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Japa Reform Notebook



Satgururupa Japa Bhawanani

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JAPA REFORM NOTEBOOK

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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INTRODUCTION

THE ESSENCE of this little book is self-explanatory. But I would like to admit the limitations of *Japa Reform Notebook* and also suggest how devotees can best use it.

In chanting the holy name of the Lord, there are three stages of development: the offensive stage, the clearing stage, and the transcendental stage. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes these in the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*:

In the offensive stage one may desire all kinds of material happiness, but in the second stage one becomes clear of all material contamination. When one is situated on the transcendental stage, he attains the most coveted position—the stage of loving God. Lord Caitanya taught that this is the highest stage of perfection of human beings.

Japa Reform Notebook concerns a devotee's struggles to free himself from offensive chanting. A critic may question the benefit of hearing from a neophyte who can describe only his own experience in trying to surmount the lowest stage of chanting. But I am not alone in earnestly endeavoring to free myself from the unwanted habits described in this book. Advice on how to make genuine advancement in attentive chanting and in appreciation of the holy name will be relevant for many. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is expanding throughout the world, and every day more people are adopting the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Everyone should be eager to root out bad habits from the start.

Lord Caitanya and His immediate followers, as well as our founder-ācārya, Śrīla Prabhupāda, have already fully

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described the chanting of the holy name in pure love of God. Their statements and books will always remain as beacons to guide us to the ultimate goal. Reading their realized statements and witnessing the potency of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pure chanting, we are confident in the existence of the highest stage of chanting in pure love of God. We are also convinced that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, even in the beginning stage, is itself the means to attain pure chanting.

The instructions here stress the effort to improve one's quality of chanting. Critics may feel that I have emphasized too much the hard work required to chant. For example, I dwell on such basic things as properly pronouncing the words and staying awake. Pure chanting, of course, is not attained merely by technique but comes by the grace of God. Neither have I said that by hard work alone can a chanter attain pure love of God. Yet we must work to cure ourselves of offenses.

The *Japa Reform Notebook* is therefore an elementary book in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Its instructions are based on the authority of *guru*, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*.

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is not done in a vacuum. We have to chant within a whole lifetime of service in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Although I have given different instructions about proper chanting, real advancement comes when Kṛṣṇa is pleased with us. He appears in the heart at His sweet will, and His appearance will be evoked by our becoming a devotee all around—not just a devotee of chanting sixteen rounds but also a devotee of the Vaiṣṇavas, a devotee of our spiritual master, a devotee who performs fixed-up service.

I have quoted as the epigraph for this book a statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Of all the regulative principles, the spiritual master's order to chant at least sixteen rounds is most

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essential." But in this same purport, in the very next paragraph, Śrīla Prabhupāda stresses that we must also remember Kṛṣṇa *through our service*:

One may sell books or enlist life members, or render some other service, but these duties are not ordinary duties. These duties serve as an impetus for remembering Kṛṣṇa. When one goes with a *sankīrtana* party, or sells books, he naturally remembers that he is going to sell Kṛṣṇa's books. In this way he is remembering Kṛṣṇa. When one goes to enlist a life member, he talks about Kṛṣṇa and thereby remembers Him. *Smartavyaḥ satatam viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātucit*. The conclusion is that one must always act in such a way that he will always remember Kṛṣṇa, and one must refrain from things that make him forget Kṛṣṇa. These two principles form the basic background of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

By emphasizing the importance of *japa*, I hope I have not given the impression that one can succeed in chanting without performing active service. The truth, rather, is that only when we humbly engage in devotional service with our mind and all our senses—twenty-four hours a day—only then can we chant in such a state of consciousness as to evoke Kṛṣṇa's blessings.

1

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At 26 Second Avenue in 1966, His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda would personally lead us in *kīrtana* as well as *japa*. After morning *kīrtana* just before his lecture, he would order, "Chant one round." Then he would finger his *japa* beads and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. And the assembled devotees, seated on the floor, would chant aloud their individual *japa*. I used to both chant and finger the beads intently. One time, absorbed in this chanting and fingering, I looked up at Śrīla Prabhupāda and was surprised to find him looking right at me with great concern. It seemed that he saw me, although a most fallen wretch, struggling intently to chant, and this caused him great compassion and concern. It seemed as if even he was awed at the mercy of the holy name.

I also remember my first chanting of *japa* in my apartment around the corner from the temple. Fingering the beads and passing them through my hands gave me a sensation of opulence and luxury. I felt like an ancient *sādhū*. I recall trying to chant clearly and intently.

Over the years, however, my *japa* became less distinct. More and more my attention would wander. I began to think of other devotional duties I had to perform during the day. I neglected to carefully pronounce each word. Sometimes I would attempt to reform the quality of my sixteen rounds, but eventually the bad habits of unclear pronunciation and wandering attention would creep back in. Although I would preach

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to other devotees, "It is an offense to be inattentive while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa," I would repeatedly commit the offense myself. How many other offenses I committed due to the offense against the holy name (*nāma aparādha*), I cannot say. How much I slowed down my devotional growth, I do not know; but certainly it was not auspicious.

But then I received anew the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa in the form of a Godbrother's instructions on *japa*. I became determined to reform, to chant my *japa* pronouncing each word and syllable. My *japa* improved immediately. I then understood the chanting was most important and could not be neglected. I felt I was learning a crucial, confidential secret, although Śrīla Prabhupāda is constantly repeating it, "Chant sixteen rounds and avoid the offenses in chanting." It is a practice. It takes practice. Whatever you practice, the body can learn to do. Chant, chant, chant!

Most difficult is controlling the mind. But the chanting itself is intended to control the mind. So you must practice until you become expert, until you are perfectly pronouncing the holy names and controlling the mind.

Maintain a fighting spirit. The mind *always* wanders. The senses *always* tend to drowse in the early morning hours. Therefore, good *japa* is a matter of successfully combating these things. Like the example of steering a car: keeping control means keeping from going out of control—it is natural that the car heads off the road.

You can expect difficulty after many years of offensive chanting. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul and his enemy as well. For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his very mind will be the greatest

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enemy." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.5-6) As for controlling the mind while chanting *japa*: "It is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by constant practice and detachment." (Bg. 6.34) Wherever the mind goes due to its restless, flickering nature, bring it back under the control of the higher self. You can only pray to Kṛṣṇa that, with practice, sleep and inattentiveness will be overcome.

Doing other things while chanting is not good. Still, sometimes out of expediency you do it. But you should try to put off so-called expedient actions until after chanting. Chant at a designated time and chant loudly. Let other things wait. If you acknowledge that your chanting is very poor and at the same time you acknowledge that it's important to improve it, then you'll be much better qualified to chant and preach.

If you have some basic dissatisfaction or worry, then chanting will be difficult. Try telling yourself, "Put this trouble aside. In these two hours, just turn to the name."

Of course the mind is sometimes thinking of other things besides the sound of Kṛṣṇa's names. Then at least maintain the virtue of pronouncing the names clearly and of staying alert. And if you cannot control the mind, then cry (like a child cries for its mother) to put the mind at the lotus feet of the holy name and taste the nectar of surrender to the name.

An unfortunate but common predicament: You are not crying to the holy name as a child cries for its mother. Who can say he is completely free of this predicament? Why does it happen? One common reason is the mind's preoccupation with other things. But what about chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa? Does it take devastation for you to cry out to the holy name Himself? But then when devastation comes, chanting will be especially difficult.

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Why aren't we chanting in a helpless mood? Because we are clinging to material attachments. The last offense in chanting is to maintain material attachments (*aham mameti*) even after understanding the chanting and hearing so many instructions on spiritual life. It is engaging in spiritual life with our anchor out. That wedding party was rowing all night, but because they still had the anchor out, they did not go anywhere. The anchor is attachment to sense gratification. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "You can chant and chant for hundreds of years and not get the result, if you chant with the anchor out." So much work is done without result, because they are trying to prosecute spiritual duties while maintaining their sense gratification. We should be introspective, take apart these *anarthas* and rectify our situation to have an open road in our chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa—so we can go back to Godhead very quickly. Nothing else is necessary in this age but to be a chanter of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Inattention is a serious problem in chanting. As the non-devotee does not understand the value of human life or the urgency to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, so a devotee sometimes does not fully understand the urgency and necessity of calling on the holy name. Then despite his theoretical acceptance of the principle of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, he stubbornly deliberates on other things while uttering the holy name. Inattention then explains why, when a devotee chants, tears do not come to his eyes, his voice does not choke up with the utterance of the holy name, and his hairs do not stand on end, and why he does not feel the world is all vacant without Kṛṣṇa.

"Unless a devotee actually develops transcendental love for the Lord, it is not possible for him to think always of the Lord within his heart."

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Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Twelfth Chapter of the *Gītā* that you should always think of Him in spontaneous love. But if you can't do that, then try to follow the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*. And if you can't do even that, then try to work for Kṛṣṇa, and if you can't do that, then cultivate selfless work, and if you can't do that, then cultivate knowledge. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu also advises that you give your whole life to Kṛṣṇa, but if you cannot do that, then you should give your money, and if you cannot do that, then you should at least give your intelligence, and if you do not have intelligence, you should at least give your words. Similarly, for chanting *japa*, we can advise that a devotee should constantly cry out in full love of God, completely surrendering himself to the Lord, and tasting the nectar of ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa. But if you cannot do that, then cry out, "My dear Lord, I am unable to sincerely cry out Your name in surrendered love. Please forgive me."

But we may have to admit that we cannot even cry out sincerely about our inability to cry out in spontaneous love. What then? At least you should cry out, lamenting your inability to even feel any inability: "My dear Lord, I am just a dull stone. I cannot chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with any quality, only mechanically. I cannot even lament my inability." Somehow or other, come out with an utterance, a cry. Do not remain a dull stone without feeling. Starting immediately from whatever point you are at (no matter how low), utter the available cry of your heart and go on from there.

Chant feelingly. Of course, if at any given moment you do not chant feelingly, you cannot go back and start your rounds again. What can be done? Push on, but keep trying. Kick out with heavy boots the poisonous snakes of sleep and

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gross sensualism. Then cry like a child for its mother, calling on the holy name, "O energy of God, O Kṛṣṇa, please let me serve You."

King Kulaśekhara's advice is important for proper chanting. At the time of death, it will be difficult to chant due to our physical condition. "Now that I am chanting in good health, let me die thinking of Kṛṣṇa." Of course we don't want to die now; we want to live to serve. But now while our material minds and bodies are intact, we should chant in the mood that this is our last precious chance to concentrate and to depend fully on the holy name. With this sober reflection, you can drive out all auxiliary thoughts. Chant while you can.

Bhīṣmadeva also drove out all other thought at the time of his passing away. Scheming over this and that, letting the mind wander—at the time of death you will be forced to give up all these thoughts. But do it now and save yourself for chanting. Such pure chanting can save the whole world. "O Rādhā, O Kṛṣṇa, please engage me!"

Mind-wandering and drowsiness continue to be the main obstacles. The mind thinks over his latest schemes: "I can't put certain things aside and simply chant!" But analyzing them, I see the things my mind dwells on are not so important that they couldn't be suspended in favor of two and a half hours of concentrated *japa*. Put everything aside, and chant the holy name.

You should have already had a good evening's rest; therefore, resist sleep. After fighting it off, you will get strength for *japa*. But if you yield to sleep, then your rounds may always be sleepy, poorly uttered, and inattentive, not just for one day but for months on end. The power of a bad habit is such that it may even become a bad habit for life, based on an illusion

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that you cannot fight off sleep. You say, "What can I do? It has overpowered me!" But the *japa-yajña* is not a mere physical exercise; it is dynamic and spiritual. Therefore, it contains force, and you can gain force if you resist the deadly undertow of sleep and poorly uttered rounds.

Japa is not a short burst but a long haul. One round after another, you have to enter gradually, deeply, into the mellows of the holy name—by numerical strength. It takes time. Keep chanting.

Chanting *japa* in the association of devotees helps. It's too embarrassing to fall asleep in their presence. But no extensive talking with your *japa* partners; only Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare

But you have to *keep going*. Two hours-plus can seem like a long haul if all you are doing is loudly repeating: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. But you have to go on, go beyond, push on, round after round without let-up.

It seems hopeless to stop the mind's wandering, but at least let the other track (as in multiple-track tape recordings) contain the full, awake, articulated sound: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Chant clearly, no matter what. Admitting the impossibility of stopping all impure thoughts, at least always keep the sound track clear. Then I know whenever I switch back to chanting, pure sound will be there. By a flick of the mental switch, I can be out of *māyā* into *japa*. But how to keep the dial locked on the pure sound?

