

Śaranagati

ISSUE NO. 29

SRAVANA, 07|23|13

THE BEST OF ALL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Practitioners of any spiritual path always have one question: which practise is the most powerful and will bring me to my goal in the most efficient way? Those who have a burning desire to obtain the goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness put great emphasis on their search for an answer to this question. They almost become obsessed by this question and investigate it like “mad scientists”. They discuss it with great fervour and are never satisfied with superficial answers.

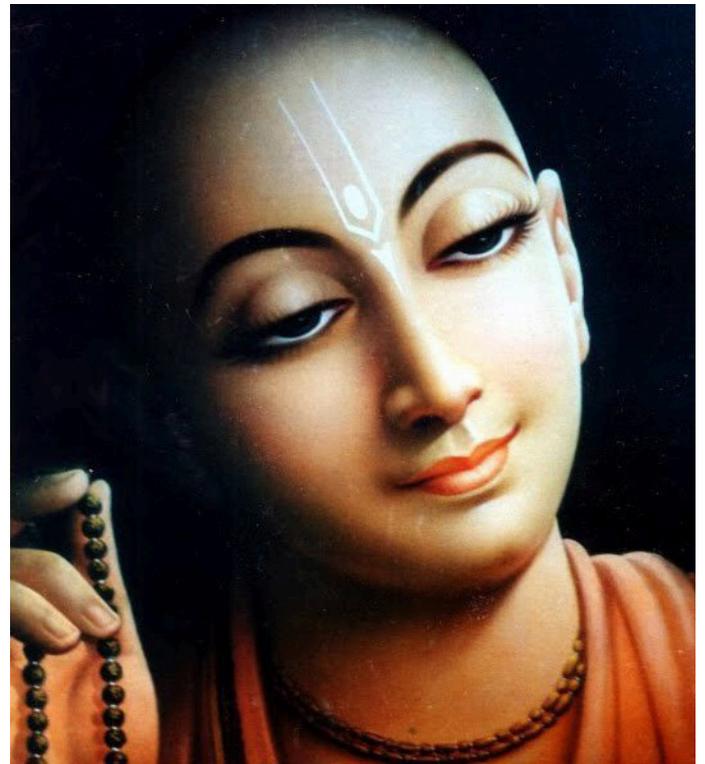
They specifically ask, “Which sādhana should I practice and how precisely should I go about it?” The sacred scriptures and the sādhus inform us: that practise is the best by which one purifies the heart from the ego. We can do yoga exercises, we can meditate and follow other practices, but if our heart remains full of selfish desires and ego, what then is the use?!

The best sādhana must have the greatest power and the greatest power is with God. Only Kṛṣṇa can truly purify the heart and he does this in his most merciful form: the Holy Name. The Holy Name can be compared to a touchstone. By its energy a touchstone can turn iron into gold. The same thing happens, when the Holy Name touches us: we transform. That is because Kṛṣṇa and his name are identical. If we attract all-powerful Kṛṣṇa through our chanting our heart transforms – not by our own endeavor, but by his potency.

However, the difference between iron and us is that iron is unconscious matter, whereas we are conscious beings. Therefore, the Holy Name needs to touch not our body but our consciousness. Then we become transformed.

Chanting is the best means of attaining perfection in Kali-yuga (SB 12.5.51). Only chanting has the power to directly bestow love for Kṛṣṇa, therefore it is considered the best of all sādhanas (Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, 2.3.158).

☪ from a lecture by Śacīnandana Swami on Iz, Croatia, June 6th, 2013.



FAITH – THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY IN BHAKTI

On the various paths of yoga like karma, jñāna and aṣṭāṅga many qualifications are necessary in order to advance. For example, in the rituals of karma-kāṇḍa only a slight mispronunciation of one of the numerous mantras can have disastrous effects. Similarly the paths of jñāna and aṣṭāṅga yoga require elaborate study of the scriptures, strict mind and sense control, and prolonged practice of intense bodily exercises.

In bhakti, faith is the only qualification needed for success. However, it is a necessary qualification – without it, the process won't work.

Patañjali defines faith as the absence of doubts and a favorable attitude toward the object of one's devotion, Kṛṣṇa. In the beginning, faith is *komala*, very tender and vulnerable, but later it must develop into *niṣṭhā*, firm faith. At this stage, it produces a feeling of complete clarity and security in the heart and thus protects the devotee like a loving mother, even in the most difficult situations. From this stage onwards faith condenses more and more until it reaches the stage of direct experience of Kṛṣṇa. Only someone who travels the journey of faith will come to this realization.



According to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura faith is to be directed towards two things:

1) The words of the *bhakti* scriptures. As conditioned souls we are uncertain of our relationship to the Lord and the path leading to him. But the scriptures inform us about the qualities of the Lord such as his merciful nature and thus give us hope and entuse us to take shelter in him.

2) When we have – by the mercy of the *śāstras* – obtained such faith in Kṛṣṇa, we need to extend it to the spiritual practices that the scriptures recommend for contacting Kṛṣṇa. Without faith in the *sādhana*, the process, we will never reach *sādhya*, the goal.

Faith can also be seen by its symptoms: Faith produces vigor or enthusiasm – we become strong in our activities. This inner strength results in an undisturbed mind, a mind that is constantly referring to the goal of life and to the spiritual perspective of the *bhakti* scriptures. By the power of faith we are able to distinguish between the spiritual and the material – no matter what the waves of life throw at us.

For one who has faith it is also easy and natural to surrender unto the Lord. Thus, as Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains in the *Bhakti-sandarbha*, faith and surrender are considered to be the same. This is how we can test our own faith: Are we surrendering unto Kṛṣṇa? If we have faith, we will naturally and gladly follow his instructions. One who has deep faith in Kṛṣṇa prays, “*Oh Kṛṣṇa, I do not desire any personal happiness from you. Whatever you desire, I accept it with all sincerity. Even if I have to suffer from that, this is my happiness. Oh all-auspicious one, there’s no inauspiciousness in your arrangements.*”

☪ from lectures by Śacinandana Swami in Dallas, USA, May 23rd, 25th & 28th, 2013.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF FAITH

We can only get faith from those who have it. We cannot get it from materialistic people who are faithless, just as a beggar cannot fill his stomach if he seeks help from other beggars.

When we are with devotees their faith enters our heart – they may speak, or sing, but what happens essentially is that their faith passes on to us. The association of devotees will give us the inner strength to follow the path of devotion. We all know how important it is to get the association of devotees – not just *sika* devotees, but real devotees, devotees that are devotees in the heart. In their association faith is born.

☪ from a lecture by Śacinandana Swami on Iz, Croatia, June 12th, 2013.

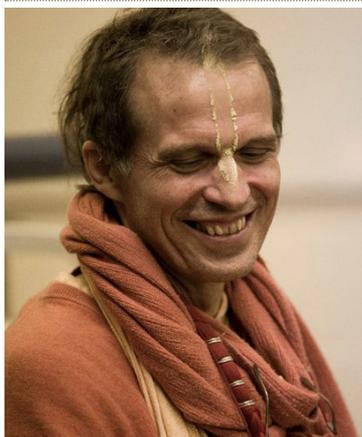


Photo by Mickey Shah

☪ MEET ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI

upcoming seminars & events:

Aug. 21	Balarāma Jayantī, Kraenzlin, Germany
Aug. 28-29	Janmāṣṭamī Festival, Nueva Vrajamandala, Spain
Aug. 30-Sep. 1	Sacred Space Retreat, Switzerland
Sep. 12-15	Rādhāṣṭamī Festival, Goloka Dhama, Germany

Read more: www.sacinandanaswami.com