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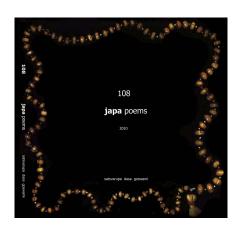


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# 108 JAPA POEMS

**GNPress** 

by Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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# To my beloved spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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# I. 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

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 sleepyeyed, 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.

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# 11. Too Early

Chanting so early like Nanda Maharaja bathing in the Yamuna at a too-early hour and getting 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 vou 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 *harinama*. 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.

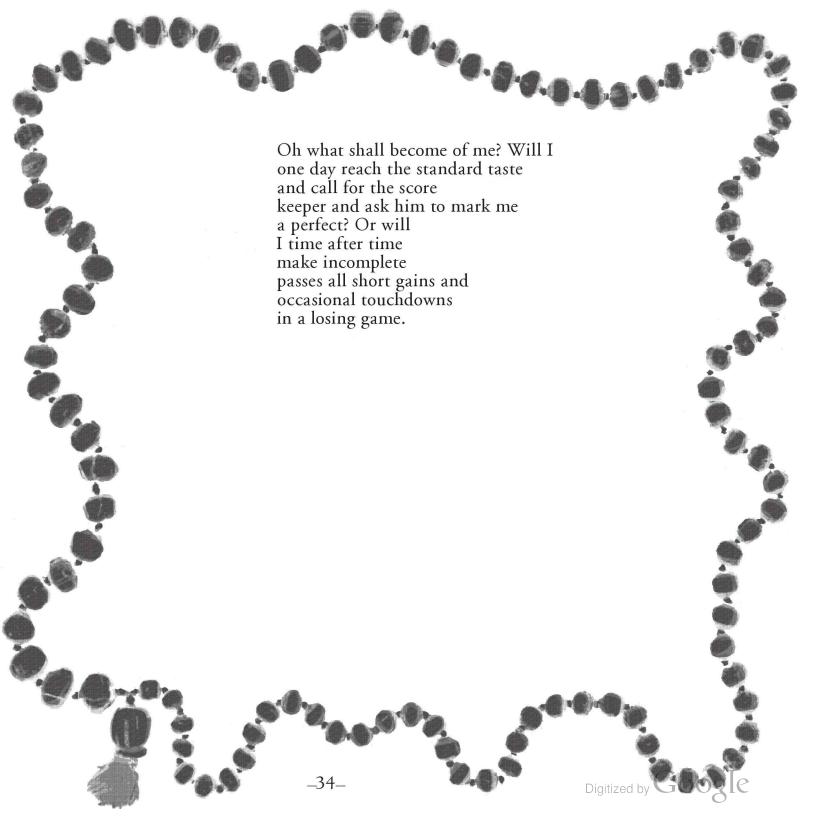
Time after time, I never miss a day. I always reach sixteen, but always it's mechanical and not the heart of prayer, the way You want it.

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.



## 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.



#### 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 longdistance 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 tamoguna, 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 turbulation 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 mahamantras, 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 when Nama 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.

# Faith Grows 43. 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. -60-Digitized by

# 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.

## 51. 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.

## "Pinch Yourself" 57. 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 your self to stay awake—count the mantras with devotion. Digitized by

#### 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 Caitanyadeva 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 Í 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 yaina 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.



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, Haridasa confirmed that even a glimpse of the holy names brings liberation to a soul. A smarta-brahmana present challenged Haridasa and said, "If his statement isn't true, his nose should be cut off." All present were offended and defended Haridasa. 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 he 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. -113

#### 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 true. 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.

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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'étre 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. -120-Digitized by