This is the good struggle. I spit at the bad thought. Getting back on the track a few moments, my mind as well as my voice and jaws moving to worship the holy name, take shelter

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in the calling out the holy name—but then again slipping off on another track, either some devotional service, or some *māyā* not to be done. Is there a secret? I work my fingers over the beads, conscientiously chanting, saving my best time for the chanting, intellectually aware that chanting is the *dharma* for the age, preaching it as the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and aware of my poor chanting. Hope against hope: maybe tomorrow will be better.

“O Kṛṣṇa, O Rāma, O energy of the Lord, Hare, please engage me in your service.”

But then I reached a plateau and I thought, “This is the vast intermediate zone. It stretches far and wide. It seems you can go no further than the intermediate zone. You have stopped committing the four sinful acts (previously you didn’t even know they were sinful), and you are bound by a strong vow to chant sixteen rounds daily. But after making a certain amount of significant progress, even after being initiated by a genuine spiritual master in *paramparā*, after chanting for years, you are still inching along in the vast stretches of the intermediate zone.”

So you have decided you can go no further? Is it modesty that prevents you from aspiring to pure love of God? No. You are afraid of giving up material life once and for all.

“O my Lord, when will my eyes be decorated with tears of love flowing constantly when I chant Your name? When will my voice choke up, and when will the hairs of my body stand on end at the recitation of Your name?”

When will the day come when I chant the holy names and not just “my rounds”? Meditating on “the second round,” “the third round,” and “the fourth round” is to mix the pure sound of Kṛṣṇa’s name with the thought of an ordinary number. One,

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two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. But these numbers are in themselves *niyama-āgraha*—following the rules without realization. “Now I’m on the second round,” “Oh, this is the third round”—what kind of chanting and hearing is this?

How often do you say, with foolish satisfaction, “I got my rounds done,” “I finished chanting,” or “I did my rounds.” But did you chant as Lord Caitanya prays? No, you were too busy trying to stay awake, trying to keep your mind on the right track. Where was time for crying at the feet of the holy name? You didn’t “finish chanting.” You haven’t even started! Chant humbly and pray, for forgiveness for your offensive chanting and for a chance to improve.

We can get out of the offenses in the intermediate zone by being very sorry to be there. Be troubled, be bothered by it. *Then* you can reform. Even in the material world, reform comes out of intolerance at injustice. The reformer of labor conditions or champion for human rights—he demands reform. He protests and goes on strike. He fights.

The holy name is the only way out of the material world. It is the specified mercy form of the Lord; if we neglect the holy name, we’re neglecting Kṛṣṇa Himself. How lamentable! If I do not take this mercy, I am worse than dead. I have knowingly drunk poison. I have spent my life uselessly. “Why did my attraction for that chanting never come about? Day and night my heart burns from the fire of the poison of worldliness, and I do not take the means to relieve it.” Am I just going to sit here and let this happen? The *japa* reformer fights against inattentive, offensive chanting.

In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is stated that even a person whose life is completely sinful will be completely protected by the

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Lord if he simply surrenders unto Him. So it is accepted that one who surrenders unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead becomes freed from all sinful reactions. And even when a person becomes an offender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, he can still be delivered simply by taking shelter of the holy names of the Lord.

—*The Nectar of Devotion*

The name is not different from Kṛṣṇa, but in this passage Rūpa Gosvāmī makes a distinction. *The Nectar of Devotion* says that even if you offend the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you can still be delivered by the holy name. So what's the difference? The name is a very merciful appearance of Kṛṣṇa. So easily you can associate with Kṛṣṇa. Nothing special is required—no austerities or rituals. The name is Kṛṣṇa; however, just as Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa, but a very, very merciful Kṛṣṇa, so Kṛṣṇa becomes so merciful that if you approach Him in this form of the holy name, everything is forgiven.

If you offend the Lord, you can still be delivered simply by taking shelter of the holy names of the Lord—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In other words, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is beneficial for eradicating all sins. But if one becomes an offender of the holy names of the Lord, then he has no chance of being delivered. There is, however, a way to be excused for offenses at the feet of the holy name.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

While chanting the holy name of the Lord, one should be careful to avoid the ten offenses. From Sanat-kumāra it is understood that even if a person is a severe offender in many ways, he is freed from offensive life if he takes shelter of the Lord's holy name. Indeed, if a human being is not

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better than a two-legged animal, he will be liberated if he takes shelter of the holy name of the Lord. One should, therefore, be very careful not to commit offenses at the lotus feet of the Lord's name.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23-24, purport

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda lists the ten offenses. In his purport he states the tenth offense a little differently: "Not to awaken transcendental attachment for the chanting of the holy name even after hearing all the scriptural injunctions." If you are so dead that even after hearing all these instructions, receiving the holy name from your spiritual master, and practicing the chanting, if you still don't develop attachment for chanting the holy name—this is the tenth offense.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

There is no way to atone for any of these offenses. It is therefore recommended that an offender at the feet of the holy name continue to chant the holy name twenty-four hours a day. Constant chanting of the holy name will make one free of offenses, and then he will gradually be elevated to the transcendental platform on which he can chant the pure holy name and thus become a lover of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is recommended that even if one commits offenses one should continue chanting the holy name. In other words, the chanting of the holy name makes one offenseless.

The book *Nāma-kaumudī* recommends that if one is an offender at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava, he should submit to that Vaiṣṇava and be excused; similarly, if one is an offender in chanting the holy name, he should submit to the holy name and thus be freed from his offenses. One should be very humble and meek to offer one's desires and chant prayers composed in glorification of the holy name.

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Here is the prayer Dakṣa made to Lord Śiva (and that we can also make to the holy name for our offenses):

I did not know the glories of your personality, and therefore I committed an offense at your lotus feet in the open assembly. You are so kind, however, that you did not accept my offense. Instead, when I was falling down because of accusing you, you saved me by your merciful glance. You are most great. Kindly excuse me and be satisfied with your own exalted qualities.

And Rūpa Gosvāmī prays in his *Nāmāṣṭakam* that one should be very humble and meek to offer one's desires and chant prayers composed in glorification of the holy name:

O *hari-nāma*, the tips of the toes of Your lotus feet are constantly being worshiped by the glowing radiance emanating from the string of gems known as the *Upaniṣads*, the crown jewels of the *Vedas*. You are eternally adored by liberated souls such as Nārada and Śukadeva. O *hari-nāma*, I take complete shelter of You.

These are the kind of verses with which you can pray to the holy name. If you make offenses to Hare Kṛṣṇa, then it's to Hare Kṛṣṇa that you must go for relief. You can't get forgiveness for your offenses to the holy name except from the holy name. Just like if you offend a person, then you have to approach that person for forgiveness of your offense. You have to actually feel remorse. Otherwise, we may say, "The cure for offensive chanting is to go on chanting." But you have to chant with the desire to improve. This is your way back to Godhead, you have to do it right. If that awareness doesn't enter your mind and heart, then it will not be very easy to change, to reform.

Rūpa Gosvāmī has explained such reluctant chanting of

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the neophyte. He compares such a chanter to a man with jaundice. To a man with jaundice everything tastes bitter. But the cure of this jaundice disease is to regularly take the most concentrated sweet, like this rock candy. And even rock candy the jaundiced man tastes as bitter. But as he takes and takes, then gradually his normal taste returns, and he tastes the sugar as sweet. So Rūpa Gosvāmī compares this to the neophyte's chanting of the holy name. He says that actually the holy name is the sweetest of all things. It is sweeter than any taste of the material world. The taste of success in material sense gratification is nothing compared to the taste of love of God by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. But because the neophyte devotee is still affected by material desire, the sweet name to him is also sometimes dry. But the cure is to regularly take this holy name, and that will return the spirit soul's original taste for chanting the names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The spiritual master knows this science of chanting. He is like a doctor to the ailing disciple and prescribes this chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa so that the disciple can return to his normal health. By health we don't mean bodily health, but the eternal state of health. The devotee can again attain his eternal spiritual body and be with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. That can be done by this chanting. So at this stage you have to have full faith in the order of the spiritual master and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, whether you are feeling ecstasy or whatever.

Understand that Kṛṣṇa is His name and that He has come to you in His name as a great kindness: "O my Lord, You have so kindly made approach to You easy by Your holy name." And then go to that person, *Nāma Prabhu*, whom you have offended, who is the only one who can save you, and ask forgiveness—by chanting. "There is nothing in the fourteen

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worlds but the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa," says Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Admitting I am chanting poorly—please consider me fallen before You—I beg to be reformed by chanting Ha-re Kṛṣṇa.

Devotional service in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement affords us many facilities to serve Kṛṣṇa aside from the chanting of the holy names. This fact doesn't diminish the glory of the holy name, but enhances it, because the chanting is a key part of the whole devotional way of life. I had read about Christian monks who practiced solitary prayer, but they had no *prasādam* or Deity worship or lively Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*. Nor did they have the benefit of such great, nectarean *ācāryas* of the mellows of love of God like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the six Gosvāmīs, and Śrīla Prabhupāda. For the Christian monks the practice of chanting was a clinging to the name in a world they rather impersonally viewed as all illusion.

We also must utterly depend on the holy name, but at the same time our restless natures can be purified by the soothing rays of *darśana* of Their Lordships, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi, and Lord Jagannātha. As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes, "By taking the Lord's *prasādam* our senses are controlled . . . whenever I take the remnants of *prasādam* I experience a new life." Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda has said we require both diet and medicine: the medicine is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and the diet is *prasādam*. And the perfection of the eyes is to see the Deity, and the perfection of the head is to bow before the Deity of the Lord.

Moreover, we are fully engaging our body, mind, and senses in our pure devotional service. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *The Nectar of Devotion*:

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In the *Skanda Purāṇa* it is said that those who are attached to ritualistic activities, the four orders of social life and the four orders of spiritual life are considered devotees. But when devotees are actually engaged in offering service to the Lord directly, these must be *bhāgavatas*, pure devotees.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has also informed us in *The Nectar of Devotion* that the chance to engage in devotional service is beyond liberation: "A person who is constantly engaged in chanting the holy name and who feels transcendental pleasure, being engaged in devotional service, is never given just *mukti*." (*Ādi Purāṇa*)

It is a cause for real rejoicing that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us the full spiritual life in which to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Dressed as a Vaiṣṇava, with only devotees as friends, we chant. With expert guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. While living in the temple (Vaikuṇṭha), we chant. While traveling in a van on *saṅkīrtana*, we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Before and after seeing the Deity, while taking *caraṇāmṛta*, worshipping Tulasī, hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (the topmost science of God), we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. And we are chanting the supreme name of God—KṚṢṂA. Thousands of other names of God equal only one name of Kṛṣṇa.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda! All glories to the *saṅkīrtana* movement! We do not have to chant alone in desperate doubt. We have the support of enormous armies in fighting off the demons. We are not chanting in a world of void. We have been given the full manifestation of spiritual reality in which to prosecute the *dharma* of the age.

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Then, rise tiny spirit soul, in gratefulness, security, and protection—and chant, chant, chant. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

2

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Maṇḍaleśvara and I walking, chanting in beautiful twilight of Gītā-nāgarī. I am on my seventeenth round. I ask, "Is there anything you want to discuss?" He says no. I say, "Yes, the chanting is enough." We go on walking through pre-spring mud: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

I remember an old Zen story. Two monks walking in a forest. They hear nearby the loud roar of a lion. One of them breaks into laughter. The Zen story is incomplete realization, to say the least. You can laugh at death, at nothingness, at fear, at pain, at violence, at illusion—but the laugh or meditation on nothingness won't actually help you. You will have to take another birth and again experience dualities. But, *ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ*, your devotional service will be tested at the time of death. Practice to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Do not chant like the parrot who may learn to utter "Hare Kṛṣṇa," but when grabbed at the throat cries, "Caw caw!" Prabhupāda said practice so that when death comes you will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

"If one's heart does not change, tears do not flow from his eyes, his body does not shiver nor his hair stand on end as he chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, it should be understood that his heart is as hard as iron. This is due to his offenses at the lotus feet of the Lord's holy name." This verse should not make us try to force or imitate this state, but it

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should make us humble about our chanting. When we chant, does our heart change? Do tears flow, the body shiver? We give warning again and again—don't try to bring this on, but see your humble position because this is not happening; the chanting is not first-class, due to offenses to the holy name. Chant heart and soul early in the morning and you will be prepared to take on all obstacles in the day.

We want to save ourselves and we want to propagate the holy name, and it's the holy name itself that will save us. Kṛṣṇa will be pleased that we are chanting and pleased that we are distributing. Īśvara Purī advised Lord Caitanya, "My dear child, continue dancing, chanting, and performing *saṅkīrtana* in association with devotees. Furthermore, go out and preach the value of chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, for by this process you will be able to deliver all fallen souls."

