of *anarthas*, which soon fructify. *Pramāda*, or inattentiveness, is of three kinds — *audāsīnya*, *jādyā* and *vikṣepa*. *Vikṣepa* is the most dangerous, for as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains, “Distraction in chanting produces a type of illusion, causing serious offenses against the Holy Name that are very difficult to overcome. This illusion leads to craving for wealth, the opposite sex, position, success and even cheating. When these attractions cover the heart, the offender loses interest in chanting the Holy Name”.

—Śrī *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Ch. 12.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also explains that “If one hears and chants without trying to give up offenses, one becomes materially attached to sense gratification.”

— CC Madhya 9.160p

— *audāsīnya* —

Apathy, indifference, no fixed resolve in *bhajana*.

Defense:

1. Chant in association of saintly devotees, imbibe their mood.
2. Associating with such devotees, take up their discipline.
3. Chant with Tulasī Devī or at the pastime places of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.
4. Hear the glories of *Nāma* and His devotees regularly.
5. Perform as much *Nāma saṅkīrtana* as possible.

— *jadya* —

Laziness in chanting; interrupting it to do something else, or to take rest.

Defense:

1. Associate with devotees who don't waste time engaging in useless talk or activity.
2. Observe them carefully and try to follow their example.
3. Hear the glories of *Nāma* and His devotees regularly.
4. Perform as much *Nāma saṅkīrtana* as possible.

— *vikṣepa* —

Distraction, misplaced attention of mind.

Defense:

1. Regularly check you are chanting sincerely.
2. Concentrate on the quality of your chanting and pronounce the *mantra* clearly.
3. Make a constant effort to fix the mind on hearing *Nāma*.
4. Try to absorb yourself in more chanting on *Ekādaśī*, appearance days etc.
5. Regularly spend some time alone in a quiet place trying to concentrate deeply on your chanting.
6. Take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and sometimes chant with his *japa* tape.
7. Perform as much *Nāma saṅkīrtana* as possible.
8. Beg the Holy Name for His mercy with genuine humility.

The Mentality Needed to Overcome Inattentive Chanting

I always take care not to neglect completing the number of Names to be chanted according to my vow. I see to this regularly, again and again.

*I chant the Holy Names with great attention;
free from the offense of inattentiveness, I engage in bhajana.*

Giving up the ambition to simply increase my numbers, I always chant the Holy Name in the awareness that I do so by Your mercy.

Please be merciful to me, O Lord, so that the offense of inattention in chanting never blocks my ability to relish the rasa of the Holy Name.

*I should spend a little time alone in a quiet place
and practice concentrating deeply on the Holy Name.*

O Mahāprabhu, I pray constantly at Your lotus feet to be able to always utter each Name distinctly and to experience emotion while meditating on them.

*Simply by one's own effort, no one in this material world can overcome inattention.
Such a victory can only come by Your merciful blessings.*

*I take great care to beg for Your mercy, my heart overcome with emotion.
I know that You are all-merciful and will always be generous with Your blessings.*

***If I make no effort to attain Your mercy,
O Śacīnandana, then I will remain forever unfortunate.***

— HNC 12.43-51

What Are the Characteristics of a Chanter Free from *Nāma-aparādha*?

