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108

japa poems

2010

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108 JAPA POEMS
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108 JAPA POEMS

by Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami
To my beloved spiritual master,

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
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1. Write About Japa

How do you write about japa?
You report the quality, the truth
and you try to encourage fellow chanters.
But how can you boost them unless
you can speak of perfection?
Like this:
go to the center of your experience and admit
you failed that perfection, but pick out the seed,
which was the fact that you endured
and heard clearly for 16 rounds and
stayed awake and actually prayed because chanting is praying,
even imperfect.
2. **Caitanya Mahaprabhu**

The original pure devotee was Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Whoever heard the chanting from Him became a pure devotee. And whoever heard from His associates became pure in their turn. Thus it has spread down to the present day, and especially Srila Prabhupada carried it and spread it widely in the 20th century. Now we have the responsibility to become pure ourselves. We are not excluded because of past sinful acts. Just the contact with the pure devotee, washes our hearts and purifies our minds and senses. We owe it to ourselves to be pure, and in gratitude to the pure devotee we should spread it to others. The purity becomes contagious.
3. Where Your Mind Goes...

Where your mind goes
your japa will go.
You went so fast
because you wanted to
get them done, but your
mind was partly distracted
by something you had done.
Now, how do you expect
to pass the test if you
don’t keep your mind chaste
and away from waste?
I can forgive you this time,
but it’s up to you to take
your choice—harinama
or maya? Whatever you
feed the mind it will
regurgitate, so be stricter,
and you’ll do better in
your morning harinama.
Aye, Aye, sir.
4. **Fix Your Mind**

Fix your mind on the meaning of the mantra. Make more effort and don’t lay back just making syllable sounds. Is it a physical or mental act you are capable of? I think you can do better, that’s in your power. Pay more attention to the simple act, tell yourself "I’m chanting Radha and Krishna’s names. I’m chanting Their names." Don’t allow the mind to float to yesterday’s trivia. Stay in the present with the *maha-mantra* whispering, bring it to an audible pitch. Can you help yourself and do these things or are you a jelly fish? I think you are capable of being a *bhakta* if you just try a little harder. I’m on your side and will banish the trivia. So says Satsvarupa Dasa.
5. A Traveling Sannyasi

A traveling sannyasi
is able to chant his japa
in a portable way. Wherever
he is, he keeps a semblance
of a schedule and keeps
mental equilibrium to
say his rounds. This will
be my challenge, but the
devotees in the places I am
visiting are prepared to accommodate
my style. The fact is I
should be even more
dependent on the holy names
as I’m away from my relaxed
environment. I’ll cling to Nama
Prabhu as my sheer protection
against the foreign elements and
the uneasy locales. I have no
special favorite chair or peace
of room but a peace of mind
dependent on my turning to the
holy names. Please stay with
me, Nama Prabhu, and make
me feel at home with You.
6. **Chanting Out of Place**  
**[Trinidad]**

Chanting out of place,  
but tell yourself to go  
ahead and hear the holy names.  
There is nothing foreign  
about Trinidad; it's just  
another land on Your planet.  
And I don't really belong  
anywhere here.

I have lived in many places  
and always chanted japa, so  
I can do it here. I just  
have to concentrate my mind.

The words are universal and  
the call can be made from  
anyplace where there is  
an earnest heart and work  
to try. As for You, Nama  
Prabhu, You have always existed  
in all places, even in hell  
and heaven, so You are ready  
to rescue me when I call to You.  
Please help me sink my  
presence into Your syllables.
7.  Chanting Smoothly

Chanting smoothly ahead of schedule, you feel like you are in a convertible sports car on a balmy day. Nothing can stop you, there is no pain and you enunciate the names of Hare and Krishna.

This is the direct connection, and even if you don’t directly realize it, it’s taking place, you are linking with Krishna, like the gopis did when they chanted His names on the bank of the Yamuna in search of Him. Tear-felt sankirtana is the only way to persuade Krishna to appear to you and assuage your feelings of separation. I’m no gopi, but I’m chanting His name and hoping He will appear to me after all my desperate attempts.
8. Japa Triathlon

1. In his novel he had a neophyte ask the young guru, "What does the chanting feel like?" The guru answered, "Like a shower of nectar." I thought it was an exaggerated reply. I doubted the young guru even knew what a "shower of nectar" was or how it would be a pleasurable experience. Why not just say "It's hard to describe. It's like a cool shower on a hot day."

What is the chanting like? It is like a routine train ride, passing quickly through pleasant places. "It's freedom. It's peace, I feel like I'm floating through the air." When I stop and think, it's God's names that gives me a certain charge, but not so much, because I still haven't realized He is the same as His name.
What is it like? It is like sucking on a straw, vanilla ice cream through root beer, like being hungry and eating the Mexican menu, hot capati with salsa, beans, sprouts, and other spreads—sheer delicious, especially sandwiched in the hot capatis.

It’s drowsy. It’s absent minded, it’s dragging it out, it’s accumulating more slowly than I had wished. (But even in World War II, although the allies would lose heavily, they’d push on and make another victory: Iwo Jima, Guam, Hiroshima! Nagasaki! Berlin!)

You don’t cave in. You suffer casualties (Pearl Harbor, Dunkirk) but you gradually hang in there and persevere.

2.
What is it like?
A shower of nectar.
For who?
For Haridasa Thakura?

Only four rounds.
And you’re tired,
four more is eight.
You are halfway close.

What is this triathlon?
First you swim four miles.
Some do it with one arm.
Then you ride on your bike
some hours then run for most of the
way over gravel, soft
sand, hard pavement, up
the cliffs of doom, up
the staircase of logs and
dirt. Is your sneaker
coming off? Is your heart
going to collapse? Look
who is ahead, look who is
second, here comes the
pack, running, running,
the people on the sidelines cheer and offer you
Gatorade. You are not number
one, that’s a guy from New Zealand.
You’re not number two or three,
but you will finish. Your
legs are cramped, you’re sleepy-
eyed, you’re afraid your head
may crash but—no you stay
clear and pass the finish
line, and people are there
to tell you, you did well.
You finished the race,
you are an iron man.
9. Don’t Worry

If you are going to be anxious don’t worry whether your friend is faithful to you. It’s too intimate a concern, and you should be confident he’s loyal. Be anxious that your japa remains in a slump, like Obama’s popularity ratings. I don’t mean be anxious about Obama. I mean be anxious about the japa slump. Your time is running out and you need a quantum jump; care about it, and try some serious changes in your habits. Don’t let the mind drift, chant some extra rounds, you might even try whispering out loud—consider major adjustments. Being anxious about japa is a sign of concern about a serious thing.
10. Chanting Like Amelia

Chanting japa in
the early morning is
the prime requirement
for this lowly sadhaka.
He chants in his mind
but the mantras flow
smoothly as good as if
he were chanting out loud.
So far his head is clear,
and he feels like Amelia
Earhart making a trans-
Pacific crossing alone in her
airplane. It’s risky and
daring, but Krishna is with
you. You pray in His names
and feel sure you’ll complete
the flight. He has given you
the fuel, the inspiration and
the direct guidance of your
spiritual master. You left
Bala with the confident
words, “see ya” and you’re
sure you’ll complete your
sixteen without a crash.
You have years to go to try
and improve. May that
happen, may I reach the
stage of offenseless chanting
in the sky.
II. Too Early

Chanting so early like
Nanda Maharaja bathing in the Yamuna
at a too-early hour and
going arrested by the
Yamadutas. I couldn’t help
it because I woke so early.
The japa went smoothly
in the extra-early hours
as I whispered almost
in secret to the holy
names. The clock moved quickly,
but I was attentive to my rounds.
I don’t like to do this as
normal. I’ll have to nap
later. But the vow
will be complete,
and it was done
in good fashion.
12. Right Now

Going through the mind
too thoughtlessly because
you are chanting mainly
to get them done. You
should chant to do them,
not to get them out of
the way. As always, I
maintain a spark of sincerity
and pleading with Nama Prabhu to please engage
me in His service. Please
calm down, and concentrate,
and do them better.
The movie actress Lauren Bacall
is eighty-five years old and still
going strong, but you do not know
how long you have. “It Could
Be Tomorrow” is the name
of the hurricane TV station.
They tell you to be prepared
and don’t think it won’t
happen to you. You may
be ordered to evacuate and
you need to save your life.
Chant right now.
13. **Constancy**

Chanting with constancy is a great virtue. Krishna will see that despite our imperfections we are sincerely trying and we never give up. He will gradually reward us our heart’s desire. Our *japa* should be done with effort to improve, attentively hearing the holy sounds and staying alert as we accumulate our quota. How precious are these early hours spent with Nama Prabhu. I would not trade them for all the riches or honors of the world.
14. Chant with Devotion

What does it mean to
chant with devotion?
You’ll concentrate and realize
you don’t have much time
left. You move close to
harinama and recall
fondly all the years you
have been close to them,
in temples and campgrounds,
in solitary rooms. You
recall your sincere efforts
and the sound vibration’s echoing
in your ears, running in your
pulse. You chant with devotion
when you think of Prabhupada
and how he gave you the names
in the storefront and in every
place since then, your
dependency and loyalty to him.
The spiritual master gives the names,
and you give them back to him,
trusting They are Radha and Krishna
and bringing you out of this
world of misery and pain.
To chant with devotion you
share it with others in
the sankirtana movement of
Caitanya Mahaprabhu
you pray to be a preacher
of Nama Prabhu.
15. Dear Brother

I’m sorry about yesterday’s rounds. I’ll make up for it today by keeping my quota. It’s the least I can do. When I say goodbye I must have done my minimum in this essential instruction. If I were able and vigorous and had a taste, I’d do twenty-five or thirty-two. But at least sixteen.