#### 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.

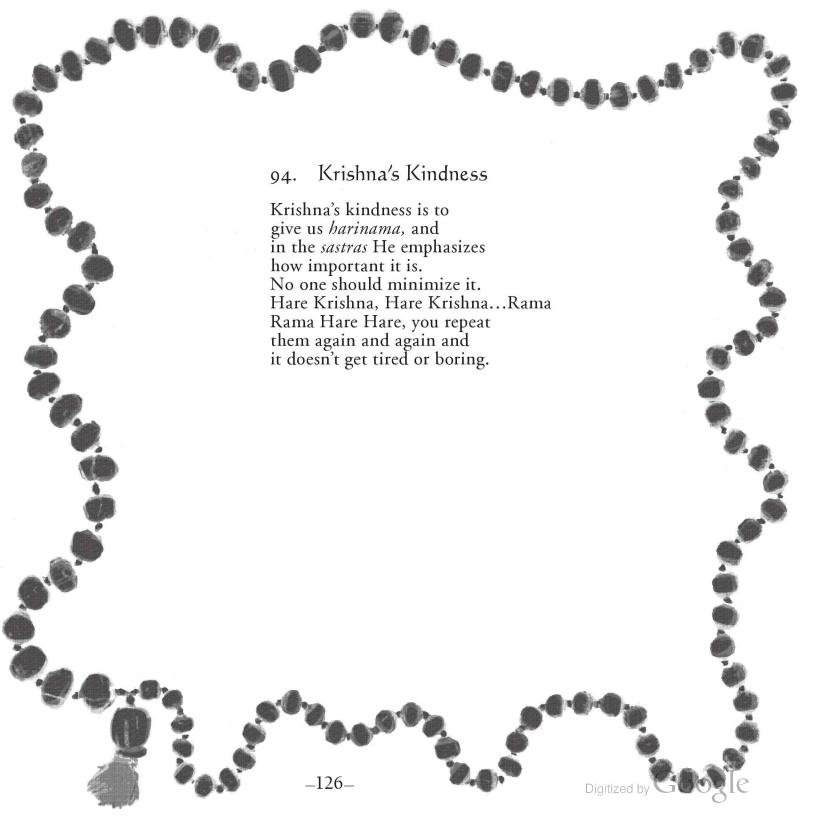
Please teach me to pray to You in the *maha-mantra* so I do it not just by rote but with deepest feelings of devotion. I have faith that the Hare Krishna mantra is the most accessible and merciful way to reach You, but I've been trying for many years without reaching the *suddha-nama* or chanting without 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. \_124\_ Digitized by

#### 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.



# 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-nama, 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.

# Interrupted Japa 97. 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. -129

# 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 dearmost 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 le but you remember less. You refor the heart. I remember a

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?

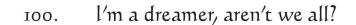
It is scary, growing older and seeing the light diminish. You seek comforts, but you want assurance that you'll attain the Supreme. How can you dare? Can you count on your earlier investments? Be good, be peaceful, be kind, speak your mind. I don't know how to make you better at this age. But you shouldn't 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 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 lunchpicnic 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 farflung 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.

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# 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. I can just meditate in devotion to the sounds I'll be saved from distractions and merged in highest love.