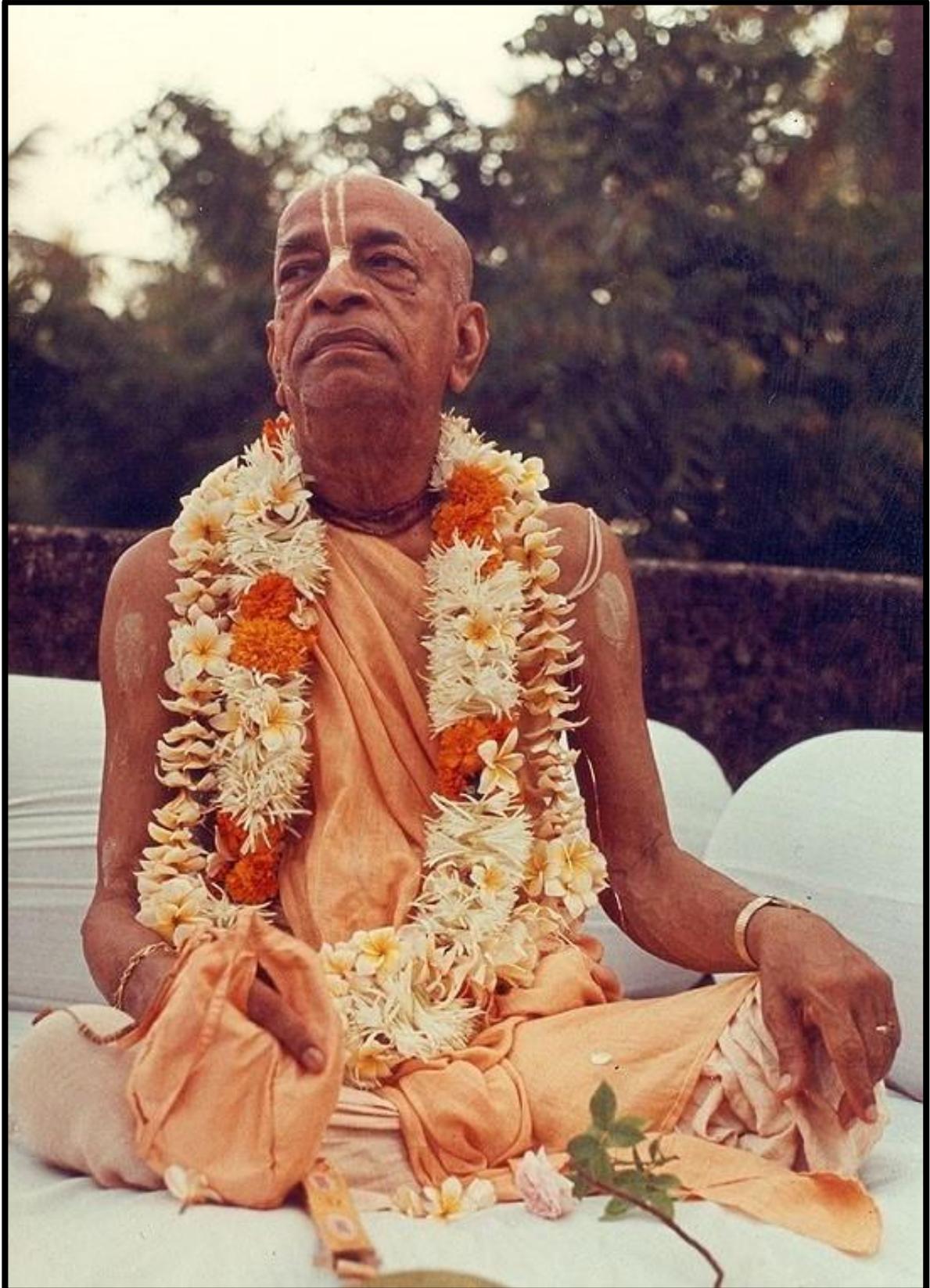
*One who diligently gives up all blasphemy of Vaiṣṇava sādhus,
who adopts the pure understanding that Viṣṇu is the Supreme Truth,
who accepts the guru and scriptures that promote the Holy Name as topmost,
who believes in his heart that the Holy Name is completely pure and spiritual,
who attentively discards all sinful motivation, the seed of sin,
who preaches the pure Holy Names only to those who possess faith,
who entirely gives up all ritualistic pious activities,
who meditates on the Holy Name without being distracted, taking full shelter...
He is the most fortunate soul in the three worlds, the most blessed,
the reservoir of all virtue and most worthy of receiving Kṛṣṇa's mercy.
By chanting in this way, such a devotee experiences the awakening of bhāva for Kṛṣṇa
which leads to prema, all in a very short time.*

When Kṛṣṇa wishes, such a devotee quickly transcends any semblance of being merely on the stage of spiritual practice.