And make them good ones, the names caress in your mind with love and concentration.

Like a ballet or a fast melody but with care and zest. It’s your most important service along with this hari-nama poem writing.

I beseech you, brother. (Raghunatha calls his mind the brother and so does BVT.) Dear brother, close kin of mine, do write and execute your rounds with attention, not with pramada.
I like you, I regard you as a friend but the Gita says you may also be the worst enemy if you’re uncontrolled. Please be controlled under the easy yoke of hari-nama. You know you like to do it. When you do it rightly it brings you peace and satisfaction and a humble righteousness.

So brother mind, execute your chanting silently if you say you can’t do it loudly because of your health. I’ll have to accept that, and it’s all right as long as you really do it, with tenderness and reverence.

Do it like a lover to the beloved. Your beloved is the form of Radha Krishna in sound vibration, in passage through the receptive mind. Please raise your prayerful faith to believe They hear you and are pleased that you call to Them repeatedly with an intention from your heart.
Lord Caitanya has been so kind, and the Swami sent you to Tandy’s to get the wooden beads and showed you how to string them with a tight knot in between each bead, 108, with a head bead. You’ve done them all your life, and there’s bound to be some credit for that. I pray for you brother, that you can learn to do it better in your remaining years. Make these last rounds your best. Learn to cry, learn to love, learn the meaning of the Names.

That’s all I ask.
16. Chanting With My Friends

Chanting with my friends around the world and making a poem of our progress. The rounds accumulate as I sip my herbal tea and relish the solitude in which to reciprocate with Radha-Krishna. Radha is in the name Hare, it’s an address to Her name, and Krishna and Rama refer to the all-attractive Lord, the enjoyer of Radhika. You recite Their names with attention to the meaning, not just bland utterances but pointed supplications: “O energy of the Lord, O Lord, please engage me in Your service.” They like to hear you chant because They have the same tendencies as the human being, They like to hear you call Them with devotion.
17. Inspiration

A friend tells you of his japa and makes you want to improve your own. We are packed up together although living in different places, chanting the mantras as Prabhupada gave us and told us to do it nicely on our own. He said he didn’t talk to anyone about his japa and thought it was generous that I write of it. I write for my survival, wish I could report better, but hope it helps my friends.
18. **Time After Time**

Time after time, I
sit to do my *japa.*
Again and again
it turns into a struggle.

Morning after morn,
It turns drowsy.
I lose my attention.
I lose my quota count.

Time after time,
I find it is refreshing,
the exciting challenge
fills the air.

It’s never boring,
though time after time,
entering into *japa*
finds me interested
and challenged.

Time after time,
I rise early and
grab my beads
and try not to live a lie.
Each time I try,
I stumble after a while
and lose my attention.
I repeatedly grow
tired in the eyes
and sometimes get headaches.

Time after time, I
enter a romance,
a love affair,
me and my beads
me and harinama.

I know it's Krishna
and try to realize it
beyond the theory,
but time after time,
I fail to perform
suddha nama,
perfect chanting.

I'm doing aparadhas
and sometimes namabhasa
but never at the
perfect stage although I
try time after time.
Every morning I am there, sitting in the early morn, starting off with hesitation. I grow determined and continue for two hours, but never do I see the Lord in His names.

Time after time, I’m a failure yet a success. It’s hard to explain: I love to do it but can’t do it well.

I’m avoiding hell but not entering Goloka by my harinama in Lord Caitanya’s golden footsteps.

Time after time, I never miss a day. I always reach sixteen, but always it’s mechanical and not the heart of prayer, the way You want it.

Time after time, you grasp your mala and strongly go around the circle.
Never are you perfect
round the mantras. You never receive
an “A” from the mentor
of the japa session.
If you get a “B”, even
that’s mechanical and
not a crying out with
tears. You’re trying, you
don’t get the taste for
chanting because you
commit offenses.

Time after time,
you like to do it
and you begin not late, but after
only a few you’ve
begun to slump
and your average
of good mantras
diminishes. You start
to do them silently in your mind
”so you don’t get a headache”
and your pronunciation is
less than perfect.

I never complain, I
do not bash myself,
I am an optimistic
chanter, who keeps himself
encouraged, but as for
progress, I don’t
find it in my soul.
Oh what shall become of me? Will I
one day reach the standard taste
and call for the score
keeper and ask him to mark me
a perfect? Or will
I time after time
make incomplete
passes all short gains and
occasional touchdowns
in a losing game.
19. Weeds

In offensive *japa*,
weeds grow up beside
the plant of devotional service.
There are many kinds of
unwanted creepers and one
has to strive to pull them up,
or build a fence around the
garden so the offenses
will not break in.
Even when one chants
quickly on a good morning
the mind may flit off
and dwell on different
topics, like a bee buzzing
into different flowers.
You have to quiet
the restless mind by
gaining presence and
gravity and concentrating
on the meaning of the
Hare Krishna mantra.
Otherwise you are guilty
of inattentive chanting,
the root of other
offenses. Chant
and hear nicely
as the hours go by.
You can chant for millions of births and not get love of God if you chant with offenses. This is the difficult side of the process which is advertised as "easy." Unless we are very, very careful the offenses will creep in. How to do it? "Just hear," says Prabhupada, and this morning I was successful. I didn't enter spontaneous ecstasy but chanted at a rapid, attentive pace and my heart was satisfied.
20. Weeds #2

Chanting with offenses,
one is recommended to
continue and he will come
to the offenseless
stage. But how long
will it take? How
can I improve? My
friend tells me he chants
best when he doesn’t
move, and concentrates,
with his eyes closed.
I do best when I
also stay in place,

awake and silent.
But the mind flits
to other things I have

done and cannot stay
fixed to the syllables.
"Just hear" my spiritual
master has advised,
and I am working
on that.
21. A Football Player

I feel like a football player who has been knocked around. I don’t know why. It just may be the aging body, the fatigue. It was hand to hand combat for my first twelve rounds as my eyelids weighed heavy on the eyeballs. But I am not about to concede defeat. We have made a commitment too deep for that. We fight back, wash water on the face and recommence the yajna with determined grit.
22. He Told the Truth

He told the truth:
his chanting wasn’t perfect.
Confessed to aparadhas,
and less than fully alert.
But he truly says his
quota and pronounces
the syllables in order,
truly repents that he
doesn’t do it better.
You must honestly rise

early and begin the
yajna in earnest,
overcoming lethargy
and resistance.
I truly try my
best to overcome sloth
and to pay attention to
the sacred syllables
in gratitude and
love.
23. Not for Material

Do not chant
for material advancement.
That is a completely
contrary plan. The
japa is meant to release
us from the life of
material striving, we should
chant with the desire
to minimize our wants and
increase our desire
for serving Krishna.
When you utter Nama
Prabhu, you should
be alert and moving
rapidly through the rounds.
This is an indication of
eagerness and application
of will. I do not
like this slough and
seek to throw it off
and move like a
sprinter or a long-
distance runner
with strength for the
meet.
24. Sins on the Strength

Committing sins
on the strength of chanting is a grievous
offense, the worst abuse.
I think I’m free of
this condemnation. But
there are other anarthas,
my chanting too slowly
and without alertness.
You may excuse yourself
and say it’s a physical
condition. But it must
be overcome. Keeping
awake is an attitude,
a fight in which you
must succeed. It comes
from lethargy and lack
of devotion. You can
overcome it with
sheer determination and
the blessings of harinama.
25. Ecstatic Transformation

I did not chant in ecstatic transformation with my hairs on end and tears from the eyes. But at least I did not chant thinking it was pious activity meant to bring temporary benefit for the world, such as charitable work, free food distribution or help for the homeless. These activities are good, and there are societies dedicated to bringing it about. But chanting is for something greater, the release of all miseries, the liberation of the soul from birth and death, and finally love of God. Love of Krishna is the ultimate pious activity and I should chant for that goal, not some lesser benefit for the world.
26. No Exaggeration

The unfortunate student claimed that harinama's glories are exaggerations to induce people to chant. Lord Caitanya was so unhappy with him He said no one should see his face. The holy names have all the power as is told in the sastras and the histories of people who chant even without full purity. Even if I do not chant in suddha-nama, I must have faith in everything stated about the glories of Nama Prabhu. They will work on me as long as I accept them in truth.
27. Three Stages of Chanting

There are three stages of chanting and one has to keep above the lowest, offensive stage. Sleeping is *tamo-guna*, and that is not giving the proper reception to the holy name. Alert and mindful, one becomes free of sinful reactions, and I must fight to keep at least that status. Only then is there hope for going higher, to chanting like the *parisads* of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. “Don’t be disappointed,” Srila Prabhupada said, but he expects us to stay conscious and alert.
28. Nama-abhasa

Japa is always attacked by enemy forces. We don’t fully live in the realization that the names are Krishna and Radha Themselves and experience that ecstasy and its bodily symptoms. I don’t crash to the ground, I keep flying in the intermediate level. I don’t chalk it up to a failure. I give you a daily report on the speed and temperature and direction. I speak in metaphors—today we flew steadily through clouds and turbulence but did not make a crash landing. I think it’s called nama-abhasa.
29. In a Fearful Place

The world is a fearful place and even in America, there is fear from terrorist acts, crime on the street, and suffering from poverty. At any moment one can die in his brand new car, or be burned to death in his new home, or swept away with all his dear ones and belongings in an earthquake or hurricane.