You must think of chanting in terms of serving the spiritual master, not just as your own *sādhana*. I am thinking Śrīla Prabhupāda has given me different responsibilities, and if I don't carry them out he will be displeased with me. Spiritual life rests on chanting. That's the main teaching. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, chant sixteen rounds. So how can that not be thought of as service to the spiritual master? Sometimes the spiritual master may find out, "Oh, some disciple, he is not chanting. What kind of a disciple is that? He promised he would chant. We are always stressing chant." I can't advance in devotional service unless I chant. Therefore, it's not just your *sādhana*, but everything you do is to serve Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. Everything. That should be our dedication, that there is nothing apart.

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I think I would do better to ignore the mind's dwelling on a piece of dirt rather than keep holding it up for inspection, exclaiming, "Gosh, it's still there; and again, look, it's still there; how persistently it stays! What a disease! Will I ever be rid of this before the time of death?" This is like too much of a challenge to the rascal mind. So let me try not to be so worried and instead turn my mind elsewhere, even though the piece of dirt (or mental thorn) remains. There is a Cāṇakya śloka which says that mental dirt cannot be cleaned away after hundreds of times of bathing in a sacred river. And yet the holy name, according to the Śikṣāṣṭaka, can clean away the dirt accumulated for many lifetimes together.

Today in the class in New York I was stressing that the devotees chant feeling a personal connection with their spiritual master. This in itself will help keep one's mind fixed on the holy name. Always remember that you promised your spiritual master to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa without offenses, including the offense of inattentive chanting. It is a personal obligation, and one should chant keeping the order of the spiritual master in mind and therefore keeping the personal connection. Study sections in the scriptures about the holy names, such as the chanting of Ajāmila or Haridāsa Ṭhākura's instructions about the holy name or Lord Caitanya's descriptions in *Ādi-līlā*, Chapter Seven, about chanting the holy name under the direction of Īśvara Purī. Then absorbing such things and realizing more the importance of the holy name, you should humbly chant with surrender.

Attention means devotion also. You get better and better at it. Imagine doing something for years and not getting better

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at it. What does that mean? Now I am getting a new servant one after another. When they start, they don't know many things. Perhaps the servant will bring in the *ārati* paraphernalia without a conchshell. That's a big omission. I will tell him, "When you bring the *ārati* paraphernalia, bring in the conchshell."

"Oh, all right," he will answer. So generally the following day he brings in the conchshell. At worst he may forget it two days in a row. But can you imagine somebody doing something for years and not doing the essentials? It could only mean he is very stupid, like an ass, or he is unconscious.

The main thing is to fix your mind on the sound of the chanting. As you strain and yearn to keep your attention fixed, this naturally brings a mood of devotion. This is the way you serve the holy name. Just as when cooking, if you try very hard not to burn the preparation, to spice it nicely, and to keep it cooking nicely, then you express your devotion in this way. You may think separately from the cooking, "Please, Kṛṣṇa, accept this nice preparation I am cooking for You." But the main devotion is in cooking it nicely for Kṛṣṇa. So you have to actually chant nicely, and as you concentrate on it this is the best meditation. In later stages spontaneous thoughts of Kṛṣṇa will come. But you simply keep your mind fixed on hearing the holy name.

You must be attentive and control your mind. Don't chant unconsciously. That implies that you have an intellectual conception of chanting: "I just can't get into it. It's not important." Sometimes people will read directions how to operate something, but they have so many other responsibilities that

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they just can't pay attention to the directions. It doesn't mean anything to them. It's not important to them. They may say, "Somebody else can do it. I can't concentrate on it. It's just too trivial." So don't minimize the holy name in the back of your mind. It's absurd if you cannot actually accept that you're supposed to use your best intelligence to concentrate on the repetition of the holy name.

If you have an eight-track mind that disturbs you when you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, the only remedy is to put Kṛṣṇa on all the eight tracks. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* wherever the mind goes you have to bring it back under the control of the higher self. Be conscientious.

To say "I tried hard—I almost made it" is not perfection. If you chant with offenses, then your chanting will be offensive. Still, that doesn't mean that you stop the chanting or stop the preaching. We should be encouraged just by our trying even though imperfect. Just go on. Maybe we won't attain Kṛṣṇa for some time by our devotional service, but we have to keep trying—being satisfied by the *japa* and the nectar we obtain by that trying. The higher stage of chanting is love, and at that point there is no more *trying*. It is spontaneous.

But not that the best chanter of the names of Kṛṣṇa has developed his chanting like some great weight lifter. "Oh, he is a very famous chanter. He tried day after day for many years, and now he has perfected his chanting. He can control his mind!" I remember talking to one professor practicing Buddhist meditation. He was explaining how to keep all different thoughts out of the mind. When some thought enters like an intruder, then with great prowess you push it out; when

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another thought enters you push that thought out. In this way you meditate—very strenuously. We may think, “Now I’m avoiding the first offense, now I’m avoiding the second offense, now I’m avoiding all ten offenses—I’m awake, I’m attentive,” etc. But we are not like the juggler who puts another spinning plate on top, then another, then another, and then he is perfect. In other words, the holy name is Kṛṣṇa, who when fully pleased appears on the tongue of an ideal chanter. He is not created by the chanter. Ultimately only loving service pleases Him, and that is done by linking with one who is already known to Kṛṣṇa. Of course, Kṛṣṇa knows everyone, but in terms of devotional service it is different. I may say I have been a big rascal and now I am letting out a great crying of love, “O Kṛṣṇa! O Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!” He’ll say “Oh? Who is this with all these protestations of love for Me? Who is this upstart?” But, if He is informed by one of His intimate associates like Rādhārāṇī, “This person chanting is actually a very good devotee. I recommend him,” then He will say “Oh, then all right.” He won’t take you without a recommendation; this is mercy.

Our trying to chant nicely is satisfying to Kṛṣṇa, and He responds; but ultimately it is not just by our hard endeavor that He does so. In the *Bhāgavatam* Prahāda tells his father, “You cannot know Kṛṣṇa by the practice of austerities or *saṅnyāsa* regulations or *gṛhastha* regulations.” And he mentions severe examples like going into the river up to your neck on a cold day. It is not that we can finally try so hard to chant our *japa* that we beat down the holy name into submission—“Now I’ve got you under my foot!” No, you have to cry for Kṛṣṇa! And the chanter must be avoiding offenses in his service. Kṛṣṇa will be attracted not just by hard endeavor but by

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rubbing yourself in the dust of the lotus feet of the pure devotees.

Kṛṣṇa appeared in the womb of ISKCON. Although the chanting of the holy name is absolute, if chanted by someone performing sinful acts, then the full effect is not there. Allen Ginsberg went to India and brought back the holy name even before Prabhupāda, but how effective was that marijuana-homosexual chanting? The holy name has to be chanted by one who is serving Śrīla Prabhupāda in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Then the chanting is pure. Then the full effect is there.

There is no "secret" to *japa*; it is a struggle. There is no easy shortcut. The *secret* is to surrender to the struggle. The secret is to be afraid of death and to take it as very urgent that you must chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. We used to have a slogan, "Chant while you can," on some posters and show a scary picture of a graveyard. So we have to think like that: "Chant while you can." That is the secret. You develop love of Kṛṣṇa by crying as a child cries for the mother, "Kṛṣṇa, son of Nanda, I am stuck in this ocean of birth and death. Please save me and fix me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet."

The best thing is that you just pray to the holy name and hear the sound. The stage of thinking of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their forms will come automatically. It cannot be so much forced. When the mind wanders, bring it back in a mood of prayer and supplication, thinking, "O holy name, I want to chant, I want to hear, I want to be engaged in Your service by chanting and hearing." Then simply practice the *mantra*-

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yoga of vibrating with the tongue and hearing with the ear. Don't make interpretations or imaginations on the holy name. As far as the love Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja speaks of in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, that is the highest stage. We should aspire to that and make endeavor.

As far as controlling the mind, two senses engaged are sufficient. If we engage the process of hearing and the process of chanting with the tongue, then these two senses can capture the mind on the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

We have to invest more and more our thinking, feeling, and willing into our chanting, not thinking that we will surpass this chanting or that the chanting will lead to something different from chanting. I told this several times to one devotee who said he chanted sixty-four rounds on Janmāṣṭamī. As he chanted he had this feeling that something was going to happen, that if he chanted enough, "it" was going to happen. But his conclusion at the end was that he was still a rascal, even after chanting sixty-four rounds. Another conclusion is that it's not by chanting that "it" happens but "it" is happening while we chant. What we have to do is just invest more of our consciousness into it.

An example is the pseudo-spiritual hippie impersonal philosophy that what's really happening is whatever is happening now. It's summed up in that phrase, "Be here now." I had a friend who used to say, "As far as eternal, there's no afterlife. But there is eternal—eternal means *now*, what's happening now." Actually that philosophy leads to hedonism—the moment, whatever is happening, is all there is, so you have to really get into it. And sometimes they try for spirituality—

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that everything right now is holy, and this is what is transcendental. You just invest yourself, invest meaning into the temporary life, and that is religious. But that's bogus because there is another life; there is Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, beyond this world. It's not that this is all there is, so you have to invest everything here. We don't subscribe to that philosophy. But we can take that mentality. We can apply it—"Be here now"—because we have got eternal transcendental life given to us in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The chanting is Kṛṣṇa, so for us that is true, that everything is here. "Be here now"—Kṛṣṇa is actually here in His name. All you have to do is get into it or get with it, that this is Kṛṣṇa's name.

So while you are chanting, you don't have to get to something else or go somewhere else or wait for "it" to happen, but you just have to realize that this is actually Kṛṣṇa. Then, as you realize Kṛṣṇa more, you get more into the chanting. You realize that the chanting is simply to chant Kṛṣṇa's name, and you want to do it more and more.

Of course, in a sense it is true that the chanting leads to a breakthrough and to higher understanding, but to higher understanding of the same thing—that Kṛṣṇa is His name, that Kṛṣṇa is actually His name. And then you realize it more—that actually Kṛṣṇa is His name. Sometimes we gain a little understanding of it. We say, "You know, I've been chanting. I am understanding that actually the name is Kṛṣṇa." Or we may be reading and then understand, "Oh, actually the name is Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is His name, Kṛṣṇa is so wonderful, and Kṛṣṇa is appearing in His name." Improving chanting means realizing this more and more. Just like with the Deity—Kṛṣṇa is standing on the altar, so we keep going and seeing Kṛṣṇa. The best way to take His *darśana* is to get more and more realization

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that Kṛṣṇa is actually here. Not that you have to see a light coming from the Deity or see Him move, but He has come in this form. He's exactly Kṛṣṇa in this brass form. He's not brass, He's Kṛṣṇa—but exactly as He is. The name is like this. The name is actually Kṛṣṇa. Not that by chanting—then something else. But the sound vibration is Kṛṣṇa. It's just a matter of becoming submissive or receptive. Prabhupāda uses the phrase "aural reception." We produce this sound, and we hear it; this is *yoga*. Therefore, it's such a simple process. We can make all advancement.

Chanting is done from the heart, as a way of life. That is inoffensive chanting. It is not just a technique. You have in the past been a victim of your uncontrolled senses. You should pray to Kṛṣṇa when you chant, "Please save me from *māyā*. Please save me from my raging senses. Please, Lord, engage my senses in Your service. Please let me chant Hare Kṛṣṇa sincerely. Please do not let me go away from Your lotus feet into the jaws of *māyā*." This prayerful attitude as you chant, realizing your dangerous position, will be more effective than touching the tongue to the upper portion of the palate like the South Indian *brāhmaṇa*.

A few years ago on the inside cover of *Back to Godhead* we used an ad where different *karmīs* would relate their experiences of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. One man said, "It charges my batteries," and others said different things. Prabhupāda said, "That is all right, but you must also instruct them that they should take to the process." Chanting involves the whole process. We don't want people to introduce it in their lives as a cheap thing: "Oh, I chant because it relieves me of tension

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before I go to the executive board meeting," or, "Before my performance, I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." You have to take to the process.

Nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ. Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ". . . *Gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or Kṛṣṇa's name or Kṛṣṇa's form, pastimes, anything about Kṛṣṇa—they are one. Therefore by chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, you directly contact Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the *nāmī*, and Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is His name. But they are nondifferent. Otherwise, how this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is so quickly appreciated all over the world? There's no difference between chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and meeting Kṛṣṇa eye-to-eye, face-to-face. Simply one has to realize. The more you become purified by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, you will see Kṛṣṇa face-to-face.

People are asking, 'Can you show me God?'

You can see. Simply prepare your eyes. Simply prepare your ears, by hearing. *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. So this is a very scientific, authorized, practical movement. You chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and you will realize that gradually you are advancing to meet Kṛṣṇa face-to-face. It is possible."

—Lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda
1/12/73 in Bombay

How can you control your mind by chanting? This is an honest question. Even if you don't commit gross sinful activities, the subtle material desires in the mind, and the fact that the mind is uncontrolled makes you unable to chant. This is especially prominent in the age of Kali. The only solution is to work hard at chanting. Kṛṣṇa says wherever the mind

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wanders bring it back under the control of the higher self. Just as when a parent takes care of a little child, the parent has to constantly see that the child does not go astray. The parent cannot say that the child should cooperate more and just stay in one place. But the parent lovingly has to constantly watch. In the same way, you have to lovingly and yet strongly discipline the mind and keep it concentrated on the holy name. Do not find fault with the process. And do not think that Kṛṣṇa is not helping you. He has helped you by giving you Himself in His holy name. Now you have to take to the process sincerely and "God helps those who help themselves."

You just have to be aware of the importance of chanting. Whatever the leaders preach, the others will talk about and follow. But, you cannot artificially preach or introduce anything to someone else unless you first introduce it to yourself. First examine your own chanting, then you can convey your realization to the others. It is not like some legislation—if you want something to enter people's hearts, it has to enter your heart first.

As you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, your dormant love of God will come out, just as butter comes out when we churn milk. Butter is already there in milk, but it has to be brought out by the process of churning. So your love of God is there, it just has to be brought out by your chanting.

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *japa* should be done by moving the tongue and lips, reciting audibly, and pronouncing the words. At least our sixteen rounds should be chanted in this way. Beyond this, if one can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at other times, it is

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good. Such chanting aloud should not be considered external. The sound vibration is part of the internal or spiritual energy. Not that because we chant aloud it is external, whereas quiet or silent or meditative chanting is internal. Lord Caitanya savored the external congregational chanting of *kīrtana*, and even the *japa* is done aloud. Prabhupāda once said if we try to chant in the mind, then without chanting aloud we may have to listen to the mind's nonsense. So to overcome the devious mind we chant aloud. It is all right to recite the translation, but not that it should be done regularly after each *mantra*. Don't concoct.

But how can I become determined to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa? I have read Lord Caitanya's prayer where He states that He has no attraction for the holy name. So I think certainly this is my position also, except I cannot even make it into a wonderful prayer of lamentation as did Lord Caitanya. Whatever progress I have made in my chanting is due to Kṛṣṇa's mercy on me. We gain benefit by watching others chant with great absorption. The words should be chanted with clear utterance, and the whole body should be concentrated on the chanting. We can't expect to do other things while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. It is not such a thing that you can negligently chant and at the same time drive a car, dial a telephone, read a newspaper, etc.

We should not minimize the hearing. What are we hearing? Kṛṣṇa's name. Hearing oneself calling on Kṛṣṇa's name is really not different from addressing Kṛṣṇa. It should not be that we are repeating the name dully, or unconsciously. So let your consciousness be that you think of calling on Kṛṣṇa's name while you actually recite that name. This is called attentive

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chanting. As far as whether Kṛṣṇa hears you—yes, Kṛṣṇa hears you directly, but I do not think that Prabhupāda is left out of that direct hearing. Brahmananda Mahārāja calls this “Prabhupāda consciousness.” That is, that when we chant as well as do any other service, we think I am doing this because it has been given to me by Prabhupāda. So we are thanking Prabhupāda as we chant. I know myself when I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and sometimes feel myself grow inattentive, I spontaneously call out, “Prabhupāda!” This spontaneous call shows that I am thinking of the chanting in terms of my spiritual master who gave it to me. The chanting always goes through the spiritual master. At what point would we like to become so advanced that we now kick aside the spiritual master? At least I would not like to reap such advancement.

“Devahūti shows us the process for understanding transcendental subject matters. It is not by challenge but by submission. The entire *bhakti* process is a process of submission. That is also Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s teaching. *Tṛṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā/amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*. If one is interested in advancing in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya Mahāprabhu advises that one should be humbler than the grass and more tolerant than the trees. One should not be very proud of his intelligence but should give all respects to others. In this way one can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa offenselessly.”

—The Teachings of Lord Kapila

Anyone who is proud can move his mouth and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but he will not be able to experience the actual taste of serving the holy name, unless he becomes very humble. “I

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am very fallen. I am not a big independent living entity. I am simply dependent on Your mercy, so please give me attention or else I cannot stand."

Why is it a struggle on some days to concentrate while on other days it is easier? This is the very definition of unsteadiness. When you become steady, it will be good every day. You can make advancement in *japa* when you always look forward to doing it, feel pleasure when you do it, and do it with steady consciousness. Another measure is that you will feel less material desires. That symptom is more important than exactly how much bliss you feel while fingering the beads.

When the spiritual master asks you to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, which he especially does at the time of your initiation, that is an order different than is given to you by any other person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His request that you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, when you take it up, forms the most intimate, personal relationship between yourself and your spiritual master, and yourself and Kṛṣṇa in disciplic succession. So this is the real link for your friendship and your dependence on his instruction.

We might say chanting is a kind of lazy intelligence—you're just chanting. But it's very important. So if you know this is a priority, then you have to control your mind. The world is not going to end in those two hours that you chant your rounds. Don't interrupt them. But sometimes you do have to interrupt them, and we see it's not good. We should try to have a peaceful life. Don't arrange your life so it's always subject to such interruptions, which become a habit. There's emergency crisis management, but not that you just go from

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one crisis to another. Try to arrange your life so that you can chant your *japa* with concentration.

If you chant your rounds with great attention you can feel your connection with your spiritual master in that way. As you chant you should think, "I have been told by my spiritual master to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and that alone will give me pure love of God. So I feel very confident in my spiritual master's words. Therefore, I shall chant as he instructed me." In this way, by saying the names of Kṛṣṇa, you will think both of your spiritual master and the Supreme Lord.

My disciples ask me how to improve their personal relationship with their spiritual master. Therefore, I have told them that if they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with great faith in the order as I have given it to them, this will constitute a very intimate and completely transcendental relationship between ourselves. So this is also proof of the connection that exists between us for improving your chanting and hearing for approaching Kṛṣṇa. Please continue this and increase it, so that by chanting and hearing all impurities will go from your heart and before the end of life you will be ready to go back to Godhead.

It is all right that you pray to Kṛṣṇa to make you pure while chanting. You should pray to Him to help you hear better. The holy name will Himself make you pure. You don't need to pray while chanting for some separate purification. Just pray to be able to hear better.

You must have a reserved period of time, whether it be in the afternoon or whenever, in which you are able to chant

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the balance of your rounds every day. The important thing is regulation and a good place and time to chant. Aside from that, the whole thing is up to your determination.

It is all right if one is doing Deity service and cannot chant in the early hours. Although early hours are the best according to *śāstra*, that he will have to sacrifice. But not that he sacrifice the good quality of his rounds. He should have a reserved time in the afternoon, and then eventually he will be able to chant well at that time. I work in the early morning hours myself on the biography, and I chant a good number of my rounds in the afternoon. But actually the afternoon chanting is good because I have reserved time—not that I am trying to grab a round here or there.

As the sky is overcast with clouds, so my consciousness is covered with subtle material desire preventing me from purely serving the holy name. Whatever temporary thing is going on, it fully distracts me. Is attentive chanting important? Do I even believe that much can be found in *japa*? Have I lost my faith in great gains that can be made in *japa*? Thus I lament.

Prabhupāda urges that we should practice chanting. Sometimes he says chant “constantly.” Chant constantly so that we will remember to chant Kṛṣṇa’s name at the time of death. *Ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ*.

Sometimes a person will try to remember *ślokas* when he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa. I think this is like trying to run two tracks on a tape recorder at once. If the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is being recited then we should hear that and not try to recite *ślokas*

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at the same time. Sometimes in India we have seen workers and even women balancing big loads on their head and doing other things at the same time, such as talking or something else. This is an interesting balancing, but I think it is better that we keep our consciousness tuned in to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* while we do our *japa*.

Good management begins by managing your *sādhana*—your life. It requires intelligence. A *karmī* has no time for self-realization. He has so many activities that he can't manage to chant one day or even one round. So somehow you have to manage to chant sixteen nice rounds during your daily activities. You manage to take *prasādam*, don't you?

"What nectar is in these two alphabets (syllables), Kṛṣ-ṇa"—Rūpa Gosvāmī (stated by Prabhupāda in Chicago, July 1975).

"Dear Lord, we may not be able to remember Your name, form and qualities due to stumbling, hunger, falling down, yawning or being in a miserable diseased condition at the time of death when there is a high fever. We therefore pray unto You, O Lord, for You are very affectionate to Your devotees. Please help us remember You and utter Your holy names, attributes and activities, which can dispel all the reactions to our sinful lives."

—*Bhāgavatam* 5.3.12

We can pray while chanting that the holy name bestow upon us love of God. At the same time, this is not different from careful hearing. We must have faith that Kṛṣṇa is in His

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name and that simply by hearing the name of the Lord we will enter association with Him. Then love of God will appear in our hearts by the grace of the Lord. Prabhupāda has said that the chanting doesn't happen by a mechanical process but is initiated by the Lord by His free will. In this way, gradually all our material desires will evaporate.

“Caitanya Mahāprabhu has recommended that everyone chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* just to cleanse the dust from the heart. If the dust of the heart is cleansed away, then one can actually understand the importance of the holy name. For persons who are not inclined to clean the dust from their heart and want to keep things as they are, it is not possible to derive the transcendental result of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. One should therefore be encouraged to develop his service attitude toward the Lord, because this will help him to chant without any offense. And so under the guidance of a spiritual master the disciple is trained simultaneously to render service and at the same time to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. As soon as one develops a spontaneous service attitude he can immediately understand the transcendental nature of the holy names of the *mahā-mantra*.”

—*The Nectar of Devotion*

What if you think of the day's devotional service when chanting your rounds? It is not so easy to stop the flow of our thoughts. So better you are thinking of devotional service than *māyā*. But as far as possible try to steer your thinking back to the sound vibration of the holy name. Then after such absorption in chanting you can go forth to your day's activities in the best condition.

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Chanting is the first service—*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam*. So when your service attitude and all your service has come up to the offenseless position, then you automatically become perfect. This is very important.

“There are many names for God throughout the universe, but Kṛṣṇa is the supreme name according to Vedic knowledge. Therefore, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommended the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as the supreme means for realization in this age.”—*Rāja-Vidyā*

You can diagnose the cause of your slow progress in self-realization as offensive, inattentive chanting. This has also been called failure to develop ecstatic love even after so many instructions on the matter. Beware of *complacency* in your devotional service. It is all a disease of hearing—a hearing deficiency. By not *hearing* the philosophy one falls into illusion. He imagines injustices, difficulties, and becomes snared into material plan-making, etc. He forgets his own identity as a servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa, and his mental activity replaces his concentration on his rounds—his *japa* becomes afflicted.

This illness in advanced stages results in a variety of maladies (*vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, *guru-aparādha*, blooming) and that can culminate in death (spiritual).

So take preliminary precautions to protect yourself from serious illness. Just as a person developing sniffles and sneezing may dress warmly, drink *brahmāstra* juice, etc., a person who finds himself “elsewhere” when chanting *japa* should immediately take precautionary measures.

Shake your mental laziness. Ultimately such a complacent

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attitude in *japa* means that you think you will never die. If you were conscious of your true position and how, factually, death could come at any moment, then your *japa* would not be so nonchalant. You would actually be grasping for the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in desperation—that in whatever small amount of time destined you, you must perfect your life, perfect your heart, and the only means is through the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa through His holy name.

“If one chants and accepts the holy name as a material vibration, he falls down. One should worship and chant the holy name of the Lord by accepting it as the Lord Himself. During the chanting of the holy name, the tongue must work; the tongue is *sevonmukha-jihvā*—it is controlled by service.”

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*

By our living submissively in Kṛṣṇa consciousness we are becoming entitled to reap the fruits of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. So now we just have to adjust those things that are preventing us from tasting or from obtaining the wealth. Committing these ten offenses prevents us from chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa purely, but many of them are avoided by the different regulative activities during the day—every day. We say, “Don’t sleep when you chant. Don’t mispronounce. Control your mind, and then it will come.” And other adjustments are there. Like one boy gave me this stereo system. It has so many complicated switches. So everything is working—the speakers are working, all the electronics are working. But there are so many switches sometimes somebody flicks one switch and turns the whole thing into the radio or turns off the something-or-other, and then it doesn’t work. It doesn’t mean everything is useless. But you

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have to see, "Oh, *this* switch." You turn it, then immediately the sound comes.