Passing the stage of bhāva, one attains the stage of prema at which point one attains the highest perfection, according to all the scriptures.

O Lord, You Yourself have stated that anyone who chants without offenses is a great personality who attains the treasure of love for Kṛṣṇa.

— HNC 13.38-46



Let's Rise Above

Aniṣṭhitā Nāma-bhajana

(A checklist based on Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's "*Bhajana-rahasya*",
Dvitiya-yāma-sādhana)

1. Remember how powerful Nāma is and how merciful He is. Pray to Him about improving your chanting.
2. **Regularly remind yourself that your misfortune of having no taste for chanting is the result of your offenses.**
3. Be aware of the four categories of *anarthas* that are blocking your advancement in chanting. (Please refer to following page.)
4. Remind yourself that all these can be destroyed by Nāma's mercy, and sincerely pray to Him.
5. Consciously work on making your circumstances more favourable for chanting, and practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness in general.
6. Carefully avoid the six thorns on the devotional path. (See *Upadeśāmṛta* 2)
7. Give up non-devotee association and associate with sincere and serious devotees. (See *Upadeśāmṛta* 4)
8. Carefully avoid blaspheming devotees.
9. Rid yourself of desire for prestige and any tendency to manipulate or deceive others. Especially beware of hypocrisy.
10. Endeavor sincerely and seriously to give up the ten *nāma-aparādhas*.
11. Give up false renunciation. Develop honest *yukta-vairāgya*.
12. Give up unnecessary religious activity/ritual, especially demigod worship.
13. Give up excessive attachment to rules and regulations and be more conscious of the essential rule: Always remember Kṛṣṇa, never forget Him.
14. Develop your understanding of *sambandha*, *abhideya*, and *prayojana*.
15. Develop your understanding of *nāma-tattva*.
16. Carefully and consciously develop the six qualities favourable to devotional service. (See *Upadeśāmṛta* 3)
17. Strive for genuine devotional association, and be very careful about the company you keep.
18. Always deal with devotees appropriately.
19. Maintain yourself without over-endeavor or attachment.
20. Follow the *mahājanas*. (Śrīla Prabhupāda and the disciplic succession)
21. Be committed to the chanting of the Holy Name in the mood of being His servant.

*daśa aparādha yena hṛdaye nā paśe
krpa kara mahāprabhu maji nāma rase*

O Mahāprabhu, please be merciful to me so that the 10 offenses never touch my heart, and I can always remain absorbed in the *rasa* of the Holy Name.

—Harināma Cintāmaṇi 13.59
Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Let's Stay Above

Aniṣṭhitā Nāma-bhajana

(A checklist based on Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's "*Bhajana-rahasya*",
Tritīya-yāma-sādhanā)

1. Remember that the behavior of a devotee who is qualified to steadily chant Nāma is given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Śikṣāṣṭakam* 3. Consciously and honestly develop such a mindset and behavior.
2. Contemplate and consciously practice the sixfold process of surrender.
3. Consciously work on giving up bodily identification and developing your actual identity. (e.g. Learn and chant CC Ādi 6.86)
4. Become tolerant.
5. Be respectful to others, especially devotees.
6. Be humble.
7. Don't seek honor for yourself.
8. Be eager about your *bhajana*. You can't buy back time.
9. Always be dependent on Kṛṣṇa's mercy, and seriously and sincerely pray for it.

The Four Clouds of Anarthas Prohibiting the Heart from Purely Chanting the Holy Name

4 Weaknesses of Heart

(hṛdaya - daurbalya)

- * Attachment to things not related to Kṛṣṇa;
- * Propensity to cheat and find fault;
- * Envy;
- * Desire for recognition.