Thus the Bhagavatam says, padam padam, at every step there is danger. But the vast ocean of material life can be shrunk up to the size of a calf’s hoof in the mud, if one takes shelter of Govinda. The best way to do this in the present age is by chanting His holy names, the one great quality in this ocean of vice and danger. Let us chant Hare Krishna and be at peace.
30. A Pillar of Success

A fall down is the worst thing that can happen to a bhakta on the royal road of devotional service. But he can save himself if he takes to chanting Hare Krishna and stops his sinful action. The chanting must not be merely mechanical but a cry from the heart, begging forgiveness. If one reinstates himself and resolutely engages in devotional service he cannot be considered fallen. Krishna protects him and warns others to accept the erring devotee as a victim of an accident and include him again in the circle of devotees.
31. Happy...

Chanting your rounds alone
in the quiet morning
with a relatively quiet
mind. It's peaceful
and transcendental. My
mind wandered to some
of the books I have written
and to my correspondence
with a poet. But I
brought it back to hearing
thoughts of the Hare
Krishna mantra and was
satisfied and fixed.
Without stoppage I built
up my numerical count
round after round
smoothly and at peace.
Chanting in this way
makes me happy, and
I feel I have been
praying in earnest.
May Krishna let me
improve to higher stages.
32. Find the Chanter

The chanting comes down from Krishnaloka and the connection is with a living representative of harinama. This has been going on forever even before there were books. In previous yugas, other practices were taken up, but now in Kali none of them are possible. You must find out a chanter who lives in harinama, who constantly chants and who is authorized to give it to you. Then you begin your own chanting life with beads and karatalas and you pass it on to others. The chain never ends as long as there are persons in parampara.
33. Japa Blues

Japa blues, you can’t chant nicely. You run a machine of maha-mantras, and they don’t mean much to you. Your mind drifts in unclear waters filled with objects like old car tires, dirty plants, sour memories. This is not the chanting of a pure devotee. You trust in the potency of even offensive chanting and move on through your quota. You try to pray to do better. Please Lord, don’t leave me this way.
34. Even Improper

Even if you chant improperly, you get the benefit of Harinama, and your sins are destroyed. It acts like a medicine which cures even if taken without knowledge of how it works.

I chanted my mantras with an audible whisper and did not stop or interrupt them. One followed another without ceasing. Although I did not meditate on the ecstasy of Radha-Krishna’s pastimes, I called on Them, knowingly or unknowingly and so entered Their sacred precincts. I chanted “Hare” and “Krishna” and prayed for the service of attentive japa.
35. **Chanting Slow**

Chanting slowly is not the best. It takes you over three hours to finish your quota. Something is not right. But you accept it and move along even with hampered speed. The quotes for the morning spoke of attaining the stage of ecstatic love, and my *japa* did not rise to such a height. More energetic bliss would have the symptom of pure love, not creeping at a slow accumulation. But there is always solace hearing the names and rubbing against the touchstone that will one day release you from all bondage.
36. Desire to Serve

I've chanted my rounds, and now I want to serve. The *japa* has invoked the service spirit, the desire to write. Chanting the vibrations is satisfying in itself, but it provokes you to do more, just as the Mohammedan governor wanted to render some practical service to Lord Caitanya after he'd been liberated by chanting. In the beginning the Swami engaged us in *kirtana* and *japa* and then one by one the boys came forward and asked what they could do to help him in his mission. He gave out service, and it was complete.
37. Rapid Chanting

Chanting rapidly gives the pleasure of racing in an expensive sports car. It is a luxury. But you can’t merely drive. You have to concentrate on the road, taking care to hear the meaning of the names. I did my 16 rounds in minimal time, but there was too much concern for racing. You have to learn the art of moving quickly but hearing deeply and keeping aware of the transcendental vibration; feel the pull of the names toward attraction to Krishna. By the code-sound, open up to everything about Him and feel your love.
38. Rushing

Rushing chanting isn’t bad as long as you don’t overdo it and become a mindless race car. Being aware that the clock moves quickly, and the numerical count moves slowly, you step on the accelerator and utter the holy names quickly. It is better than lethargic drowse. So I move with speed from one 32-syllable mantra to the next but careful not to slur them but to say them clearly, rushing to reach my Lord.
39. Ultimate Liberation

Chanting japa for many years but I have not yet realized my direct relationship with the Lord. I know I am His servant and that is enough for now. The ultimate liberation will take place whenNama Prabhu is fully satisfied that I am an offenseless chanter and desire, more than anything, to please Radha-Krishna in a specific service in Goloka Vrndavana. Until then, I perform my duty conscientiously every morning and I do it humbly and with hope.
40. In Pain

The pain prevents you from meditating on Radha and Krishna—it is like a big log in the middle of the roadway. But you do not stop your yajna. You have the strength of purpose to continue uttering the names, and despite your pain you say a prayer to Nama Prabhu to please accept you and allow you to chant another time in a painless state. When relief comes, you thank Him and embrace the coziness.
41. Krishna is Grateful

Krishna is grateful when you chant His names. Just try to imagine that power of japa and kirtana. They can accomplish such a great thing. By other methods it is not easy to please Krishna who is atmarama, fully satisfied in himself. How can one presume to make the all-great grateful? Yet this simple gesture which He has introduced and endorsed can do it. You have to chant nicely, without offenses. Offensive chanting won’t make Him grateful, but the pure outpouring of the heart makes Him obliged and He never forgets the chanter and grows in affection toward His devotee.
42. "Krishna is Mine"

"I am not this body."
Chanting Hare Krishna
brings you to this place.
"I am spirit soul"
is the result of japa.
You situate yourself as
the servant of the spiritual
Lord, beyond the concept
of "American, old man."
When I chant I'm something
else, a particle of
spirit and my mind
is cleansed of dirt.
You can do it if you
say the names attentively
and pray to Nama
Prabhu for self-realization:
"I am Krishna's and
Krishna is mine."
It is a high understanding
but possible
in the yajna of harinama.
43. Faith Grows

Faith grows by chanting Hare Krishna, like a plant grows by watering the root. It's the root of our devotional service. I am an early-morning gardener with my equipment of beads and sitting in a quiet place repeating over and over building numerical strength which builds faith in Krishna which is the greatest goal of life.
44. **Enemies Always Ready to Strike**

The enemies of the mind are always present. One can’t think "I'm an accomplished chanter and don’t have to conscientiously control my mind."

The enemies are like a snake; they are always ready to strike. One has to keep thinking, keep hearing with attention on Nama Prabhu, and the mind's enemies will be held at bay. Intoxication, illicit sex, madness, illusion and fear—a formidable gang. But they can easily be counteracted by mastering the mind with attentive chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra.
45. A Talk with a Friend

Sometimes while you chant something bothersome is on your mind and you chew on it and it obstructs your attention from concentration on Nama Prabhu. A talk with a friend may help remove it. Real chanting requires that you don’t think of other things. Your consciousness is focused on the yajna and other things are put aside. There is nothing so important that you should be dwelling on it instead of japa during japa time. Resolve to stop this dreadful practice.
46. Uncovering

Uncovering the original energy
like the energy in the sun.
We each have it within us,
unadulterated by any designation,
or nominal belonging to a religion.
It’s a pure source, like
the pure spring water
they advertise for, “Poland Spring”—
the clear, rare source
of the only clear origin.
It’s covered over by a
sense of being the controller
instead of the servant of
the Lord.

