

Śaraṇagati

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NO LONGER A CLOSE STRANGER

A stranger can come very close to you and yet remain unfamiliar. He may sit just one meter away, but because you don't know him, he remains distant from you. I believe that many of us still have this kind of a relationship to the holy name. He is a stranger, a close stranger you could say. Close in the sense that he is on our tongue and thus in close physical proximity to us, but a stranger nonetheless, because he has not yet revealed himself to us. He has not yet allowed us to enter into the secret of understanding him. Only when you have a relationship to the holy name, will the holy name reveal himself.

The holy name is complete; it's not a material name. It's absolutely spiritual and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa himself. In other words, when the holy name is no longer a stranger to you, you will chant the name and you will see the form of Kṛṣṇa and you will feel his qualities, for instance his kindness upon you. At that moment, you will taste what is called *rasa*, a spiritual experience of Kṛṣṇa. You will be overwhelmed, or in colloquial Australian English: "You will be blown away man." (Hare Kṛṣṇa, I'm trying to learn your language.) It will be stronger than any wave in the ocean you surf. It will be stronger than any good taste you have ever experienced in a restaurant. It will be *rasa*, an absolutely overwhelming revelation of



Kṛṣṇa. Yes, that is what happens when the name is no longer a close stranger, but he says, "Come on, let's sit together now. I don't want to keep myself hidden any longer. I'm like this."

From a lecture by Śacīnandana Swami at New Govardhana, Australia, September 18, 2014.

GET DOWN INTO THE CELLAR



"The whole process of spiritual culture is aimed at changing the heart of the living being in the matter of his eternal relation with the Supreme Lord as subordinate servant, which is his eternal constitutional position. So with the progress of devotional service, the reaction of change in the heart is exhibited by gradual detachment from the sense of material enjoyment by a false sense of lording it over the world and

an increase in the attitude of rendering loving service to the Lord." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 2.3.24, purport)

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a summary of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The whole process of spiritual culture is aimed at changing the heart of the living being. Śrīla Prabhupāda defines what the change of heart entails: detachment from sense enjoyment and an attitude of rendering loving service to the Lord. So if you can see that your heart is becoming free from selfish enjoyment and you are more and more inclined to render loving service to the Lord, then you know the transformation is taking place. At the beginning stage of *bhakti* you just engage the limbs of the body, but then you are supposed to move on and engage the mind. It is expected that by discharging regulated devotional service one will manifest a change of heart. If there is no such change of heart then the heart must be considered steel-framed for it has not melted even while one is chanting of the holy name of the Lord. At the end of the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says: "The whole process can be summarized as follows: The advanced devotee who chants the holy name of the Lord in a perfectly offenseless manner and is friendly to everyone can actually relish the transcendental taste of glorifying the Lord."

GET DOWN INTO THE CELLAR (continued)

Besides summarizing the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, this verse also addresses a problem. The problem is that although one practices Kṛṣṇa consciousness, chanting of the holy name, there may not be a real change in the heart; one may not witness real progress in one's life. This refers to the second stage of chanting the holy name, which is the *nāmābhāsa* stage. *Ābhāsa* means something like shadow, reflection, something which is connected with a real thing, but still lacks the substance of it. So when you practice the *nāmābhāsa* chanting, you have something which looks like chanting, but it lacks the actual taste of chanting.

See, a shadow is something which you actually do not want to have. Your shadow are those things which you don't show to the public. To the public you may show a clean *dhotī* and a straight *tilaka*, but you don't want to show what's in your heart: the weaknesses, the attachments, your failures and so on. But see, my dear devotees, in spiritual life it's different than in material life. In spiritual life you can't, I will now use an Australian term, "fake it". You can't in other words just be like an Indian shopkeeper who has all the good products in the front window and all the bad things hidden in the cellar. No, in spiritual life we want to purify the heart. In material life you can be a rascal and a professor of ethics at the same time, but in spiritual life

you can't be a rascal in your heart and give a positive outer appearance. You need to really cleanse the heart. You need to take care of the stuff inside. You need to be an inward-looking person.

In material life everyone tries to look good on the outside. That is material life, the shadow life, the unreal life, the fake, external things. Spiritual life is a different sort of life altogether. It is a change in the heart, not a change on the outside.

We want to get down there into the cellar. We want to purify it because Kṛṣṇa sees it, and because it is not good to have these unresolved things in the heart. They influence us, they move us, they work on us – they are the reason that we don't make advancement. Everyone can be the super-duper Mr. Everything and project that onto the outside, but only a few have purified their hearts. And this is the group we want to join. We are anyway already a minority, we Hare Kṛṣṇas. We might as well join another minority, the pure souls. Because it is then and then only, that it is possible for us to taste Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

☪ From a lecture by Śācīnandana Swami at New Govardhana, Australia, September 19, 2014.

THE EFFECTS OF PURE CHANTING



What power does the name of Kṛṣṇa possess? My heart constantly burns in the fire of worldly desires, just like a desert scorched by the rays of the sun. The holy name, entering the core of my heart through the holes of my ears, showers unparalleled nectar upon my soul.

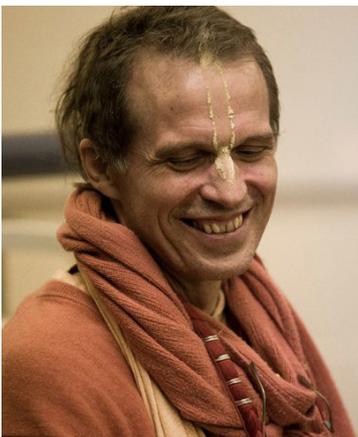
Rivers of tears flow from my eyes, perspiration completely soaks my body, all my skin thrills with rapture, my hairs stand on end, and my complexion turns pale and discolored. My mind grows faint, I begin to experience devastation, and my entire body is shattered in a flood of ecstatic emotions.

While causing such an ecstatic disturbance, the holy name showers liquid nectar on my heart and drowns me in the ocean of divine love of Godhead. He does not allow me to understand anything, for he has made me truly mad by having stolen away my mind and all my resources.

The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power that Kṛṣṇa manifests that when his holy name starts to blossom a little further, it then reveals his own divine form and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa.

☪ From Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura's Śrī Nāma-Māhātmya, verses 1, 3, 4 and 6.

Photo by Mickey Shah



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