4 Kinds of Illusion

(tattva - vibhrama)

- * about one's own identity;
- * about position of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead,
- * about the process and goal of *bhakti*;
- * about what opposes devotional progress.

4 Types of Offense

- * Nāma - aparādha (10);
- * Seva - aparādha (32-50);
- * Vaiṣṇava - aparādha (6);
- * Jiva - aparādha.

4 Thirsts for the Impermanent

(asat - tṛṣṇā)

- * for worldly pleasures
- * for heavenly pleasures
- * for mystic powers
- * for liberation

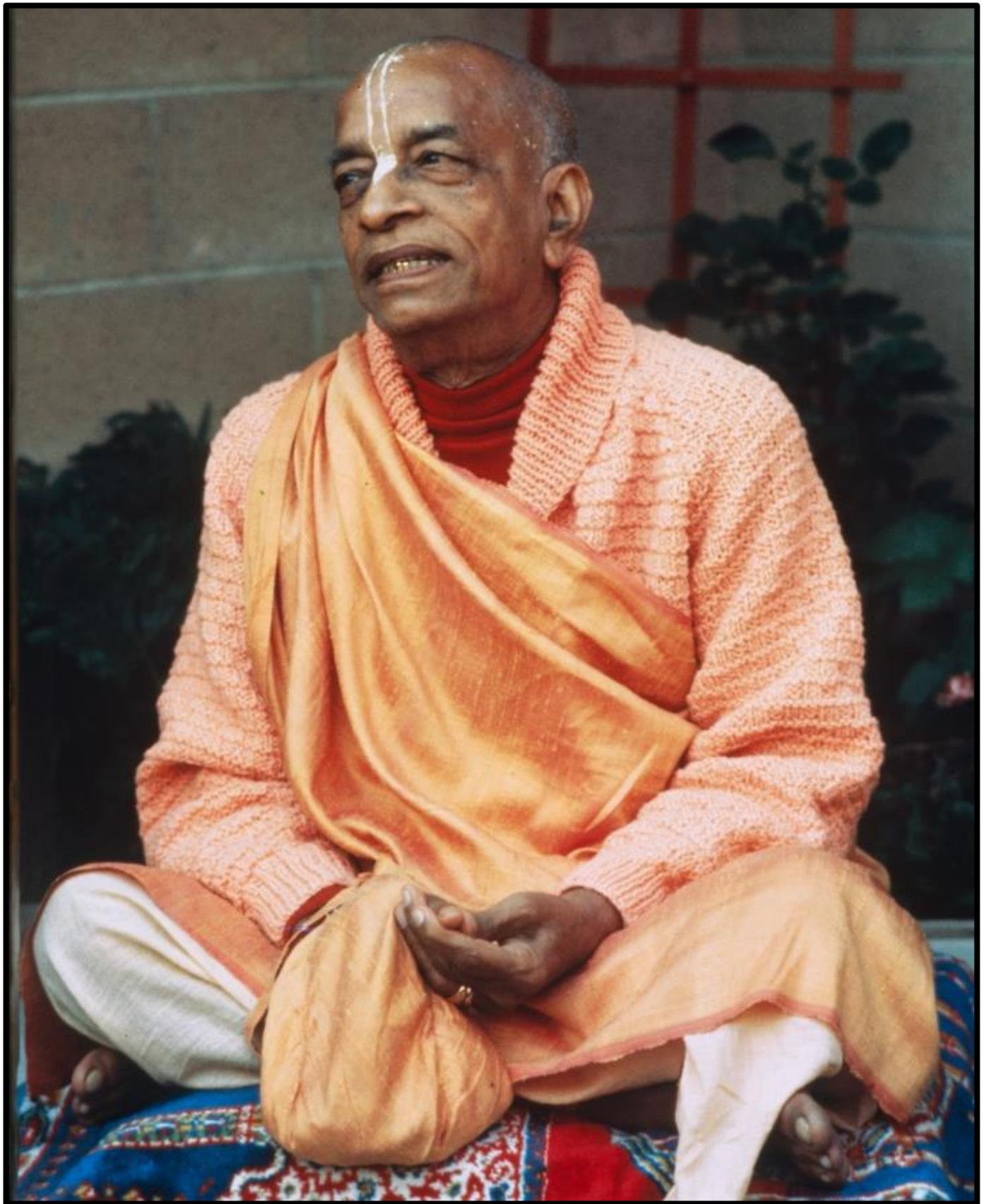
OH HARINĀMA, YOU ARE EVERYTHING!