It’s contaminated
by the mixture of the
material modes of nature.
It all gets cleared only
by the chanting of the names
which are themselves the
original consciousness
of the living being.
47. Decided by Krishna

You are a chanter
and make it your daily
effort. But you don’t
rise to the perfect stage.
There is good news
and bad news,
you chant relentlessly
but not with ecstasy.
Where will it end?
How much will be counted
in your favor, how
much will it be considered
that you failed? The
result will be decided by
Krishna, and the
effort depends on me.
48. Pray to Pray

I always wanted to pray. Once I prayed like the Christian saints and devotional engagement and special word formulas. Then I realized again that Prabhupada had taught us the best prayer formula in the Hare Krishna mantra. I pray every morning in my imperfect way. Sometimes I forget to ask for engagement in Their eternal service. Still, I pray the transcendental sound. It is vandanam in the most congenial form given by Lord Caitanya and recommended as the only way to call on Him in Kali-yuga. I pray to pray.
49. Pleasing Lord Caitanya

Chanting Hare Krishna is auspicious for the world. We should chant with attention and devotion. Lord Caitanya has promised the benediction of the chanting will go forth. The chanting pleases Him, and when He’s pleased there can be reduction of suffering and people learning the purpose of life, acting in the right direction to bring about bliss.
50. **Call on Radha and Krishna**

First you call on Radha, then you call on Krishna. The potency comes first, and then the Potent. Radharani is the tender feminine counterpart of Krishna, and we call on Her first. If we get Her favor then Krishna is obliged to bless us. Hare Krishna, They are together and we never try to separate Them in our *japa*. It is the *yugala-mantra* for worshipers of Them both. As you cruise through your quota, keep this always in mind.
All-attractive

The topmost form of the Lord, “Krishna” means all-attractive, and is the best of names of God. It does not need a translation. It needs a chanter who recites it with care and attention and numerical strength.

To counteract his sins, Subuddhi Raya was told by Lord Caitanya to chant the names constantly, and He gives that advice to all: kirtaniyah sada harih. Once you learn the value of “Krishna” you should cling to it and say it in song and japa all the time. That will save you from maya and bring you to the Lord.
52. **Sleepless Night**

Chanting after no sleep, the Lord still allows you to chant alertly. You are most grateful for that. It is the most important item in devotional service, so you need to keep your mind fixed as you utter the names. I paid attention to the count and finished 16. Of course, I could have done better, but I won't look a gift horse in the mouth. To complete my rounds after a sleepless night is a boon I will gladly accept.
53. The Right

We all have the right regardless of the low birth where sinful activities were committed before initiation. They should not deny us the status of worshipers of Krishna. But even if some narrow-minded persons do not allow us entry, we can chant Hare Krishna anywhere under Lord Caitanya’s shelter. The important thing is to chant with reverence and devotion begging to be accepted as an atom of dust at the Lord’s lotus feet. The importance is to chant with a cry.
54. Yajna for Kali-yuga

The prescribed yajna for Kali-yuga is the one I am doing, so I am rightly situated in religious practice. I have the gift of Lord Caitanya and am most fortunate among yogis and jnanis. But within this best chance I struggle to keep it live. If you chant mechanically it is only not on the outer form. The essence is a genuine cry for Krishna for eternal service in the eternal kingdom. When you do not even cry that you do not cry, you are outside the circle of harinama.
55. Alert

Chanting alertly is a great pleasure and satisfaction. You are thankful to the Lord for allowing it. You are happy for the conditions that allow this to happen. Sleepy chanting is a drear to be avoided at all costs, and a good night's sleep is one way to do it. So rising at two is not a bad thing if it allows you to glide starry-eyed through your mantras.
56. Entering the Sacred Space

The more you chant the better it gets. You clear away inattention and start to hear with the "inner ear." Your mind calms down, stops spacing out and fixes on the name like strongly-bonded glue. When you are wide awake and pain-free, this adds to the good performance and you start to understand that Nama is more merciful than the Lord Himself. You enter the sacred space.
57. "Pinch Yourself"

Rising quickly, but you can't be simply an unconscious bundle. You have to be awake and coherent, paying attention to the mantras as you rise. Otherwise it is a dumb show and you do not actually go up. Pinch yourself to stay awake—count the mantras with devotion.
58. Alone with Radha Govinda

Alone with Krishna and Radha
can I make that claim?
Yes I can, it is backed
by the scriptures. The name
is not different than the form.
I do not taste it fully,
and Lord Caitanya says this
is due to offenses. My
main offense is lack
of love. I chant with
just the quiet emotion
of japa yajna,
uttering and counting and relishing
the peace. I like to be alone
with the maha-mantra and
hear no sound but my mental chanting, the cleansing
like a broom of the dust,
the polishing of the mirror
of the mind so I can see
who I am, a servant of
the Lord, and with my
outer eyes I see Radha
and Govinda on Their altar.
59. Celebrate Your Improvement

Improving in your japa as the early morning increases, you celebrate your improvement and thank the Lord and Prabhupada for enabling you. We can go on improving every hour of every day because there is so much ground to be covered before we reach the suddha-nama. Let “Improvement” be our banner and stay alert and concentrated on Radha and Krishna in the form-sound known as japa-yajna.
60. Chant From the Heart

You want to chant from the heart, feeling like a lover or parent or friend. It can't be just a mechanical act if it's going to please Krishna. He has given us the names to use as a way to gain access to love of God. That's what Lord Caitanya brought so strive for that, don't sit conked out just making a sound but be profound, simple and devoted, crying tears is what the Lord asks for and standing of hairs on end, that's how He wrote it in His Siksastakam, the ideal method of japa.
61. My Separation

Happy in your japa
but wish you could
do better. Feeling
separation from the
Lord (like Sita felt
separation from Rama,
like Caitanyaadeva felt
separation from Krishna).
My separation is not
so intense, it’s the
generic separation of the
jiva from God. Wanting
to be closer, to feel
His closeness, to know
He is with me and protecting
my back. Krishna is the
cynosure of all the Vrajavasis’
eyes, and I want to be
included. When He’s caught
in the Kaliya’s coils I want
to feel like I’m dead in
sorrow, and I want to
join in the celebration when
He dances on the serpent’s hoods.
I want to love Him
in His names.
62. Not Yet Raganuga

Chanting where you are at, you don’t lament you are not yet a raganuga bhakta. You chant as best you can, speeding the mantras in your mind, making the numerical count, and being satisfied to complete the vow. "When oh when will that day be mine, my offenses ceasing, taste for the name increasing, when in my heart will Your mercy shine?" Being satisfied for now, you work to improve.
63. **Numbers**

Sixteen rounds in less than two hours. You are a speeder, but are you going over the limit? No. Prabhupada said sixteen rounds should take two hours, but the quality is most important, not galloping like a race horse. I think it was all right, but there is always room for improvement. You can sink more into the feeling for Nama Prabhu beyond the numbers. 1,728 is just a number, the real point is devotion.
64. In a Row

Chanting sixteen rounds all in a row, makes a man happy and satisfied. Prabhupada said when he published a book he felt he had “conquered” an empire. Chanting sixteen rounds makes you feel you have conquered inertia and pleased your spiritual master. Does it mean you have to start at 1 A.M.? Maybe not—that’s hard to do—but that’s what happened today. It is good to rise somewhat early and say as many as you can in quiet, peaceful time, awake and alert, listening to the mantras in your mind, and remembering the value of this gift.
65.  Endure My Soul

The japa man does not choose to bash himself. He stands (or bows) before Nama Prabhu and claims he’s done his duty. We know he’s not in suddha-nama, and we are humbled by that fact. “One should chant the holy name in a humble state of mind thinking oneself lower than a straw in the street,” This is a qualification for constant chanting. I keep my place before the Lord and patiently endure my soul.
66. **Quantity or Quality**

Quantity and quality,
the quality is more
important. I chanted
them as quickly as
possible and aware
of each mantra as it
passed through my mind.
Sooner than usual,
I finished 16.
But something was missing,
and it's elusive to gain,
The heart fixed on Radha
and Krishna. You solace
yourself, "But the names
*are* Radha and Krishna"—
and yet
and yet . . .
67. Was it Good?