So somehow we are chanting, and we are not able to fully associate with Kṛṣṇa. We have to see what is the faulty thing, whether it is inattention and the mind wandering. Of course I am assuming that we are following the four rules and that we are actually motivated after Kṛṣṇa. Then only do these things apply. If our motive is right, then we will by and by learn how to chant correctly. Then our service to Kṛṣṇa will be enhanced, very, very much. We are not talking about trying to just drown in some ecstasy all the time. We want to enhance our service. Just like someone saying, "Oh, I am very troubled with sex life." But when Kṛṣṇa comes in His holy name, then we will see these other things as pale. We will just want to be the servant of Kṛṣṇa.

It seems that the good servant is also good at serving the holy name; specifically, I mean at the time of uttering his sixteen rounds.

To be concerned at one's deficiencies in improving *japa* is the first requirement. Otherwise, if we just absentmindedly go on chanting without even stopping to think that our chanting needs improvement, then where is the question of actually improving. But if you are actually concerned, you have to do something about it. Do not simply allow yourself to stay on the mental platform. Just as we do not allow our senses to do what they like in other areas, so also the mind has to be restricted and brought under the control of the intelligence. You may not be able to control your mind every second of the day, but you should not become helpless and just let it roll on. Do

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your best, and Kṛṣṇa will help you as you struggle to chant in the morning.

Prabhupāda instructed everyone to chant sixteen rounds a day. That is a fact; we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa because Prabhupāda told us to. Although the name of Kṛṣṇa is fully nectarean and we should chant it spontaneously, we actually chant it on the order of our spiritual master. And whatever sweet taste we get progressively in chanting we also know is due to the mercy of our spiritual master, who has given us the *hari-nāma*.

We want to serve Kṛṣṇa, and chanting itself is service. In fact, the *mahā-mantra*, consisting of the three words *Hare*, *Kṛṣṇa*, and *Rāma*, means, "O Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your service." So the chanting in itself is a prayer to Kṛṣṇa to engage us further in His devotional service. If one is able to continue chanting like this, he can become purified of all sinful reactions from previous lives, because the chanting washes away all the accumulated dirt in the heart *Ceto-darpaṇam-mārjanam*.

If we chant the holy name, Kṛṣṇa takes that as giving love even though our hearts are hard and devoid of feeling. Kṛṣṇa regards any little effort favorably. A gulf of qualitative difference lies between the little love offered in our beginning chanting and the love of Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Lord Caitanya's chanting. In the prayers of lamentation by the *ācāryas* like Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, they take the role of the conditioned soul. They cry out that they have no devotion for Kṛṣṇa, and yet within this lamentation is purification. If I lament my sinful nature and yearn for Kṛṣṇa

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conscious love, then that is also an expression of love, is it not? At least I desire to have that love. So this is *sādhana*. Although I lack spontaneous love, I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, because I have some love for the order of my spiritual master, rascal that I am.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī says *duṣṭa mana, tumi kisera vaiṣṇava?* "My dear mind, what kind of devotee are you? Simply for cheap adoration you sit in a solitary place and pretend to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. But this is all cheating." So he is speaking to the heart about the cheating propensity that we all have to some degree; it can manifest itself even in such a pure activity as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He's talking about solitary chanting—a *bābājī* trying to get some credit. But in other ways also we may try to impress people that we are some kind of great chanter of the holy name. But especially he refers to this solitary *bhajana*. So we should not cheat.

Early in the morning, walking, working, chanting the holy name, bead after bead, round after round, hour after hour, it takes hard work and endurance.

I remember when Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the humble little temple we had in Boston. We had advertised all over town, painted and cleaned the building, and made so many different arrangements for the arrival of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee. We worked and worked and worked, and in the process, our hearts were cleansed. And when he actually came, Prabhupāda was praising the glories of the holy name, how Kṛṣṇa appears in the holy name in this fallen age. Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee was telling us, "What if Kṛṣṇa Himself were to come—and Kṛṣṇa can come through that door just like we can—how would you

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receive Him?" So what if *you* heard this? What could you do? You wouldn't know how to prepare. Certainly you would try to make the most gorgeous reception, the greatest welcome; the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself is coming. There is no limit of things you would do or the extent to which you would go to make a wonderful reception for Kṛṣṇa. The point is that *Kṛṣṇa does come* in the form of His holy name and because he is very kind, He doesn't even require a reception. You can just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa wants to make it easy in this age—there are no hard and fast rules for chanting. Śrutadeva was very poor, but certainly he did everything he could to receive the Lord. We are poor in heart, but because we are lazy and envious, we don't even invite the Supreme Personality of Godhead—but He comes anyway. His pure devotee carries the holy name—"Please, you are suffering from material disease, and this is the best medicine. Except for he who is carrying the medicine, what friend do you have in this material world? Please take the medicine—*hari-nāma mahā-mantra*, and be happy." So He comes to your door. You don't even want to receive the holy name, but He induces you to accept Him. "I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for the holy name." I am supposed to be a devotee, but when I hear that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is coming—I remain rascal number one. By my inattentiveness the reception is ruined. Kṛṣṇa is coming and you remain inattentive; therefore it is called *nāma-aparādha*. If you make an offense in cooking or Deity worship, what do you do? You chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. But if you make offenses to the holy name, then what do you do? There is nothing! There is no other way, no other way, no other way! This is the last mercy, and if you don't take this mercy then there is no other

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mercy. A Vaiṣṇava poet says that, "What is the value of my living?" Better I were dead!

We should learn how to make our hearts pure and avoid the offenses in chanting, so Kṛṣṇa can come home. The spiritual master is representing Lord Caitanya in delivering this holy name to us and by accepting his guidance, we can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and go back to Godhead.

Your *japa* is a barometer of your spiritual life. Your changes of consciousness will show up there. So when your *japa* is strong, then you are strong. That is why I place emphasis on chanting. It is such a source of strength.

"There are so many dangers in this material world that one may fall down from an exalted position at any time. Yet, if one keeps himself always pure and steady by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, he will be safe without a doubt."

—*Bhāgavatam* 6.1.63, purport

Too much mental anxiety indicates poor quality *japa*. Inattentive *japa* is a symptom of spiritual illness; certainly it causes it. You *must* improve the quality of your *japa*. If you improve your chanting, all other anxieties will clear up, and immediately you'll see in the proper perspective.

If after chanting your rounds, you realize there was no furor, no urgency, no struggle, then that is a bad sign. A lot can be accomplished simply by approaching *japa* sincerely. Keep a daily progress report. Work daily on your *japa* and you will see a difference. *Japa* is especially weakened by material desires. Avoid the ten offenses. The best way to remember you

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are not your body but the soul, the servant of Kṛṣṇa, is to follow the orders of the *guru*.

“The essence of all Vedic knowledge—comprehending the three kinds of Vedic activity (*karma-kāṇḍa*, *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, and *upāsana-kāṇḍa*) the chanting of Vedic hymns, and the processes for satisfying the demigods—is included in the eight syllables Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma. This is the reality of all *Vedānta*. The chanting of the holy name is the only means to cross the ocean of nescience. Chanting the holy name is the chief means of attaining love of Godhead. This chanting of devotional service does not depend on any paraphernalia, nor on one’s having taken birth in a good family. By humility and meekness one attracts the attention of Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of all the *Vedas*. Therefore if one becomes very humble and meek he can easily attain the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in this age of Kali. That is the fulfillment of all great sacrifices, penances and austerities, because when one achieves ecstatic love of Godhead he attains the complete perfection of life. Therefore, whatever one does in executing devotional service must be accompanied with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord.”

—*The Nārada-pañcarātra*

When we chant, we should enunciate clearly. If we are speaking to some important man, we take it as an important occasion; we don’t mumble to him. “What are you saying?” So similarly, Kṛṣṇa knows what you are saying, what you are thinking. As we are offering the name, the sound vibration, He knows His name, and He has many people glorifying Him already. But He will be pleased if you also glorify Him. So it should be done like that. It’s just another sign of care, con-

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cern, that you say the names nicely. You could even be chanting something less than the thirty-two-syllable *mantra*—leaving out one of the names. Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is a scientific arrangement, so it has to be chanted in that order. Don't be neglectful. Don't leave out His name—Hare or Kṛṣṇa or Rāma.

Chanting and hearing in an attitude of service means when we chant Kṛṣṇa's name we should be desiring to be engaged in His service. The eighth offense to the holy name is to chant as a pious act to get some material benefit. So we are not praying to God for material benefit. That is what is meant by service. Also, the act of chanting and hearing, when done very carefully, is also a service. Surrendering yourself to chanting clearly and hearing with rapt attention is also chanting and hearing in service attitude.

The chanting is deceptively simple—just repeat some names. But the mind is rebelling because if you say these names, then all sense gratification will go away and you will become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. The mind wants us to be a devotee of our nonsense mind. So although it is deceptively simple, it is hard to actually chant. Therefore, we stress it always. It is a simple process, and if you try it in a simple way it will not be difficult. But if you go on listening to your mind, it will be very difficult.

Unfortunately we have no taste for hearing and glorifying the Lord's name and activities. Developing a taste for hearing and chanting the holy sound is done through the medium of service to the pure devotee of the Lord. *Sampradāya-vihīnā ye 'mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*. The *mantra* has to be chanted

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in *sampradāya*, received from the bona fide spiritual master. As Prabhupāda says, "The taste for hearing and chanting the holy name is done through the medium of service to the pure devotee of the Lord. The Lord is reciprocally responding to His devotee. When He sees that a devotee is completely sincere in getting admittance to the transcendental service of the Lord and has become eager to hear about Him, He acts within the heart."

Don't put any imposition on your mind. Just chant and try to hear the holy name. Everything will automatically come. Just drive out other thoughts and hear the holy name.

It is not very simple to improve chanting. Therefore, like any good thing, it has to be worked at. Prabhupāda once said that good trees that bear certain nuts take a long time in fructifying. So similarly, a good thing may take a while to achieve.

Complete concentration is necessary. Otherwise your rounds are done, but they aren't done well. You're just trying to get the job done, like a factory worker. You get the credit that "I chanted my rounds," but there will be far more credit if you chant with the right quality. *Attentive* doesn't mean only that you don't fall asleep or that you don't leave off a "Hare," but it means being attentive to how Kṛṣṇa may reveal within your heart more understanding of the holy name. But you have to concentrate. Anything that you want to do well, you have to think about it, and you have to put other things out of your mind in order to do it. That's very basic definition of concentration. *Concentrated* is only one thing, nothing diluted, nothing impure—just the essence. So when you concentrate

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on anything, it's like that—one thing. The *karmīs* concentrate so that they get the most out of sense gratification. Any worker has to concentrate to do something right. So a *yogī*, a *bhakti-yogī*, has to concentrate also with all his senses and his mind. We actually chant *japa* just a couple of hours, but it should be done like that—with concentration. Everybody knows this, but we have to do it. It's an easy process. It's not a hard process, it's an easy process—you just have to chant and hear. You don't have to sit in a certain place and control your breath and give up food. But it's an easy process for somebody who's not very austere—meaning the average soul in the Kali-yuga—but it's also the topmost process. So if this easy process, if you can't do this even, then literally there's no hope for you. What other hope is there if you can't chant?

Kṛṣṇa doesn't say that if we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa we won't have trouble. But He says if we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and then think of Kṛṣṇa at the time of death, we may never have to come back again. Even Queen Kuntī, who always thought of Kṛṣṇa, had so many difficulties.

Prabhupāda says we should chant at least loud enough that we can hear our own sound vibration. The process is to chant and hear. If you just chant in your mind then there is no hearing in the proper sense.

So don't think it a contradiction that we say, "If you become pure, then you will be able to chant." But then we say, "Chant and then you will become pure." *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. Chanting will purify you, but you can't just leave everything the way it is. That's called committing sins on the

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strength of chanting. Although very impure, Jagāi and Mādhāi were given the holy name, but then they had to promise, "Now no more do your sinful activities." This cleansing process works but don't add dirt at the same time. Just like a fire produces heat, but if at the same time I am throwing water on it, then I can't blame the fire. "This fire is falsely advertised as producing heat. It doesn't work." This process will work, but don't defeat it by your impure activity. Chanting has to be done within a whole devotional life—not as a professional performance or a part-time performance—to receive the real effect.

If you just try to let go of your different plans and material desires and let the chanting work, so many realizations will come, and you will feel very attached to the holy name and to this process.

During *japa* time, don't talk and converse and socialize. There are other times for that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Śivānanda, December 4, 1968: "Regarding your first question, is it offensive to think of Krishna's pastimes while chanting, I think you should know that it is not offensive, but rather it is required. One must try for the point when he simply hears Krishna and immediately all of Krishna, His Pastimes, His Form, His Quality, are in his thoughts of Krishna. This is our process. When we are full in Krishna then where can there be any chance for *maya* in us? So this is our duty to always remember Krishna's pastimes. One who cannot remember Krishna, let him always hear Hare Krishna, and then when he has perfected this art, then always he will remember Krishna, His Activities, His Qualities, etc."