— Please Bless Me with Attraction for You —

*na nāma-saḍṛśaṁ jñānaṁ na nāma-saḍṛśaṁ vratam
na nāma saḍṛśaṁ dhyānaṁ na nāma saḍṛśaṁ phalam
na nāma saḍṛśas tyago na nāma saḍṛśaḥ śamaḥ
na nāma saḍṛśaṁ punyaṁ na nāma saḍṛśī gatiḥ
nāmaiva paramā muktir nāmaiva paramā gatiḥ
nāmaiva paramā śāntir nāmaiva paramā sthitiḥ
nāmaiva paramā bhaktir nāmaiva paramā matiḥ
nāmaiva paramā prītir nāmaiva paramā smṛtiḥ
nāmaiva kāraṇaṁ jantor nāmaiva prabhur eva ca
nāmaiva paramārādhyāṁ nāmaiva paramo guru*

There is no knowledge, *vrata*, meditation, fruit, renunciation, sense control, pious act, or goal as great as that of *Nāma*. *Nāma* is the supreme liberation. *Nāma* alone is the supreme destination. *Nāma* is the supreme peace. *Nāma* is the supreme auspicious situation. *Nāma* is supreme devotion. *Nāma* is supreme intelligence. *Nāma* is supreme love and *Nāma* is the supreme remembrance. *Nāma* is the soul's reason for existence. *Nāma* is the Lord of the soul. *Nāma* is the most worshipable object. *Nāma* is the supreme *guru*.

— *Agni Purāṇa*, quoted in BVT's *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*,
Sixth Rainfall, Third Shower.



Creating a Favorable Culture for Offenselessly Chanting the Holy Name

The main obstacle to entering into Nāma's all-merciful, powerful, and very loving association is that we chant without taste. Our chanting has no life. Unfortunately, a primary symptom of such chanting is that we chant inattentively. We are not focused on Nāma because we have no attraction for Him, and so the mind is distracted by so many other things. And that means we are not watering the *bhakti-latā*, but instead the weeds that will choke our devotional creeper. One may well ask, "Isn't it better not to chant than to chant inattentively?" But perhaps a better question would be, "What do you do about inattentive chanting?" Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives a number of answers, but the main thing he says is, "Perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. It is the best cure." The reason is that not only do you have wonderful Vaiṣṇavas around you who are supporting your attempt to hear and chant, but *nāma-saṅkīrtana* builds faith in the heart. The main reason we can't chant Nāma with attention is because we don't really have faith in Him, and so we give Him a back seat in our lives. When faith in Nāma grows stronger through the association of others in *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, then our individual *nāma-bhajana* also becomes so much more focused and dynamic.

It is important to understand that how you live your life obviously has a lot to do with how successfully you will be able to enter the world of Nāma. What do you do before you take rest? What is your state of consciousness? If you are in the habit of being more introspective and more prayerful before you take rest, singing *bhajans*, *aṣṭakas*, and so on, then your consciousness will be on a higher level when you rise in the morning. And if the first thing you do upon rising is beg for the mercy of Śrī Guru, the *ācāryas*, and the Vaiṣṇavas and sing the glories of Nāma, you will easily be able to enter your *bhajana* in the mood of a humble, enthusiastic servant. Otherwise, one generally has to deal with the mood of the mind, which is so dry and frustrating.