Who is to say when your chanting is good? It's up to Krishna. But you get a feeling of your own, and this morning I felt lively and rapid and attentive to the names. On days like this you are pleased with yourself, but you don't know what Krishna is rating you. If I feel good does it mean He's pleased? It's a mystery, but at least when you are not drowsy, distracted or in pain there is a better chance for reciprocation with Radha and Krishna. You pray that is so.
68. The Elusive Perfection

To be perfect is very hard,
seemingly impossible.
But to make partial achievement
is highly satisfying. I
accumulate my rounds in the
brahma-muhurta, wide awake
and attentive to the Names.
To perform the act is very
easy, just the repetition
of the sounds,
but to do it with love is an elusive
attainment. You relax and
utter harinama, but the
kind of ecstatic emotion described
in the chanting of Caitanya Mahaprabhu
is far away, like a star
high in the predawn sky. I
merely look upon it from
my space on the ground and
yearn for the day when
my taste will increase,
and I can rise to the star.
69. Messengers of Yamaraja

Your chanting keeps away
the messengers of Yamaraja
who come to pull out the
soul at death and deliver
him for punishment.
You pray that the Vishnudutas
will come for you and
deliver you back to Godhead
or at least to a Vaisnava
human birth. So much
depends upon chanting with
attention and devotion.
Can you do it? Can you do
the right thing? Sometimes
you assess yourself as
doing the right process
but doing it poorly and
you don’t know your destination.
Only try harder and
keep awake, whisper
the names and concentrate.
70. He is Watching

You hold yourself awake
and chant the maha-mantra.
You’re aware that Krishna
is watching you and
reciprocating as you say
His names. Your mind
is attracted to the names
and taken off other subjects.
Japa is the bedrock of
the Hare Krishna movement.
He has charged you with
the responsibility to chant
a required number of names.
This is Vaisnava behavior,
as prescribed by Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

In Vrndavana, He chanted
and induced even the cows,
deer, trees and creepers to
say the holy names in an
echo to His kirtana.
I think of Him now,
Mahaprabhu, the great chanter,
and I stumble in His footsteps
with awareness that this
is the only way.
71. Same Place, Same Time

It is good to chant
japa in the same place
every day, at the same
time, and early morning
is the best time for spiritual
practices. You rise, and before
engaging in any worldly
or passionate endeavors, you
calmly sit alone or with
friends, and utter the holy names.
This morning I'm hearing in a
peaceful place, begging to Nama
Prabhu to allow me to taste
the nectar, begging to place
my attention in the syllables
of the names, with faith
that this is nondifferent
than direct association with
the Divine Couple, Radha and
Krishna.
72. Neighborhood of Stavavali

Chanting in the neighborhood of Stavavali, I move very quickly through the mantras and my eyes are wide open. I'm attentive as I silently pass the names through my mind and finger the beads. The dull pain in my head does not prevent me from decent *japa* on this morn. Quickly I move through twelve rounds and thank the Lord for His mercy.
73. Silent Japa

Chanting silently is not the ISKCON norm. Prabhupada has said to chant loudly, so others can hear, and so you can be attentive to your own vibration. But I am handicapped, crippled, I tell myself. A loud vibration in the skull will provoke the first signs of a headache, and I’ll be forced to take medicine and chant with pain. It’s like my ankle condition—I simply cannot walk far and can’t do parikrama and I can’t do loud kirtanas by the hour. The same is true of japa. I chant commonly and let the “sound” pass with attention through the faculty of my consciousness. It’s a kind of japa and counts as fulfillment. But part of me retains the thought, ”maybe you could do it out loud.” I don’t push it. I don’t try. I stay with silent japa and pray to harinama.
74. Jumping With a Chute

I jumped from the plane, and my chute opened safely, but my legs are not trained to land lightly and my morning's japa goes at a gimpy rate. They smile at me and consider me brave for trying. But I have to lose weight and know how to land with a bounce, or it will hurt even more. Now chant "Hare Krishna" and find an equipoise and thankful that you didn't break any bones. You have to work with persistence uttering the mantras like a normal guy.
75. Japa Ring

You chant your *japa*
as if you’re in a fighting
ring. You knock out all
your opponents, although they
land blows upon your body
and face. You come out
the victor in fifteen round
sessions of *japa-yajna*,
feinting and throwing punches
against the ten offenses.
It was too rough and imperfect
and slugfest-like to be rated
as *suddha-nama*, but I
didn’t fall down except once
and that was briefly.

Today I’m the undefeated
champion of the quota
with only four more rounds
to go. I think I’ll win them all.
76. No Name

Chanting “I’m late, I’m late”
like the rabbit in Alice
in Wonderland. But I shall
not let it ruin the quality
of my rounds. I’ll say
them with rapid attention
and hear the syllables go
quickly through my mind.
I’m chanting to please Krishna
and not to complete a race.
I ask Him to forgive me
if I rush, and I’ll
try to pray,
not run.
77. Japa Boat

You row in your
Hare Krishna mantras boat,
bending the oars and
not thinking of much but
making the mechanical effort.
You always reach the shore
before the end of the morning,
but you don’t meditate.
You just row to get
them done. Your commitment
is a good thing, but your
prayer-life is lacking.
Now chant the balance with
a vigor and a cry.
Can you do it
for your liberation?
78. Main Sadhana

_Japa_ is your main _sadhana_, and you do it early in the morning. Sometimes you are tired, and you don’t chant so well. But you keep on trying and don’t fail to do your quota. The same for writing. I make a daily report on how I’m chanting my rounds. Tell the truth and don’t tell it worse than it is. All the mantras are completed quickly in your mind, and you strive to pay attention. I trust in the importance and potency of _harinama_ and treat myself for first aid when it hurts itself in poor performance. I am not on the disabled list.
79. Following in the Footsteps

You are not on the level of Haridasa Thakura or other great chanters, but you follow in their footsteps. You do as your mentor taught you long ago. You have never stopped chanting from when you began in 1966. Even if you begin with sleep in your eyes, you perform the yajna faithfully, and pick up speed and attention. On each given day, you improve. How much more time do I have to improve, and how much will I make it better to enter the sacred stage? You do not seem to leap ahead, but you remain steady and push on.
80. Japa Transformations

*Japa Transformations*, deep changes for the better, expressions of victory and the importance of the *yajna*. It is an accomplishment to have captured in writing reports of praise for *harinama* and feelings of breaking through. The book contains confessions that I have not reached the *suddha-nama*, but that is welcomed too for honesty and sharing the attempt with fellow chanters. It's right to continue reporting even if you don't feel great improvement. You still fight to vanquish inattention, and you register some success. It's your main life duty along with writing and you have faith still in chanting and reporting as a service to your friends.
81. Factory of The Mind

Japa in a factory
of the mind, chanting
like a laborer.
He doesn’t time
the mantras and feels
they are coming slow
and lethargic without
a heart’s desire.
The count mounts steadily
but without embrace.
Why do you have to
make such a poor
report on yourself?
Is it really that bad?
To be truthful you
write a poem about
admitting the lacking
in love. But you know
you are trying to
improve. You are
counting and pronouncing
and never giving up.
At this rate, things
don’t look so well
but you are faithful
to make effort every day
without fail.
82. Distracted Japa

Japa distracted by worries for our friends. You should not have dwelled on their possible danger but prayed for their welfare, chanted evenly in the time of distress. It does no good to imagine scenarios of flooding, but to call on the names for ultimate protection as they would have been doing. Pay attention to harinama, and stay alert to your practice. That’s the best help you can offer in a time of suspense.
83. Mantra for the Truck-drivers

A Carmelite pastor in Belgium told me he couldn’t believe a westerner could make a true conversion to an eastern religion. I told him Christianity wasn’t western and more natural but was strange and Midwestern to his European roots. So this “Hare Krishna” recitation is at home to me as “My dear Lord Jesus, please have mercy on me, a sinner.” But sometimes it seems I’m speaking in a foreign tongue, and it doesn’t make sense or seem homely to me. It’s another obstacle to overcome, an unreasonable offense. Thousands of westerners have taken it up. Allen Ginsberg told Prabhupada he wanted an American mantra suitable for truck-drivers. Prabhupada replied “Hare Krishna” is just fine and my students have no problem.
84.  Cruise

Like a motor boat he cruised on top of the water and sloughed through the waves. The time piece kept the pace all right, and you didn’t cheat or space out. In fast time you covered the minimum quota and then glided to a halt. It was keeping on time, but you can’t be proud—you keep yourself lower than a blade of grass.
85. The Monk of Chanting

Srila Haridasa Thakura was a monk of harinama. He stayed alone at Benapola and chanted 300,000 names a day. Some rounds were out loud, some were chanted softly, some in the mind. All quickly and attentive.

He was born a Moslem and was punished by the Kazi for chanting "The names of the Hindu god."

Lord Caitanya named him the acarya of the holy names, but an envious land lord tried to scandalize him by sending a beautiful prostitute at night. Haridasa converted her and gave her his bhajan kutir. Wandering in the jungles, he was protected by the Lord.
In a conversation at the home of Raghunatha Dasa’s uncle, Haridasaa confirmed that even a glimpse of the holy names brings liberation to a soul. A *smarta-brahmana* present challenged Haridasaa and said, "If his statement isn’t true, his nose should be cut off.” All present were offended and defended Haridasaa. The *brahmana* contacted leprosy in three days and lost his beautiful nose.

The monk of the holy names had a conversation with Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and taught the ten offences against the holy names. Bhaktivinoda Thakura recorded it in his book *Harinama-cintamani,* a handbook for good chanters.

The monk of the holy names was most humble and in the presence of Lord Caitanya he wouldn’t sit for *prasadam* or enter the temple of Jagannath.
Haridasa went out
preaching daily with Nityananda Prabhu
on the order of the Lord
and endured reactions caused
by the avadhuta's wild behavior.

Haridasa Thakura is a model for
non Hindu-born aspirants.
He shows how an outcaste
can be favored if he
chants with devotion
the Hare Krishna mantra
and considers himself lower
than a blade of grass—
"He can chant the holy
names constantly."

At Puri he lived with
the great devotee,
Rupa Gosvami, and
while avoiding the Jagannath
temple, was visited daily
by Jagannath Himself,
Mahaprabhu.