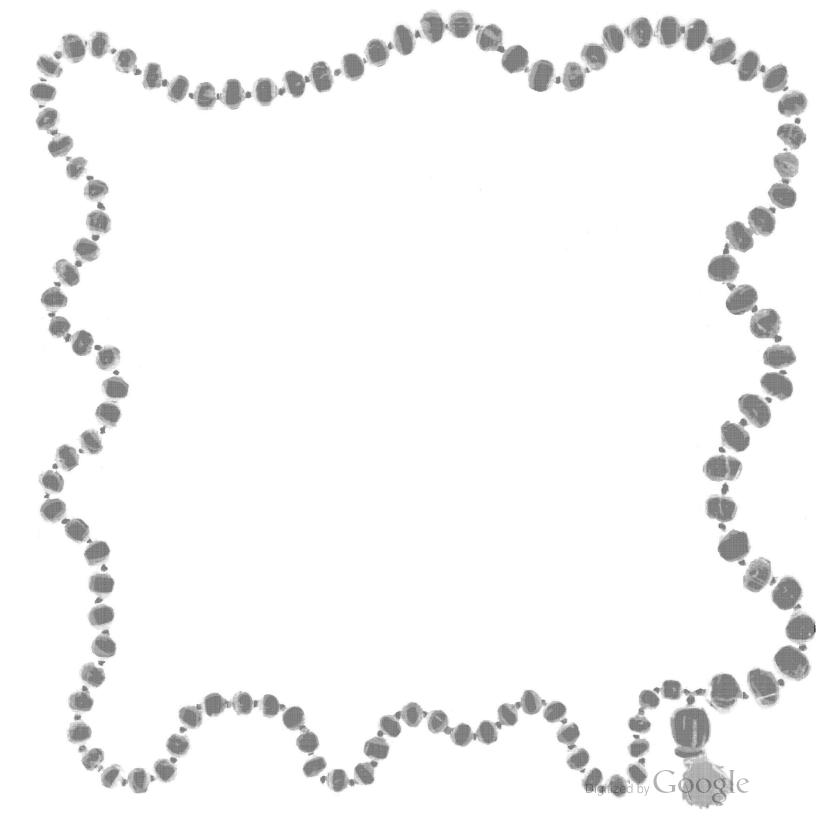


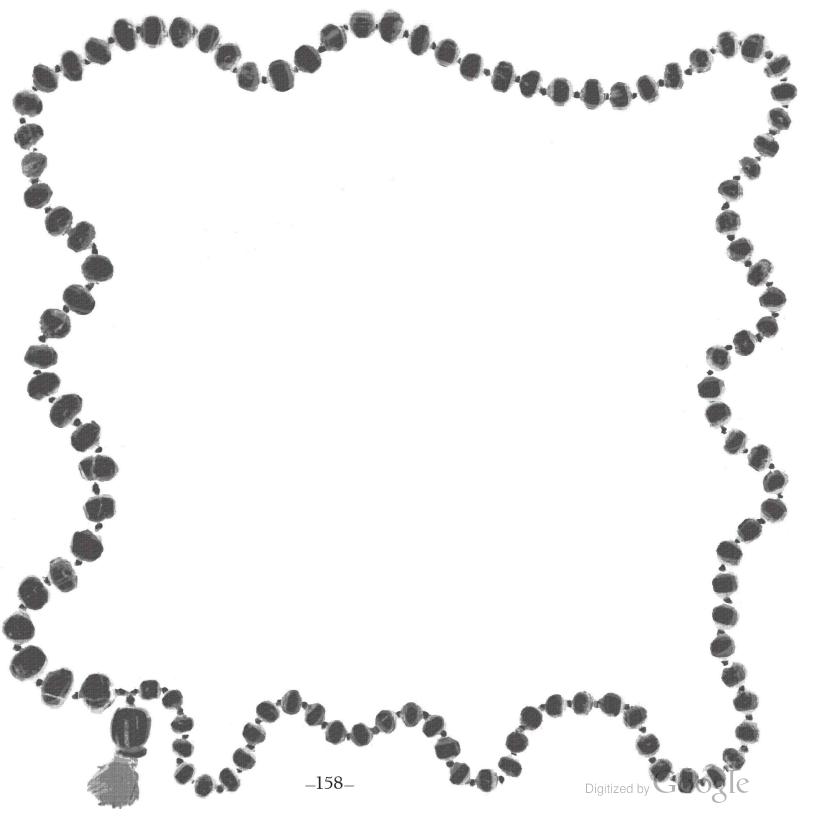
## 107. Good Japa is the Goal

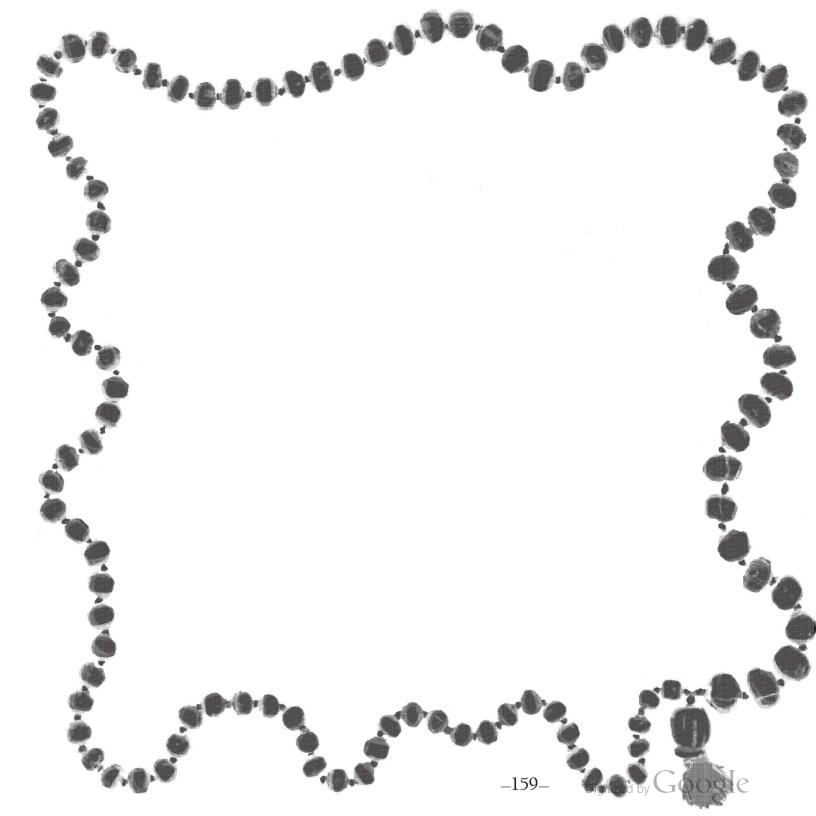
Good *japa* is the goal of a satisfied life. It's such a simple yet elusive thing. All you have to do is clear your mind of distractions and concentrate on softly, gently, reverently reciting Hare, Krishna and Rama. We have made our lives so cluttered with other things that we can't take simple pleasure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







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