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Then to me on April 10, 1969, he wrote: "Regarding your question, hearing the vibration of Hare Krishna automatically reminds one of Krishna's Pastimes. So both of them arise simultaneously in the mind when one is sincerely chanting. So you cannot make any distinction between listening to the sound and thinking of the Pastimes. But the process is to hear, and then Krishna's Pastimes, Form, Qualities, etc. will automatically come to mind: That is very nice."

From these two letters Prabhupāda says that the first step is to simply hear and then from that, naturally the spontaneous stage will come, when one thinks of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. This is indicated when he says, "One who cannot remember Krishna, let him always hear Hare Krishna, and then when he has perfected this art, then always he will remember Krishna." And in the second letter Prabhupāda says that we cannot make a distinction between listening to the sound and thinking of the pastimes, "but the process is to hear, and then Krishna's Pastimes, Form, Qualities, etc., will automatically come to mind." This is similar to Kṛṣṇa's statement in the Twelfth Chapter of the *Gītā* that one should always think of Him spontaneously, but if he cannot, then he should follow the rules and regulations. Don't artificially impose thinking of Kṛṣṇa on your mind while chanting. Hear, and thoughts of Kṛṣṇa will come.

"At the time of death, one is certainly bewildered because his bodily functions are in disorder. At that time, even one who throughout his life has practiced chanting the holy name of the lord may not be able to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* very distinctly. Nevertheless, such a person receives all the benefits of chanting the holy name. While the body is fit, therefore,

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why should we not chant the holy names of the Lord loudly and distinctly? In conclusion, one who chants the holy name of the Lord constantly is guaranteed to return home, back to Godhead without a doubt."

—*Bhāgavatam* 6.2.48, purport

For strong chanting, chant louder; that will make you strong. If you extend a little more *energy* in your chanting, in your articulation and emphasis, you will more easily capture the rambling mind.

If we stay fixed in following Kṛṣṇa consciousness and chanting at least sixteen rounds, then by that full participation in devotional service we should not become very disturbed. We should not come to the point where we are unable to do any devotional service and have to stop all activities and chant all day sixty-four rounds, etc. But if despite ourselves we come to this point, then such chanting is good.

"Regarding your question, there is no such requirement that *japa* should be silently and chanting should be done differently. Loudly or silently, everything is all right. There is no such restriction. Only thing is that we should chant very attentively, hearing the vibration very distinctly."

—Letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda to Satsvarūpa
March 8, 1969

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is dependent on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. If the rounds are good, the consciousness will reflect them, the intelligence will reflect them also. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is very important.

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Japa is an important part of devotional life. If your *japa* is not up to standard, this is serious. You must reform. That is, out of your regret may come success. Prabhupāda used to say failure is the pillar of success. Assess yourself, and try to improve your chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

One may question that if the holy name can take away more sins than the devotee can commit, why we still have to suffer sinful reactions? But those sinful reactions are given by Kṛṣṇa; it is no longer *karma*. There is no questioning why this is so. If Kṛṣṇa makes us take some token reaction, that is His mercy just so that we will actually be purified once and for all. Kṛṣṇa is all-good and just, so whatever He sends the devotee, the devotee accepts. That does not diminish the power of the holy name. We have to go on chanting the holy name and taking whatever reactions are there from the Lord. Then we may come to the stage of pure service to the holy name.

If you are always repeating the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* whenever you can—within yourself or even aloud—it will solve many problems. If Kṛṣṇa is with you all the time, then you will not be in anxiety—if you can develop this constant chanting. It will take time to be able to always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, "Chant sixteen rounds on beads and then innumerable rounds off the beads."

The fifth offense in chanting is to consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa as imagination. This means that if one doubts that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa actually is the name of God then that is actually negating the great benefits that are working on one. It is a kind of material skepticism. If you

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have no faith at all then that is a great offense, but if one has some faith but also has some doubt that is also offensive. Any doubt we have in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is offensive.

Prabhupāda answers the question, "What is the ultimate goal of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

"When one becomes accustomed to inoffensive chanting, then his fruit is that he is promoted to the stage of pure love of Godhead, or *prema*. This *prema* is the perfectional stage of consciousness and the most blissful by far."

—Letter to Śivānanda
December 4, 1968

When I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, I chant because Śrīla Prabhupāda brought the chanting and told me to chant. So, I'm chanting directly to Kṛṣṇa, but I don't banish my spiritual master. The inference is always, "Well, can we get rid of the spiritual master and go directly to Kṛṣṇa?" But it's not like that. You go directly to Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master. He's not in the way—Jesus Christ says he *is* the way. So the spiritual master is not *in* the way. He's introducing you to your intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa. So he says, "Chant Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa," so I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I'm saying Kṛṣṇa's name on his order.

If you have not received the *mantra* you are chanting in disciplic succession, it will not have effect. Your spiritual master doesn't get in your way, because he is not material. Material body means defective vision, 20-20 is not perfect *spiritual* vision. Everyone needs this transparent guide. Sometimes people think, "We don't want these priests, we don't want these *gurus*. God is in our heart, let us just go to God." But the spiritual master is a humble representative of Kṛṣṇa and I

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should approach with even more humility to accept Kṛṣṇa in this way. Because I may have personally been cheated before doesn't mean that the system of disciplic succession is invalid. All a real spiritual master wants is that his disciple be fixed in his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and be happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He doesn't want money, he doesn't want worship, he wants the disciple to go to Kṛṣṇa. He is competent to help him do that. The *Purāṇas* say there are many *gurus* who are expert in taking your money, but a *guru* who can take your anxiety away and give you spiritual life is rare. The actual representative of Kṛṣṇa can relieve the fire of repeated birth and death.

We don't adopt the process of chanting all day and night. Haridāsa Ṭhākura could do it, but if you try you will sleep and dream of different material desires. So just try to increase the quality of your chanting; that is the main thing.

"Then the Bhaṭṭācārya asked Caitanya Mahāprabhu, 'Which item is most important in the execution of devotional service?' The Lord replied that the most important item was the chanting of the holy name of the Lord." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport, "When asked which item was most important, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu immediately answered that the most important item (of the nine processes of *bhakti*) is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord— Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." In the next verse Lord Caitanya quotes the "Harer Nāma" verse of the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa*, and Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Because the people of this age are so fallen, they can simply chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-*

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mantra. In this way, they can rid themselves of the bodily conception of life and become eligible to engage in the Lord's devotional service."

—Cc. *Madhya* 6.241

If you are feeling great happiness in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, that is the good result. Always chant in the service mood. We are not chanting to enjoy sensations, even spiritual sensations. We should chant to serve Kṛṣṇa. The eighth offense to chanting is to consider it as a pious activity or to use it for some utilitarian purpose. This means the meaning of the chanting is to serve Kṛṣṇa: "O Rādhā, O Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service." As you chant, pray to become the unalloyed servant in your particular service to Kṛṣṇa.

*etan nirvidyamānānām
icchatām akuto-bhayam
yoginām nṛpa nirnītam
harer nāmānukīrtanam*

"O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge."

—*Bhāgavatam* 2.1.11

"A devotee either in danger or in happiness constantly chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. When he is in danger he is immediately relieved . . . This is the absolute nature of the

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mahā-mantra. Either in danger or in happiness, it can be chanted without limitation."

—*Bhāgavatam* 4.12.21, purport

To improve your *japa*, very scrutinizingly read over and memorize the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* prayers of Lord Caitanya.

If you are still thinking that life in the stool pile is the purpose of human existence, then it is something like insanity. In such a condition you cannot afford to chant *japa* "like background music." You have to cry to Kṛṣṇa. And if you cannot cry, then you have to cry because you cannot cry. By *cry*, I simply mean take with all seriousness your *japa* time and hear with all your heart.

As far as sleeping in *japa*, if you get a good six hours of rest you should be able to avoid it. Keep walking. Put water on your face if necessary. Pray to Kṛṣṇa to help you concentrate. The focal point is the sound of the name and the prayer, "O my Lord, please engage me in Your service." You can take shelter of Kṛṣṇa by taking shelter of the devotees.

It is most important that you follow this vow of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa sixteen rounds a day. Of all the spiritual master's instructions, this is the most important. Of course, our movement is very active, and we have many things to do besides chanting sixteen rounds. But unless we chant the sixteen rounds, then we cannot do anything. If we try to do some service, it will be almost like *karma*. And after a while we will not be able to perform service. We will lose enthusiasm. The reason we make a solemn vow—you must do it—is because

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in the neophyte stage we do not have a taste for chanting unless we are ordered to do it. The liberated soul takes great pleasure in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. And even the beginner takes pleasure, but sometimes he may be whimsical or distracted and not want to chant. But the spiritual master insists that you always chant sixteen rounds every day. In this way you will approach the stage where you will always chant with spontaneous attachment and love for the holy name.

Make some little improvements and build on them steadily. A lot of this may involve minor, personal habits. Someone, whenever he sits down, falls asleep when he chants. So it will be a big step for him if he doesn't sit down anymore. Someone else discovers that if he eats too much at night, then he can't chant in the morning, so he stops doing that. Little practical things like this will help improve your chanting. But the philosophy is there too. Be vigilant against offensive chanting.

It's true that when there's danger anyone who's pious thinks right away of Kṛṣṇa. But if the danger culminates in death, then death is such a violent shock to the spirit soul in the body that he's more preoccupied with that condition. It's not the best time to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Although it is the most crucial time, the best condition we have is now.

Mercy means chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Of course, this chanting is available to anyone, but it has to be done in disciplic succession. It has to be under the guidance of a spiritual master. This is declared in all the scriptures. The worship of the *guru* means to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa under his instruction and to follow the regulative principles. This is the actual meaning of *guru*-

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pūjā: to follow his instructions is the life and soul of the disciple. And what are those instructions? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Do not commit any more sinful activities. Your sinful activities are now removed by Kṛṣṇa's grace. Now don't do anything else sinful, but spend your time serving Kṛṣṇa with body, mind, and words. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and give your life to Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement. Therefore when we say that if you just follow these four rules and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa sixteen rounds, and you go back to Godhead, that cannot be minimized. But it means you have to do it as all in all.

I was just thinking today about my beads. Someone said they were going to get me *tulasī* beads. And I was thinking, "But these beads have been chanted on by Śrīla Prabhupāda." Then I thought, "But my beads are so worn out. The paint is worn off." But what is more important in a devotee's life than his beads, and that his spiritual master has chanted on them. The spiritual master who gave him Hare Kṛṣṇa has also chanted on his beads. They are blessed. It's a benediction. Just like *mahā-prasādam*. Something used by the spiritual master is worshipable. So that's the significance. And it's something you can feel. We are appreciating that now. It's fourteen years since he did it—he only did it once—but they become sacred. Not only has his spiritual master chanted on those beads but he's asked him to chant nicely. So he should follow the instructions as he chants.

We have been given this human form of life with the tongue and the ear just suitable for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. So try to concentrate on the sound when you chant. If it takes you a little more time to chant, then chant in the time that you

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need, and then later you can chant faster. But do not make a problem for the other devotees that you chant too long and cannot do any service.

A devotee who is trying to make up for his offensive chanting should offer prayers to the holy name. Also, he should specifically express regret that "I have not appreciated Kṛṣṇa up to now, although He's so glorious, so kind to come in His holy name. Now I am trying to understand His actual position, my actual position, and take shelter in the holy name."

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* has to be received from a spiritual master in the disciplic succession. Of course, anyone can pick up the *mantra* from a book or he can hear it and that is good and he can benefit in that way. But when one seriously wants to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to go back to home, back to Godhead in this lifetime, he has to receive the *mantra* in disciplic succession. Just like Lord Brahmā, he was the first living entity and he received the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* from Lord Kṛṣṇa directly. And now in disciplic succession from Lord Brahmā, we have to receive from the spiritual master. It cannot be just taken without a spiritual master or by some concoction as to who is the spiritual master.

Kṛṣṇa likes to hear His name chanted. It is simply a natural thing. If a little child calls his father's name, the father does not feel that out of humility he should not be pleased or that out of false ego he should become puffed up. Rather, it just touches his heart. Of course, I do not know what Kṛṣṇa's mind is or how He is pleased by the devotees. But I have given an example of how it works even in human affairs—that one likes

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to hear his name called by a lovable relative. At any rate, we should not only believe the *śāstra* that Kṛṣṇa likes to hear His name, but we should rejoice to know that we can please Kṛṣṇa in such an easy way.

Rūpa Gosvāmī has said, "There is nothing sweeter in life than chanting the holy name." Otherwise how could Lord Caitanya experience such ecstasies: It is actually the ecstasy of the soul in union with Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavatam* declares that unless you experience these ecstasies, then your heart must be steel-framed.