At the end of his life, Lord
Caitanya saw that Haridasa
was not feeling well.
"What is your disease?"
the Lord asked. Haridasa
replied, "I cannot chant
my quota of rounds."
The Lord told Haridasa not to worry, for he was already liberated. Haridasa then asked the Lord for a favor. "Could I please leave this world before You do?"

The Lord granted Haridasa his request and placed His lotus feet upon the chest of Haridasa while the namacarya breathed his last. The Lord took Haridasa up in His arms and danced with him in the courtyard of the house while the others joined in kirtana.

Caitanya took his body down to the sea and bathed him and said, "Now the ocean has become a holy place."

The Lord then begged foodstuffs from the merchants, and His men prepared a feast. "All glories to Haridasa Thakura!" they proclaimed.
Krishnadasa Kaviraja wrote that whoever hears of the disappearance of Haridasa Thakura and his bathing in the sea in Mahaprabhu's arms, and whoever hears of the feast in his honor, is guaranteed going back to Godhead.

All glories to the namacarya, whom the Lord personally protected from a beating in twenty-two market places by taking the whippings on His own back. All glories to Haridasa whose activities of chanting are so glorious they can not be completed if sung by the hundred headed Ananta Sesa for a hundred years.

All glories to the process of chanting japa, which Haridasa excelled in. May we follow in his footsteps and chant with devotion and numerical strength.
86. Not Yet

You want to chant with all your heart, but you cannot do it yet. You make the best effort you are capable of and roll out the mantras with speed and dedication. The words are uttered clearly and correctly, but you know it cannot be counted as *suddha-nama*. Go on determinedly and don’t be depressed. Go on better and do not rest. Perhaps your golden time will come when Krishna will open the gates.
87. Hope Against Hope

He tells us he’s a good
japa man, and his
external performance is
standard. We grant him
that. It is good to be able
to struggle sincerely every
day and have your basic
structures in place. So I’m
gratified, thanking guru
and Krishna and I’m happy
to be a steady performer.
But the lacking is
woeful, and you usually
admit it. I must go
on telling the truth of lack
of deep attraction and
many years poor progress.
As always, I keep aware
of the potency of even poor chanting,
and I maintain hope against
hope that I may improve.
Japa is the most
important of all the
processes of bhakti
(japa and kirtana),
and I must pay attention
to the holy names if I
want to stay alive in bhakti.
88. Routine Work

He goes to work every day, commutes and checks in his time clock.
He works in the assembly line, a steady worker.
But it's routine work.
It is not the passion of a great artist
or humanitarian or rescue worker or dedicated scientist. He is a routine laborer
who puts in his hours cheerfully enough but without great inspiration.
This is not good enough to reach surrendered states, to please the Lord, to reach the goal. He must become more enthusiastic, gain greater status, feel repentance for his poor work.
89. Krishna Himself

The names of Krishna are Krishna Himself. I don’t understand it, and yet I do. They are precious sound vibrations as valuable as Krishna’s form. They are His His form in a different way.

When you sincerely say the names, Krishna appears on your tongue. The realization has to come for you to know what it means, but you have faith even in the beginning that the Sanskrit syllables are God the Almighty, Govinda the playful.

When they are uttered by a pure devotee then the flowers bloom, the cowherd boy and Radha manifest and Their qualities like compassion and sweetness and Their forms, like tribhanga and Radha’s radiant face and limbs become visible to the chanter.

We are in the beginners’ school, and we barely pay attention to the mechanical act of utterance.
We have to overcome so many offenses, like disrespect to the spiritual master and minimizing the Vedic literature and being inattentive because of laziness and lack of taste.

It’s a struggle in the early stage when the offenses are plaguing you and blocking you from the nectarean mango.

It takes a long time depending on your seriousness and sincerity, before you reach the nama-abhasa or clearing “shadow” stage, when the offenses start to clear like a dissipating fog. Then you are neutral, a great advance. It’s as good as liberation, but it’s not pure love of God.

Krishna-prema is also known as suddha-nama, words to indicate you are in love with hari-nama and you think like Rupa Gosvami, “Why do I have only one mouth and head to chant, it’s so sweet I wish I had millions of heads.”
That’s the ultimate and can be reached step by step by disciplined japa and kirtana performed with faith in concentration.

So many things have to be overcome—sleepiness must be driven from your eyes, you have to stop frivolous sports which linger in your brain, in fact you have to commit yourself to chanting all the time or “regularly”, a fixed number of times each day, said in the best mood of mind such as in brahma-muhurta hour when it’s peaceful.

It appears to be a simple road but it’s not. It’s a life’s effort. You have to remove dirt from your mind and the utterance of the names is the very thing that does it. So chanting produces chanting.

Lord Caitanya brought it for this age, because nothing else is possible for attaining love of God. We need the simple process,
the soulful repetition of hari-nama, that’s all we need, even if we don’t know the Upanishads or Vedanta-sutras. You just need devotion and attachment to the process of nama-yajna, and you can climb the yoga-ladder from the bottom to the top. Those who know it give it to others and get back even more for themselves. It’s the pure benediction for humanity at large. I pray you can take it up and not leave it as a strange thing untouched by you. I can tell you more about it if you like. It’s worth your time.
90. Patita Pavana

My Lord is the savior of the fallen.
He is known as *patita-pavana*.
The more fallen one is the more mercy he will be given if he sincerely repents.

One can cross the ocean of nescience in the boat of transcendental knowledge.

As for the devotee who commits an abominable act, he is still a devotee and should never be consider a demon. His accidental fall-down will be erased by the Lord because he is rightly situated in Krishna consciousness.

What to speak of the saintly *brahmanas*? They will be swiftly delivered from the ocean of death and carried to Krishna’s abode.

The Lord as Gaura-Nitai gave mercy to Jagai and Madhai at the time when such sinners were rare.
Now the whole world
is populated with Jagais
and Madhais. But the
mercy of sankirtana is expanded
so that whoever hears
the chanting of Hare Krishna,
whoever sees Jagannatha riding in His cart,
whoever thinks favorably of
the devotees of the Lord,
can be delivered from their
blackheartedness.

This is the worst of ages,
and yet there is one great thing,
the chanting
of the holy names, and
that outbalances all
the evil. It’s actually
ture. So the chanting
should be spread.

Tell the people of the
saving quality of the hari-nama
and pour Him into their
indifferent ears. Great
good will come.

We have no other weapon
and this one weapon is
sufficient. Krishna came in
Kali-yuga as Sri Caitanya
Mahaprabhu, and He did
not intend to kill the demons
as He did in former ages.
His method is to kill their demoniac ways by introducing them to the sweetness of His names and forms and qualities. He is known as a *patita-pavana*. He will deliver a sinner who only once takes His names, who only once honors the foodstuffs offered to the Lord. And so the worst of ages has become the best because what was very very difficult to achieve in another Yuga by meditation and sacrifices can now be attained by a simple method.

O, come and take a *japa* retreat with us, come and chant with us in the street or at least stand and watch and hear the happy chanters. It will undo your complicated karma from many many lives and deliver you freedom to approach the Lord and receive the grace of *patita-pavana*. 
91. A Beggar

1.
Let me make *sankirtana* to Krishna
on the bank of the Yamuna
as the *gopis* did when they
were searching for Krishna
at the end of the night.

He was nearby watching their
*viraha-bhava* and relishing
their love, bringing it up to
the pitch where He would
appear before them and
profess His love.

I cannot cry like that, but
I can chant my mantras and
write my lines in tribute
to You. I *do* have love
for You within my heart
and mind. Alas, my
love is complicated by
distractions and desires
for sense gratification
that obstruct pure
*krishna-prema*.

I try to work it out
by crying in my confused
voices and blasting
through the mire of *maya*.
It comes out as music
of a kind but mixed
with the material sounds.

I don’t do pure activities
all day like an ascetic
sadhaka, bowing down,
fasting, chanting constantly,
bathing in Radha-kunda,
walking around Govardhana
and speaking many hours
with Your pure
devotees or reading
books of the acaryas.

I sit back in my chair
with a headache, I watch TV, I
struggle for right words
and can’t find them
smoothly.

I am a beggar, a homeless
poet, seeking a handout from the
sastras I have read in
many years, and I try to come
up with primary pious acts
I did in past lives to
present something refreshing
and profound.
I find myself crying tears
and walking the streets.
But I am always maintaining some
hope that You will dispense
a little charity to me and
let me speak in Your
honor—because You
like to hear Your praises
sung, and You see some
sincerity in me.

It’s a sad story, but I
won’t give up trying to
make it improved. I
do my exercises to make
my body stronger so I’ll
be able to speak better
to Your devotees. I
don’t neglect my basic
duties and so plead
with You to let
me sing a simple song
each day in glorification
of Your qualities.

2.
O lifter of Govardhana,
O subduer of Kaliya,
O charmer of the gopis,
I don’t tire of praising these pastimes of Yours and want to frame them in new ways.

