



CHAITANYA CHARAN DAS

Make the right choices

Question: What is the use of chanting the holy names of god?

Answer: The chanting of the Hare Krishna mahamantra is a profound and powerful prayer to the divine to guide us to make the right choices in life.

The mahamantra "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" contains three seed words Hare, Krishna and Rama. Krishna and Rama are names of god and Hara (changed to Hare in the vocative) is the name of the consort of god. All of us are children of god. So when we chant the holy names, we basically call out to our divine parents. The mood of this call is: "O lord, O energy of the lord, please engage me in your service."

Krishna has a plan for every one of us individually and for the whole world collectively. The root cause of all problems is twofold: forgetfulness of Krishna's plan and the vain attempt to impose our own plan. For example, consider the environment. Krishna has made a perfect plan for the ecology to cleanse and balance itself. We humans take in oxygen and give our carbon dioxide during our respiration. The plants counterbalance by taking in carbon dioxide and giving out oxygen during their photosynthesis. When we forget Krishna's plan of simple living and high thinking, and impose our own plan of industrialisation and urbanisation, we cut down trees indiscriminately and thus upset the delicate atmospheric balance at our own risk.

Krishna has endowed us humans with free will and so the success of his plan requires our cooperation. If we don't cooperate, he then unfolds an alternative plan aimed at reforming our errant mentality.

To help us make right choices in life, Krishna has revealed his general plan in his words given in the Bhagavad-gita. To help us further, Krishna is also ready to reveal his specific plan if we just turn to him and hear his loving, guiding voice within our own hearts. Unfortunately, the clamour of the material desires that crowd our hearts drowns his voice there. Nonetheless, we can still express our desire to cooperate with his plan by chanting his holy names, which constitute a prayer for serving him. Krishna promises in the Gita (10.10-11), "For those who serve me with love, I purify their material desires, and give them the intelligence to understand and participate in my plan."

Thus, the seemingly simple act of chanting enables us to dramatically change our role in the divine harmony of the world - from being a disruptor to being a contributor.

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