We want to deal with the feelings of the transcendental soul, of our real heart. And that's a whole different realm. We can only do that by entering into Nāma's realm on His terms, which means, "I am your servant, I want to reestablish my loving relationship with You." But not just Kṛṣṇa's servant, also the servant of His servants. Meditation upon the fifth verse of *Śikṣāṣṭaka* makes that clear. Śrī Caitanya prays to become a speck of dust at the Lord's lotus feet, and there are so many realized *nāma-bhaktas* already at His feet. Actually, that is where we belong — in their association at His feet. It's not so easy to find an offenseless pure hearted *nāma bhakta*, but our begging to the Holy Name should be for association with such souls who are dedicated to Nāma. It is not just a matter of engaging the ear, tongue, or the mind. The heart also has to be involved in the process of *bhajana*. If the attitude is right, and the heart is yearning, then a pure greed born of intense desire will certainly fulfil our spiritual desires, by Nāma's grace.

It is so important to have strong faith in the Holy Name. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes why in a nutshell: **"There are only two things of substance in this world; the *jīva* and the Holy Name. Nothing else."** Everything is an expansion of Nāma and His

potencies. Nothing exists outside of Nāma — not even us! If we have firm faith in this, entering into Nāma’s world as His humble servants won’t be such a big problem.

A most essential thing to realize if we want to enter deeply into *nāma-bhajana* is that Nāma is a person with deep emotions. And the realm of Nāma can only be entered through purity and depth of heart. In the first verse of *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, Mahāprabhu shows us how to achieve such purity; simply through the offenseless chanting of the Holy Name. When that verse talks of chanting, however, it is naturally also talking about carefully hearing the Holy Name.

It is important to remember that we have no potency to clean the heart ourselves. We are completely dependent on Nāma to clean it. We thus have to become cooperative servants of the Holy Name. The first qualification of a good servant is to be a good listener; to listen to what the master wants. By absorbing ourselves in the sound vibration of the Holy Name, Nāma will enter the heart and do His work. *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. So this is the most essential thing, the first point. When we talk about *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam*, **śravaṇam** is the essence. But it must be done with a genuine yearning of the heart. In other words, we have to deeply aspire to listen to what our master wants, to what He is saying. Nāma is speaking. He has something to say. What is He saying? Listen carefully. Then our chanting will be attentive. It will be dynamic and alive.

We also have to understand clearly that Nāma, according to the second verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, means Nāma and all His potencies. “All potencies” doesn’t just mean spiritual potencies. So when we chant Nāma, if we listen carefully to Him, we are connecting with the internal realm. If when we chant, we listen to the mind, then we are connecting with the material potencies. And naturally we will get the corresponding result. This is one of the essential things we have to remember if we really want to achieve Nāma’s shelter. If we want to connect with Him in the internal realm, we have to enter into our chanting as His servants, not as the mind’s servants. The mind’s service will simply entangle us — not so satisfying, not so pleasant. **A very practical way to help loosen the mind’s hold on us is to always remember that one who has a taste for issues has no taste for Nāma, and one who has a taste for Nāma has no taste for issues.**

So I have shared a few thoughts I feel are essential to understand and remember if we really want to enter into the realm of *nāma-bhajana*. But what is the heart of all this? What is the essence of the essence? In conclusion, this is what I would now like to share:

Never underestimate the mercy of Patita-pāvana Gaura (who is the savior of the fallen) and Adoṣa darśī Nitāi (who does not see your faults). Accept Their Lotus Feet as your life and soul, and They will keep your heart and *bhajana* in line, and everything both spiritual and material will work out just fine.