You embarrassed Lord Siva as Mohini-murti,
You humbled Lord Brahma when he tried to outsmart You,
You dashed Lord Indra’s pride to pieces when he challenged You about the parijata tree. You took 16,000 wives from Bhaumasura, and You cherish Radha as Your topmost queen.
I want to recount these and other pastimes as my daily collection of words, my *raison d’être* and beg you to let it be so. If I cannot sing on the street corner or in the temple of Your glories—or on the page—my life has no meaning. Please give me mercy.
92. Krishna is the Best

Krishna is the best mood. He is the king of all moods whether they be like ballads or fast and sassy. He is God and can do anything and everything.

I love Him. I want to say that. Is it true? I love myself, although I find faults. So certainly I love Krishna who is faultless. But He is far away and that makes it difficult.

Don't say He's far away. He's as close as your jugular vein. Don't be like a rascal son and say your Dad is far away from you. He's close to you and wants you to love Him. Please Krishna, let me love You. Open the door to Your paradise and let me enter.

You are my best friend. I mean it. Sometimes it's just not clear to me because I'm confused, and I distract myself with frivolities
and sloth. Please be kind to me—You are, I know—and let me see You in Your friendly feature. I want to worship You on my altar with Radharani. I want to bow at Your feet, You and Radha.

I want to study about You in Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam and Caitanya-caritamrta. I want to be friends with Your devotees who are my peers and worship the past acaryas like the six Gosvamis.

I want to mean it sincerely, not in pretense. I want to love You. You are the most beloved person in all the worlds—I believe it—and I want to realize it fully.

You are a person, and I have seen Your pictures. You are the most appreciated as a cowherd boy in humanlike form, and that’s the form
You love to sport in more than "grander" forms like Narayana or the Universal Form.

Please teach me to pray to You in the maha-mantra so I do it not just by rote but with deepest feelings of devotion. I have faith that the Hare Krishna mantra is the most accessible and merciful way to reach You, but I've been trying for many years without reaching the suddha-nama or chanting without offenses.

My master has given me all encouragement and inspiration, and I owe it to him to come up to the standard of a first class devotee. Please let me give my life to him in acts of missionary work and personal sadhana. He is very dear to You, and You were very kind to send him to this world and allow me to become one of his disciples.
I beg you to let me
live up to being a
worthy *sisya* of Prabhupada.

He knows me, and he’s taught
me much about You. There is
nothing holding me back
but obstinacy. Please
break the barriers
that hold me back from
serving You and Prabhupada
so You’ll be pleased
with me. That’s all
I want.
93. Before 4 A.M.

You finished your rounds
before 4 A.M., there is something
good about that. To complete
it you had to go rapidly
and that meant rushing
hastily. You have to take
your choice, slow or fast. Fast and
early and painless
is commendable. Now keep
all that but just add
the cry to be supernatural,
to be crying with emotion
for union with the Lord.
Fast is fine, but you
need to call out
like a child for
the mother. Mother Hara hears
the pleas of the devotee and
rewards him with
loving reciprocation.
94. Krishna’s Kindness

Krishna’s kindness is to give us harinama, and in the sastras He emphasizes how important it is. No one should minimize it. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna...Rama Rama Hare Hare, you repeat them again and again and it doesn’t get tired or boring.
95. Try Your Best

Chanting, chanting you
try your best but
can't turn into a holy man.
You count the numbers,
pronounce the syllables,
but fail to enter the inner
sanctum of contemplation
on Krishna-name, on Radha
Krishna, on transcendental
sound vibration. I wonder
how other devotees in the
world are chanting, are they
doing better than I? But that
doesn't matter. I have to deal
with my own. Jackhammer
through the crust of cement,
quietly enter the prayer room.
I gather my numerical
strength and seek a
thoughtful presence.
96. With a Purpose

Chanting with a purpose.
You sit and ruminate over the beads. Your master’s order and gift firmly in your mind, you enjoy the accumulation of numerical strength. The hours go by, you don’t take up any distractions but keep repeating your calls to Radha and Krishna Who are embedded in the chant. You are praying that They hear you in reciprocation and will be pleased by you. O spirit soul, please keep it up, these *brahma-muhurta* hours are the most precious in the day and are meant for mantra meditation.
97. Interrupted Japa

Interrupted *japa*, you will have to do it later. No worry about reaching the quota for the day, but your early morning schedule is obstructed. Recovering from a migraine I turn to my poem hoping I’ll be able to salvage that part of the morning and return after breakfast to *harinama* pace.
98. Japa in Stages

I am feel okay and able to write a poem to music. You involve yourself in the sound of Hare Krishna mantra.

It’s a nice sound, and when sung by a person who has attained love of God, he feels bodily symptoms of crying and laughing and doesn’t care for outsiders. His hairs stand on end, and the bliss he feels is like an ocean while impersonal liberation is by comparison, a puddle made by a calf’s hoof.

Chanters in the lower stages may not feel such bliss, but they roll up actual mileage in self-realization and establish themselves as steady singers of the holy names. Their minds get distracted by material things they used to do, and bodily aches and pains disrupt them. The chanter in love of God feels nothing but the spiritual vibration
and the ecstasy of service
to Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna
is the reservoir of pleasure
and the jiva soaks up
the pleasure of pleasing Him.

He cannot explain it well.
He does it because he’s
told to do it. He does
it because he needs it
now. It’s become a
habit, like breathing,
an automatic act.
He can’t measure the
bliss by a machine, but
he only knows he must
continue to chant.

He chants because he’s
supposed to, because he
vowed to do it along with
ceasing sinful acts.
He chants on the lower
platform but is firmly
attached to doing it.

He considers it a good
session when he can
pay attention to the
syllables and “Just
hear.” He doesn’t ask
for more.
A day may come when
he'll taste bliss
unknown to him in the
present sessions. He
waits for then and
goes on impatiently
calling to the Lord
like a child crying
for its mother.
The child calls out—
O Hare, O Radha
of the golden complexion,
oh Krishna like a monsoon
cloud, please engage
me in Your service.

The Lord and Radha
reciprocate, and he has
faith in that. He knows
They hear, he knows,
he knows, although he
cannot prove it.
He chants and hears
and waits for tears
as the music carries him
into the mantras, and his
heart yearns and comes
up dry. He doesn't know
why he doesn't taste it—
better accept that he
commits offenses.
Offenses against the holy name are ten. Even if you avoid them all you may not feel ananda because of failure in one, called pramada, the offense of inattentiveness. This comes from laziness or distraction. So please bear down and pay attention to your own voice and pronunciation. Please bear down and finger your beads and count the mantras up to sixteen rounds a day.

The Lord has promised you a reward sublime in the secret of the chanting, and you will taste it sure enough. It just takes time and determination and your turn will come—to enter the music of service to Nama Prabhu. The ocean of supreme happiness, nama-seva, love of God in sound vibration, the form of God in sound.
99. Before It's Too Late

We're back to write of Krishna
the one Lord of violence and peace,
the Supreme Lord of all creation.
Yet inconceivably He is a cowherd
boy. I can't understand it, but I
like it.

Our God is bucolic, He plays in
fields in His original form and
in His expansions He commissions
the work of gigantic cosmic
creation, maintenance, and destruction.

How can He be both? It's the power
of His *yoga-maya* which makes
everything possible. He prefers
the Vraja scenes and says the
opulence of being almighty cripples
His ability to love intimately
His dearest friends.

So you should acknowledge God
as great and pray to Him for
protection and be in awe of
His power, and even fear
His omnipotence.

But more so, you should
learn how to love Him
intimately as a friend.
It is not easy. And yet Lord Caitanya has made it relatively easy by the chanting of His names.

The names bring you close to Krishna in Vrndavana if you follow a pure devotee and attach yourself to a particular service.

This is obvious but not attainable in an ordinary religious lifetime. It takes rare mercy and determined sadhana.

As you grow older you should get better at it, but you feel physically tired and can’t do the vigorous preaching you did as a youth when you went to the local newspaper office and demanded they do a story on your temple’s kirtana and you went to the Boston Commons and got hit on the head by a bottle thrown by a thug.
What can you do better in your old age? Can you chant better? I don’t think so. I remember those vigorous rounds pacing and sitting up straight loudly jawing and shaking your head.

What can you do now? You can try to give a shortened lecture but you remember less. You reach for the heart. I remember a priest said he lectured wanting to convey his love to the audience. That’s more than scholarship. But do I have the love?

It is scary, growing older and seeing the light diminish. You seek comforts, but you want assurance that you’ll attain the Supreme. How can you dare? Can you count on your earlier investments? Be good, be peaceful, be kind, speak your mind. I don’t know how to make you better at this age. But you shouldn’t fade.
Search and find a way to go out singing and serving others. Demonstrate faith, speak faith, be faithful. You must think with non-speculative intellect.

Tell about the time Lord Caitanya chased after the sand dune, and how He merged into the Tota-gopinatha deity. Tell the things you know. Don’t waste your time watching movies. I need to sleep but don’t overdo it. Prepare for death by living. But don’t wait around for it. Be telling someone about Krishna when it comes.