Hare Kṛṣṇa is our original taste. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, "It is not an artificial imposition on the mind." It has been going on for thousands of years all over India. It is not some mind control as the deprogrammers claim in their devious, material way. It is actually the original spiritual taste. So we say that if you chant, the taste comes back like with the jaundiced man. The happiness that we are looking for life after life, all over the universe, in travels, in scholarship, in sex life, in nationalism, in everything, is to be found in the chanting process.

You should not accept a spiritual master unless you agree to chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* daily. Lord Caitanya even accepted a spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, and His spiritual master told Him to regularly chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. And when He chanted, then He felt so much ecstasy of love of Godhead. But later the Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs* questioned Him, "Why do You always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa?" They were more interested in impersonal meditation and studying the *Vedānta-sūtra* to reach a non-

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devotional conclusion. But Lord Caitanya replied, "The reason I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa is my spiritual master ordered Me to. He told me, 'You are not fit to understand the *Vedānta-sūtra* philosophy. You are foolish. Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.' " Of course, Lord Caitanya is not foolish, He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was setting an example so that in the future people could not say that by meditation they have become God or that this Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting is for sentimental people. Lord Caitanya was establishing this as the highest form of *yoga* meditation for this age. Not only is it easy to perform, but it brings you greater perfection than any other method.

It is not "all right" to make up rounds for the previous day. It is an emergency measure. It is not good. But better than neglecting the rounds, you at least make them up the next day. It should not be a regular thing, and only in a very rare case should you on any single day not chant sixteen rounds. But in the event that you do fail to do so, then you have to make them up.

As I was chanting my *japa* in the company of disciples, I was lamenting how my *japa* is mechanical. Then I looked up at a painting on the temple wall. The painting was a crude rendition of Lord Caitanya dancing in *kīrtana* with His eternal associates. I could appreciate the artistry was crude. It then occurred to me that my *japa* and my other devotional service, although lamentably lacking, has a genuine standing within the realm of devotional service, just as this painting of Lord Caitanya does. This thought encourages me.

The lamentable gap exists—between where I am now and

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where I want to be in devotional service—but nevertheless, there is now a real place for me in pure devotional service. I pray to be able to see and appreciate it even as I can see Lord Caitanya's pastimes in this simple devotional painting on the wall.

Walking with devotees in the scenic Irish forests. We went to an overlook above the rapids. There were unusual depressions and holes in the rocks caused by the water's pouring over them for centuries of time. Pṛthu said, "It is like constant chanting which—" he paused to think of a phrase, and I added, "—just as chanting wears away a stone heart." It was his metaphor, and it struck me as wonderful. Like Śrīla Prabhupāda's expression, "Little drops of water wear away the stone." As Pṛthu said it, while we beheld the powerful water rapids—the white sluicing foam coursing over the rocks, the ever-fresh, clear water gradually, imperceptively, boring holes in solid rocks—I saw what he said, that the chanting could eventually wear away our stone hearts, mine too.

The name of Kṛṣṇa is always Kṛṣṇa, pure and uncontaminated. Even if you are alone and even if at first you do not find the taste, you have to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. There is a very relevant verse by Rūpa Gosvāmī in the *Upadeśāmṛta*. He compares a person who is chanting without taste to a person who has jaundice. The jaundiced patient is given sugar candy for a cure, but he still tastes the candy as bitter. Similarly, the neophyte chants the holy name, the sweetest of all things, but finds it dry and bitter. That is the proof of his material disease. But by going on chanting (just as the patient goes on eating the sugar candy), the cure comes.

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It is not that by strict pronunciation we attain love of God. But when we struggle to pay attention and chant, Kṛṣṇa blesses us. We endeavor, and Kṛṣṇa blesses us. It is not by our endeavor that we conquer Kṛṣṇa and He is forced to reveal the holy name. It is not like arm wrestling. You can develop love for Kṛṣṇa by chanting *japa* on the order of the spiritual master. If you have love for the order of the spiritual master, then that is the same as love for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa will see you and say, "This devotee is so nicely struggling to chant because his spiritual master told him to chant." He will be pleased by that love for your spiritual master's order. So do not minimize the importance of the holy name.

In the Eighth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna asks, "What should one think of at the time of death?" So Kṛṣṇa says, "You should think of Kṛṣṇa at the time of death." And then purport after purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda recommends the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, which he then prints in text after text. So this, he said, is the way to think of Kṛṣṇa. Immediately, by the name of Kṛṣṇa, it is the quickest way; it is the best way. Everything is there—His energy, His pastimes, His form. Everything is in His name. *Nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ*. The name Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa.

If by looking at the pictures you become distracted into different thoughts of intricate relationships between the Lord and His eternal associates, then it is not as good as simply chanting like anything. So it does not matter whether you look at a picture of Pañca-tattva or Kṛṣṇa or the Gosvāmīs, just as long as you chant and hear. The main thing in *japa* is not looking at pictures but chanting and hearing.

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As you already know, the best way to cure anxiety is to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Often when I am traveling there are long delays, sometimes there are difficult conditions in some of the countries with the immigrations officials, sometimes we are detained, etc. Whenever there are long detaining situations or situations that demand tolerance, I always go on chanting in my mind, deliberately and steadily repeating the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

In chanting you must submit your time, the attention of your mind, and your voice to the sound vibrations, and then eventually more and more submit your whole self to the holy name. You can simultaneously hear and also think of the prayer, "O Lord, please engage me in Your service."

At the end of the list of ten offenses in *The Nectar of Devotion*, Prabhupāda has written, "Anyone who claims to be a Vaiṣṇava should be very careful about guarding against these offenses." So if we claim to be a devotee, intellectually we must admit that this chanting is very, very important—especially in the time of danger. But when is that? That time is every time. *Padam padam yad vipadām na teṣam*. At every step you chant the holy name.

Chanting is the heart of *bhakti*. It cleans the heart. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is so powerful—*śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ/hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām* (Bhāg. 1.2.17). The Lord is in the heart, and when one chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, he becomes pious. It is the most pious activity; it is not just a matter of atonement to cleanse away what sins you have. When you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa,

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the Lord in the heart cleans away all sinful activities, and everything becomes auspicious.

As we chant more and more we realize that this chanting is keeping us within the spiritual energy. Also we can take the words of authority—Lord Caitanya said, “All glories to the *saṅkīrtana* movement which cleanses the heart of all the dirt accumulated for many lives.” By chanting, the fire of conditional life—repeated birth and death—is extinguished. “The *saṅkīrtana* movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large, and it spreads the rays of the benediction moon.” This means that as the moon starts out as a small sliver and grows to a full moon, so you start chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa faithfully (without offenses), and you will realize the full moon of love of God. “The life of transcendental knowledge increases the ocean of bliss and gives us a taste of the nectar for which we are always anxious.”

We can follow Ajāmila to the extent of chanting helplessly. One of the symptoms of surrender is to consider oneself very fallen and in need of Kṛṣṇa’s help. You must call out like that—“Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Lord Caitanya was so kindly aware of the position of the struggling devotee trying to come to the platform of pure devotion. He compassionately revealed this in His own prayer, “O my Lord, you have so kindly appeared in Your holy name, and in these names You have invested all Your energies, but yet I am so unfortunate that I have no taste for chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa.” Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura also expressed this lamentation of the devotee who wants to engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness but who cannot taste the nectar of devotional service due to his material attachments. Narottama says,

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"What good is my life? I know with my mind and intellect and even within my heart that this chanting is everything, but I don't like to chant. I don't like to associate with the devotees, and I don't like to take part in this *saṅkīrtana* movement. I must be cursed. What is the sense of being alive?" He does not want material life, but he cannot taste the holy name. This is not our permanent despair, but it produces that helpless condition. We don't chant for any material or even spiritual benefit in terms of liberation, but we know that this chanting is everything—except we just can't taste it. By surrendering in this way to the holy name—that is helplessness.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Lord Caitanya asked for a secluded place to chant, like the place of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. In the purport, however, Prabhupāda says it is not for the members of ISKCON to drop off the regular activities and practice *bhajana* in seclusion. Also, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said that one who tries to do this is actually just cheating and is trying to gain some adoration as a great devotee. He said that one may, out of some motive, go alone and try to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and claim he is on the topmost platform, but actually in his mind he will be thinking of sex life, fame, profit, and adoration.

Should we think of Kṛṣṇa's forms and pastimes while chanting *japa*? We should not do anything artificial. As Prabhupāda has said, the chanting is not an artificial imposition on the mind. Prabhupāda has recommended that if we just hear the chanting then the time will come when simultaneously we will think of the form of Kṛṣṇa. To concentrate on the sound may seem routine. Of course, that is only our neophyte stage.

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The mood for chanting is advised in Lord Caitanya's prayer that we should consider ourselves lower than the straw in the street and should pray to the Lord to please fix us as one of the atoms at His lotus feet. So even more than desiring to see Kṛṣṇa, we should pray that Kṛṣṇa will be able to see us in such a way that we will be pleasing to Him. So in your chanting cry out just as a child cries out for the mother that, "Kṛṣṇa, I am chanting Your name, but still I am so fallen I do not taste it. Please engage me in the service of Your holy name and situate me in the sweet taste of devotional service unto Your Lordship and Your holy name."

3

THE TEN OFFENSES

There are ten offenses in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. They involve not only the time when we sit down to chant *japa*, but our whole devotional life. These offenses—disobeying the orders of the spiritual master, committing deliberate sins on the strength of chanting, blaspheming the devotee—have to do with more than correct pronunciation of the names of the Lord. So whether we can carry out the orders of the spiritual master is our test. By the time you sit down to chant, it's already determined by your service attitude—you've either already committed the offenses, or you haven't. Both the offenseless chanting and the following are interdependent.

By chanting carefully, you get the strength to follow the orders of your spiritual master, as you associate with Kṛṣṇa's name. But we know that if you associate without offense, it is much more effective. Following the four rules and living in devotional service assures you of avoiding the ten offenses.

The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa has the power to erradicate all sins, but if you become an offender to the holy names of the Lord, then you have no chance of being delivered.

THE FIRST OFFENSE is to blaspheme those persons who have actually dedicated their lives to spreading the glories of the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is called *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. We usually think first of the *guru*, *guru*-

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aparādha, but this offense refers to all devotees, even the so-called little devotees with whom we are living.

Devotee means anyone who is actually surrendered to the teachings of God. You cannot indulge in faultfinding or criticizing such a person. One who has dedicated his life to the service of God is not to be considered an ordinary person. And not only should you refrain from blaspheming him, but you should keep his company. When mentioning those things favorable for devotional service, Rūpa Gosvāmī states, *saṅga-tyāgāt sato vṛtteḥ ṣaḍbhir bhaktiḥ prasidhyati*: One should avoid the company of the nondevotee and keep company with the devotee and value his association.

We have been speaking about the community of devotees. So I am one devotee; each of us is one individual. We have to honor all devotees. Whoever chants Hare Kṛṣṇa has to be mentally honored. Whoever is initiated and is following the rules and regulations, you offer him obeisances. Whoever is actually an advanced devotee, you offer him service. Although one is himself a devotee—he's taken initiation, he's chanting *hari-nāma*—he must think of himself as a servant of the devotees and hold the devotees in reverence.

You cannot chant the holy name and still speak offensively, act offensively, think offensively about others who are chanting the glories of the holy name. The relationships may be different, but in none of these relationships is there neglect of a genuine devotee of God. And if you do neglect, then you will be in difficulty, you cannot chant with the pure effect. You cannot chant on your beads and at the same time be blasphemous or neglectful of the devotees of the Lord. That is like trying to build a fire while throwing water on it. The potency of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is always absolute. But if at the same time

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you commit such a great offense, it is like that—throwing water on the fire. You will make a great havoc of your devotional life.

All over the world devotees of God are working, in different religions, as followers of Mohammed or Jesus, and the Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees should not blaspheme these persons. Anyone who is actually a devotee of God is dear to God. They shouldn't be blasphemed.

It is also an offense to the holy name when there is criticism between disciples of different *gurus* (whether disciples of Prabhupāda toward the other disciples or toward the other *gurus*), or between the *gurus* or between the disciples of the same *guru*. They are all preaching, they have all received bona fide initiation, they are all following. So for myself, I should worship my *guru* exclusively, but respect all other bona fide devotees and spiritual masters in a humble way and try to improve my own Kṛṣṇa consciousness in relation to my spiritual master. And everyone should uphold the principles of initiation, worship their spiritual master with the right understanding and the right *siddhānta*, and not blaspheme any of the devotees of the Lord.

If we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa but don't avoid this offense and the other offenses, then for us it is hopeless. The chanting is so purifying that all other discrepancies and offenses will be washed away. But if in the chanting you are full of offenses, then what can save you?