Concluding Words

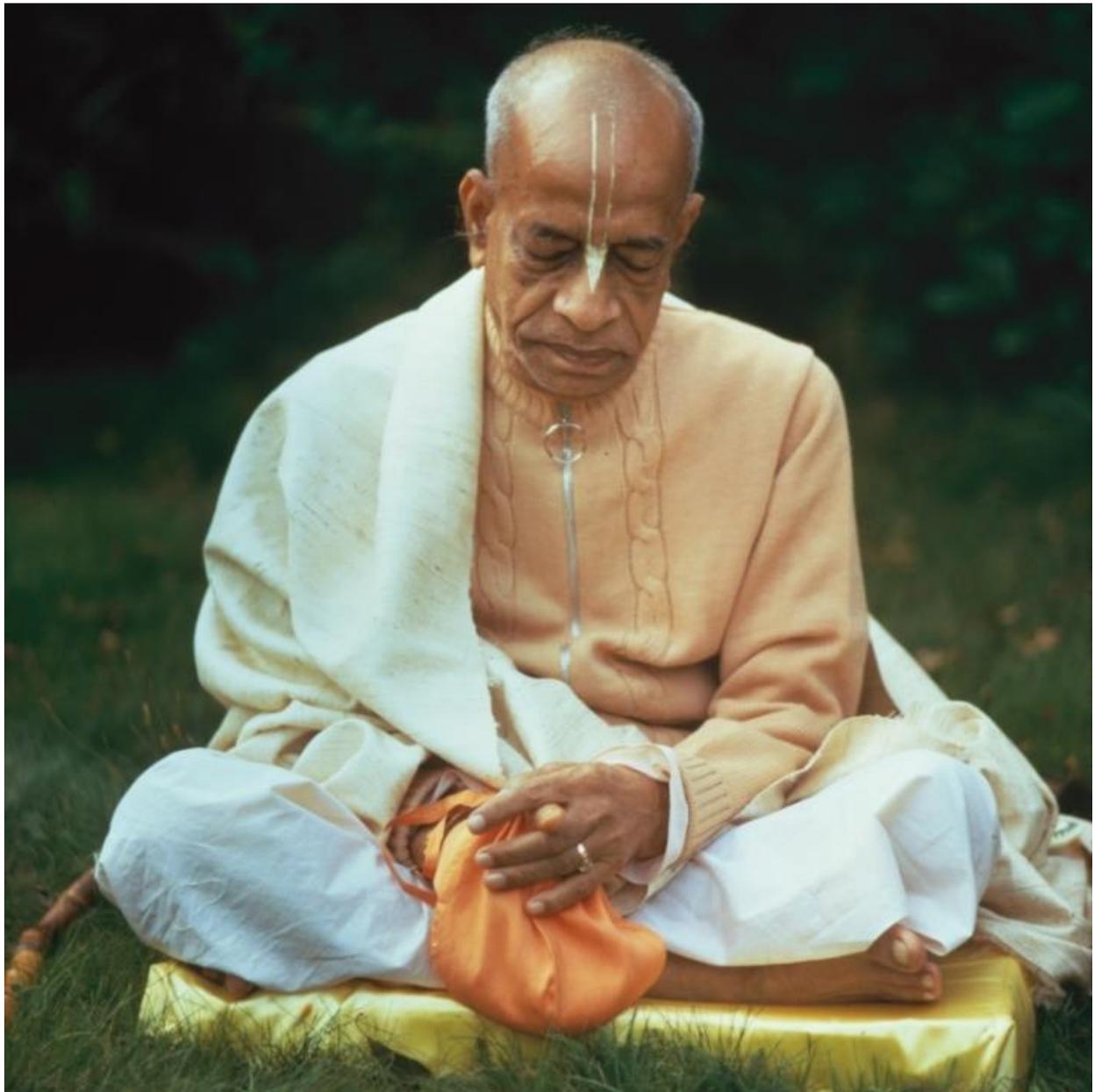
The enthusing rain of Nāma's mercy is causeless, conscious and constantly falling. What is our response? Are we like the Vṛndāvana monkeys who find the rain an unwelcome botheration and inconvenience? Or are we like Vṛndāvana children who eagerly embrace and relish it? Or are we somewhere in between the two?