Excuse me sir, but you have to go now. It’s too late for anything additional. You should have done it already.
I’m a dreamer, aren’t we all?

I dream my japa
will come to the point
of suddha-nama, and
I’ll have symptoms
of bhava.
I dream I’ll become attracted
to a particular devotee in
Vraja, and he or she will
teach me my appointed service
to Srimati.

I’m a dreamer,
aren’t we all?
Don’t you dream,
that at death the
Krishnadutas will
come and take you
to Krishnaloka in a
golden airplane?

I dream Krishna greets me on
the forest road the way He
met and embraced Gopa Kumar
and gave him his new name, Svarupa.
I don’t need a new name, because Prabhupada gave me the name Satsvarupa das but Prabhupada and Krishna could welcome me like a long lost servant, and we’d all fall unconscious . . . I do dream.

Krishna would explain to me the meaning of my name as “the inner form of truth” and “the truth personified”, just as Prabhupada told me, but in more detail. Or maybe there would be a new name, if Prabhupada approved.

I dream uncontrollably, don’t you? I dream I’m in the rasa dance or watching from the sideline ready to assist my gopi leader by drying her forehead with a towel.
I’m a dreamer,
aren’t we all?
Do you ever dream
you are at the lunch-
picnic with Krishna
and the boys and
He picks you out with
His eye contact and it’s
just you and He and
nobody else?

These dreams don’t come
when I’m asleep but they are
sphurtis, visions in a near-
unconscious state. Or maybe
they are imaginations, wishes
fulfilled in the mind.
Whatever they are, I welcome
them and approve.

I know we have nightmares
where everything goes wrong
But it’s the favorable daydreams
that I’m looking for, where
I don’t step on anyone’s feet
and everything’s a treat,
where I am with Radha and Krishna,
or Caitanya Mahaprabhu, doing things we love to do.
I’m dreamer,  
aren’t we all?  
Do you ever dream  
that you are a member of Goloka Vrndavana  
to stay forever and  
you are happier than  
you’ve ever been?  

Do you ever dream that  
you have attained love  
of God? I dream I am  
there. It’s only a dream.  
But we all have to  
dream, don’t we?  

Don’t we need to be in  
love with Radha and Krishna?  
So what’s wrong with  
dreaming we’ve actually  
attained it?  

Of course we don’t want to  
be prakrita sahajiya and  
artificially act out some  
thing we are not. But if  
we have strong wishes  
they needn’t be harmful.
To *desire* to be greedy
isn’t a fault at least
I can’t stop from dreaming
so I’ll try to dovetail it
in authorized devotional service.

I’m a *vaidhi* practitioner and
too much dreaming could
be harmful. I have to
keep my feet on the ground.

Please forgive me, readers,
if I took you on a trip.
I meant well. I only
meant well.

I didn’t just make it up capriciously. I sincerely
desire all these states
I’ve described even
if I haven’t attained them,
even in dreams.

We are all dreamers, aren’t we?
We need to encourage ourselves.
Sometimes we overdo it.
I’m sorry if I did.

I’m a dreamer.
I’m a neophyte
aspiring devotee.
I'm not close to perfection. I sometimes make up a scenario and sometimes put my heart into it.

I'm a dreamer, aren't we all? We better be careful. Pride comes before a fall. I better be humble and not over estimate myself, even in a dream.

Please forgive me for my dreaming pictures if they seem overdone and offensive. I meant no harm. I'm only dreaming that one day I can improve, just improve, that's all.
101. An Invitation

Lord Caitanya offered
an invitation to the
world—that all
who wanted relief from
misery—that all who
wanted to reach the spiritual
world—should take
to the chanting of the Names.

He traveled to South India
offering His invitation,
and millions accepted the
fascinating song and dance
of the big sannyasi. He
made them Vaisnavas
just by His presence and
His sankirtana, wherein
He poured forth tears
like shot from a syringe,
and His skin erupted in
goosebumps, and
He leaped several feet
high in the air and
came crashing down.

They were caught up in
this magnetic display
of love of God and
felt it in themselves,
their own personal bhakti,
awakened, and they converted from karmis to Vaisnavas.

Lord Caitanya offered an invitation to the world—sometimes in the form of a learned discourse with Mayavadi scholars, telling them that Vedanta was to be found in surrender to Lord Krishna. And they submitted to His logic and learning and accepted His royal invitation to give up the void and take to loving service.

Lord Caitanya made a call to one and all throughout the land—“Tell everyone you meet about Krishna and become a guru.”

He invited all castes and orders of life to celebrate by chanting Krishna’s names. He gathered congregations and induced even wild animals in the jungles to chant harinama in their own way.
Lord Caitanya’s movement
is an invitation continued
until today in parampara.
He sent His Gosvamis
to Vrndavana to excavate
the lost places of Krishna’s pastimes
and to write books on
the philosophy of Krishna
consciousness and His followers
continue it
up to the present day
are extending the invitation.
It is an invite
to throw off Maya’s shackles
and enter the liberated state,
It’s a call to arms against
the asuric influence of
Kali-yuga in all its forms,
inviting souls to become
crusaders against the
evils of the age.

His way is easy and sublime—
“Chant and be happy”—
and even a child can
take part. He makes
His invitation through the
Hare Krishna movement,
and it’s possible for
ten thousand years that
a golden age eddy
can take place even though we are in the dark of Kali.

Lord Caitanya made an invitation, and it was predicted that His chanting would go forth to every town and village. It was taken out of India by Srila Prabhupada in the twentieth century and the worldwide religion became established as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Lord Caitanya’s invitation is a sincere cry from the Lord Himself, making God consciousness accessible in the most difficult time, when it is most urgently needed.

All you have to do to respond is chant the Hare Krishna mantra and follow some basic regulations for human behavior. Whoever takes His invitation will taste bliss and be spared from the punishment for sinful acts so prevalent in this age.
102. Don't Expect Me

Please don't expect me
to travel far distances
to your countries. I
prefer to stay in one place
and quietly chant the
maha-mantras and write
my daily journal. My
energy for far-
flung travels is ebbing,
and I cannot imitate
Prabhupada. But I will
be enlivened if I can just
chant japa and write
to friends and broadcast
videos to them over the
high-tech computers.
Thus I will take advantage
of yukta-vairagya into
old age.
103. Chanting Alert

Chanting alert and feeling happy. My long time friend, the *maha-mantra* is passing clearly through my mind and my lips are moving in pronunciation. I'm a little distracted by the delay in publication of my journal, but the problem is being solved so it's a "good" distraction. Mainly I'm just hearing as Prabhupada advised, and patiently awaiting more advancement.
104. Christmas Day Japa

Christmas day japa
I do a little and then
turn to writing.
You have prayed
about the maha-mantra
as a yugala mantra
signifying the twosome
of Radha and Krishna.
It’s a rasika mood
when chanted in earnest.
But I struggle on a
lower platform, to
keep awake, to enunciate.
The day will come when
I’ll chant thinking of
Radha and Krishna,
I’ll do it by chanting
of Nitai-Gaura.
From the Ganga I’ll
enter and come out at
Radha Kunda. That’s what
the acaryas say has the right progression.
Right now I’m progressing
from drowsy to alert to attentive,
from drowsy to alert.
105. Diving Deep

Diving deep, you
aspire for it,
but stay in the shallows
of the Names.
At least pay attention
to each passing mantra
and the meaning of the
syllables, Hare, Krishna, Rama.
You are calling to Radha
then calling to Krishna, then
calling to Radha then
calling on Krishna.
If
I can just meditate in
devotion to the sounds
I’ll be saved from
distractions
and merged in highest love.
106. In Your Mind

You were chanting
in your mind, the
same mantra, the
same hope that He
will accept me. I
fail to be perfect
but put my effort
into it. I concentrate
my attention with
a light focus and
obey the basic command.
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
roll through the mind and
keep away from other
thoughts. Stay in your
chair and comfortably
say them, gently
drive out all other
realms. You are chanting
the maha-mantras,
that's all.
107. Good Japa is the Goal

Good japa is the goal of a satisfied life. It’s such a simple yet elusive thing. All you have to do is clear your mind of distractions and concentrate on softly, gently, reverently reciting Hare, Krishna and Rama. We have made our lives so cluttered with other things that we can’t take simple pleasure in the single most important thing. But some days are better, and you have a dawn of hope that you could become a hari-nama man.
108. Waiting for a Quantum Leap

Chanting alert waiting for
the day when my japa
will make a quantum leap.
Until then perform it
honestly, modestly and
with utsaha. Enthusiasm
for the chanting is as
good as theoretical knowledge
of the mantra as yugala,
the joining of Radha and Krishna.
Attentive hearing in a helpless
cry is what you want
to achieve. Calling out to
Krishna with mind fixed
on His names. That's
all I ask of you.
Acknowledgements

The following people helped produce this book:

Caitanya Candrodaya dasa — Designer and Editor
Krishna-kripa dasa — Proofreader
Gurudasa — Proofreader

I would like to especially thank Gurudasa, who has generously funded the printing of this book.