Are we happy with our response? Our present relationship and dealings with Nāma? If not, we are free to change them. We have that right.

Mantra by mantra, day by day, the choice is always ours!

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

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

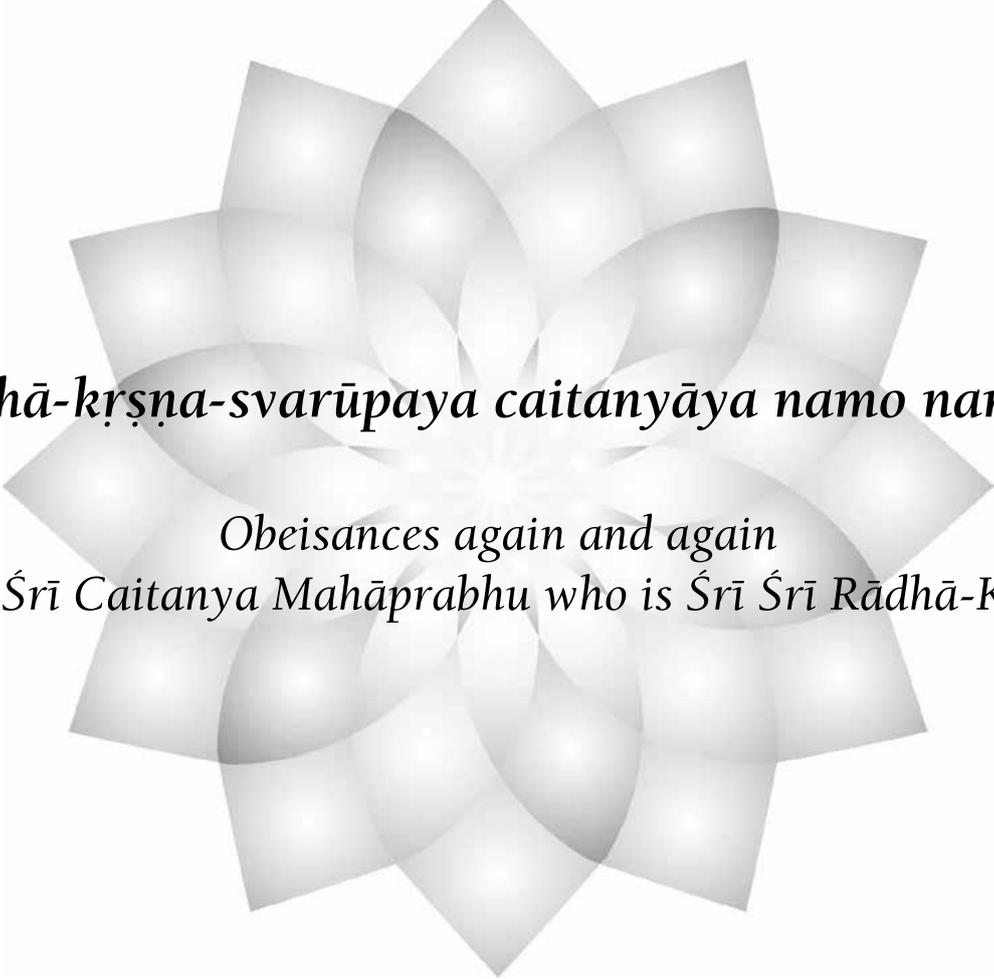




The Price of Causeless Mercy was completed on
Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's tirobhava, 9th January, 2019,
in Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma
by the mercy, potency and will of Śrīla Prabhupāda,
and for his divine pleasure, satisfaction and purpose.

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

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



rādhā-kṛṣṇa-svarūpaya caitanyāya namo namaḥ

*Obeisances again and again
unto Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who is Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa*