THE SECOND OFFENSE is to take the names of the demigods, like Brahmā and Śiva, to be equal to or independent of the name of Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa. We see this offense especially in those mistaught in the name of Hinduism or Vedic culture

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that there are many gods and they are all the same. No. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He has many names, but only the names of the Supreme Lord are in the category of *hari-nāma kīrtana*, and they cannot be compared to these names that one chants for material benefit.

The name of Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa. It is actually Kṛṣṇa Himself. So one has to understand the place of the holy name. It is not a name designating a god; it is actually God, Kṛṣṇa. The sound vibration is not different from Kṛṣṇa. But although the Supreme Lord has different names, one should not distinguish between them. He shouldn't confuse the names of demigods with the names of God, or he becomes like the atheist. He does not actually understand the value of the name of God. God is one; He is supreme. His name, we have already explained, is different from any other name. It is purifying, liberating, and can't be compared with any other meditation or *mantra*. So if you take the name of an ordinary being, or even an exalted demigod like Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva—if you confuse the name of a demigod with the name of God, this is offensive to the holy name. The demigods are also expansions of Kṛṣṇa, neither independent of nor equal to Kṛṣṇa. God is one, supreme; He has no competitor.

There is a prevalent misunderstanding of Hinduism. It is fact many demigods control different parts of the universe, but people commonly think all these gods are equal. They think Hinduism is a religion of many gods, polytheism. Don't become part of this hodgepodge mish-mash that goes in the name of Hinduism. Actually there is no such thing as *Hindu* in the scripture. The word is not there; it is not a Sanskrit word. It is a mistake, a misnomer. The Mohammedans on India's border

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called the people living by the Indus River *Sindu* and then the word became *Hindu*. And now *Hindu* means anything. You can be an atheist, you can worship a ghost, you can worship the demigod, Durgā—anything you like—and still be called a Hindu. India's national leaders are proud that anything can be Hindu. But under that misnomer, if you say, "Yes, it is perfectly right and religious. Our leaders, our *gurus*, say that any worship is good. You worship a dog, you worship a ghost, you worship a politician, you worship Kṛṣṇa. It's all the same. Everything is one"—that's an offense. The Lord is the Supreme Truth. Everything is coming from Him. He has many names, but don't confuse these names or think them equal to ordinary names of material personalities.

There are many names of God—Jehovah, Allah—in different religious cultures. Any name can be chanted, with the understanding that this is a name of the Supreme. But to take any other name to be the same as the name of God is an offense. And we are chanting this name *Kṛṣṇa* because we are following Lord Caitanya, who chanted *Kṛṣṇa* and who gave us evidence that this is the supreme original name for the Supreme Being. So we have to defend our position when some rascal speaks otherwise, and for ourselves, we cannot even consider worshipping any demigod side by side with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa wants exclusive worship—*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam*—unalloyed devotional service. Don't make such a mistake.

THE THIRD OFFENSE is to minimize or blaspheme the order of the spiritual master. The spiritual master gives the holy name. *Sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*. Unless you receive the *mantra* from the spiritual master in *sampra-*

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dāya, it will not have effect. One reason that I chant *japa* with my disciples each morning is to emphasize the connection between chanting and receiving the *mantra* from the spiritual master. Unless we have received the *mantra* in *sampradāya* it will not have effect. Then only can you receive the authority to chant the holy names of the Lord.

One should not minimize the spiritual master, who is himself practicing the holy name, who is immersed in the taste of the holy name, and who is teaching the holy name, and one should not think that some other teacher or teaching is higher. The Māyāvādīs think that *Vedānta* philosophy is the ultimate. But no, the holy name is the highest knowledge. So one should never forget that his spiritual master, in giving the holy name, is giving the highest teaching; there is nothing more profound. *Ṣaṭ-karma-nipuṇo vipro mantra-tantra-viśāradaḥ*. The guru must be Vaiṣṇava. The Vaiṣṇava guru who gives you the holy name is the greatest teacher.

The spiritual master, as stated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, is the manifested presence of Kṛṣṇa. He is the mercy of Kṛṣṇa manifested in the spiritual master. So he is carrying the instruction of Kṛṣṇa. If you neglect that or disobey that, then what is your chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa? It is useless. So when you recognize the spiritual master as the representative of God, you must follow his instruction. How can we disobey him and expect to make progress? "Well, now he's here. I'll take initiation and behave nicely today, but then tomorrow I'll do something against his order. He will never know." But he will know. Kṛṣṇa will know, and it will be very bad for me if I do this. This defiance, gross or subtle, is a kind of suicide. There should be no question of this.

Every morning we pray, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-pra-*

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sādo, but sometimes we forget what it means. The verse means that by the grace of the spiritual master one gets the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. If one does not please the spiritual master, then he has no chance of progress. So this applies to our chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. So how can you disobey the instructions of your spiritual master and still be successful in your chanting? These offenses contradict the spirit and the essence of chanting. How can one possibly chant while disobeying the order of the spiritual master and expect Kṛṣṇa's blessings? The spiritual master's orders are the same as Kṛṣṇa's, because the spiritual master is the *via media* to Kṛṣṇa. We have heard this verse many times, *yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau/tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*. That is, only unto those great souls who have faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed. So that includes also only to those who have that faith can the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa be revealed. Prabhupāda explains in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, "Believing in the words of His spiritual master, Lord Caitanya introduced the *saṅkīrtana* movement, just as the present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started with the belief in the words of our spiritual master. We wanted to preach. We believed in his words and tried somehow or other to fulfill them. And now this movement has become successful all over the world. Therefore, faith in the words of the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success."

So how can we displease or disobey the *guru's* order and say, "But it is all right. I am chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa." That chanting will not be effective. I have to chant with the blessings of my spiritual master.

Even if we don't yet chant completely without offense

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or we don't even understand completely, we chant on the order of our spiritual master as Lord Caitanya did, considering Himself like a fool. "I firmly believe that simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord I can remove all the misconceptions of the material world. I do this because I firmly believe in the words of my spiritual master. Although the Māyāvādī philosophers do not like this chanting and dancing, I nevertheless perform it on the strength of my spiritual master's words."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa when he came to New York City in 1965. One could have thought, "Well, he's Indian, *sannyāsī*. This is his religion. It's not mine." But then when you become his disciple, his servant, then you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, because he's the spiritual master and he says that this is the process. And when you become the servant and you chant in that way, then the name will reveal itself to you. But you can't chant without that connection with the spiritual master as his servant. This is the meaning of *dīkṣā*. "It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of *māyā* by initiating him into the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. In this way, a sleeping human being can revive his consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is the purpose of *dīkṣā*, or initiation." So for any disciple to make advancement in spiritual life, he must guard carefully against this offense. He must not neglect the orders of the spiritual master.

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THE FOURTH OFFENSE is to minimize the Vedic scriptures and literatures in pursuance of the Vedic version. The scriptures are our guiding light, our direction. Without them it's impossible to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Only by the mercy of the Supreme Lord's incarnation as the *śāstra* has this information come to us—through *guru*, *śāstra*, *sādhū*. *Guru* is repeating *śāstra*, *sādhū*s are repeating *śāstra*. I am the servant of the *sādhū*s and the *guru*, so I hear the *śāstra* from the *guru* and *sādhū*; *śāstra* is my life. There's no question of taking a mundane, speculative attitude and minimizing in any way the words of scripture. Our authority is Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa speaks through the scripture. So this is our authority.

So one may say, "Well, this statement is there in the *śāstra*, but we don't take it literally," or "It doesn't mean this, it means something else," or "These books were written a long time ago." No, no. This is the word of Kṛṣṇa. There is no approaching Kṛṣṇa without these books.

We are defeating the atheistic iconoclasm against Kṛṣṇa consciousness by the strength of the *śabda-brahma*, the proof of the scripture, the sound vibration coming from Kṛṣṇa, coming from outside this material world, *apauruṣeya*. The absolute truth is coming down in this way, descending to us from the Lord through the authorized *mahājānas*. You cannot minimize the scripture and expect to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Whatever is stated, you accept. All reason is there, but you accept on the basis of the proof of the *śabda*, or the sound.

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy is based on the authority of Kṛṣṇa's words manifested through the *Vedas*, *brahmākṣara-samudbhavam*. The Supreme Lord's breathing is the Vedic knowledge. Don't take it as some ordinary philosophy. Don't be so over-intelligent as to foolishly

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minimize the Vedic injunctions, not realizing the actual knowledge. We don't have to be original, inventive, or make something up. Rather, we have to repeat the words of Kṛṣṇa and follow the instructions already given by Kṛṣṇa and the *mahājānas* of the past. But if being mislead in some way or other, you take an atheistic, sophisticated attitude toward the scriptures and don't understand their nature as absolute, axiomatic truth, then that is a great offense.

Our whole conclusion, our proof, is *śabda-brahma*, the scriptures, and we should never speculate on or minimize them. But neither should I just respect the scriptures by keeping them in a glass museum case—they have to be regularly heard. *Not minimize the scriptures* means that you study them, hear from them, without speculation but with submission and inquiry. If doubts arise, regularly reading and hearing from *śāstra* is the best way to remove these doubts. It is very important. So along with chanting we have to hear from these books so that we can become competent preachers and combat our own doubts, because everything is based on the authority of the scripture. We stand by the truth of *śāstra*.

THE FIFTH OFFENSE is to consider the glories of the holy name to be imagination. The fifth offense and the sixth offense are similar—to take the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as imagination or to consider the claims for the chanting to be exaggeration.

This morning we read that if a man practicing even a sinful life chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, he can become better than a *brāhmaṇa*. The *śāstra* also states that these sixteen syllables of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* contain all possible religious activities and rituals that are performed at great cost and labor. They

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are all accomplished just by chanting the *mantra*. The effect of chanting—that one finishes his material life and attains love of God—cannot be interpreted or exaggerated. Ajāmila saved himself at the time of death by chanting the name of Nārāyaṇa. Haridāsa Ṭhākura said that if one chants the holy name negligently or even inadvertently, he gets liberation. These are not exaggerations.

We have to free our minds from doubt and mundane speculation. We cannot understand God or the material universe or even our own body, so we have to hear from higher authority. We put any doubts before the spiritual master. His answers destroy those doubts. Then approach the *śāstra* and the holy name with full faith.

Our mundane critics take the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* as a material sound, an imaginary sound. But Lord Caitanya says,

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smarane na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam idṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

“Kṛṣṇa is coming in His name. Many, many names He has. Although He’s so easily approachable through His name, I don’t have any taste for it.” That is Lord Caitanya’s statement; the name is actually full of power. Kṛṣṇa has invested Himself in *Hare Kṛṣṇa*. So it is not something imaginary. The glorious descriptions of how Hare Kṛṣṇa cleanses the heart—*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam*—cleanses the dust of the heart from many, many lifetimes, puts out the fire of material life, and gives you a taste of the nectar for which you are always anxious—these statements are not

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imaginary. So we have to chant with faith in the glorification of the holy name.

Just by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa you can go back to Godhead. So in the beginning you may not understand, but you have to have faith, and you have to learn from the *śāstra*—not from your own mental maneuverings—how the science of the holy names works.

THE SIXTH OFFENSE is to interpret the holy name. In the *śāstra* are many different statements of the holy name's powers. The *Nārada-pañcarātra* declares that chanting the holy name protects one from the bad effects of this age, Kali-yuga. The *Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad* says that the *mahā-mantra* contains within its syllables all other *mantras* and Vedic rituals. It is so powerful.

So don't interpret—the chanting actually works something on the mind, it hypnotizes the mind, or it's meant for meditating on Brahman, or any subtle interpretation. Hear. Learn. What your *guru* and the *śāstras* say about the holy name is the literal understanding. Don't make some interpretation from your own concoction. When we were first chanting in Tompkins Square Park, Allen Ginsberg was there, and a reporter asked him, "What is this chanting?" He said, "It is a biological thing. The release of oxygen by constant chanting produces ecstasy in the body." Where did he ever hear this? By his fertile poetic imagination. This is his concoction. Or sometimes people say the devotees are hypnotized. These are material explanations. And don't invent so-called spiritual interpretations either. Once one girl told Prabhupāda, "When I chant, I see in my brain a big red light. What should I do?" "Just keep chant-

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ing," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "It will go away."

So we must have faith in the Vedic authority of *guru* and *śāstra*. For example, the scriptures say that in the age of Kali by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa you can become free of all contamination. However, one who wants spiritual life finds it very difficult in this material world. Material life is full of suffering, yet everyone is trying to enjoy; and even their little enjoyment is only suffering. Their attempt to increase enjoyment increases their suffering, with more and more agitation for sex life, intoxication. One can practically feel it increasing his suffering, but he goes on trying to enjoy the holocaust. This is *māyā*, illusion; this will not make us happy. So how to remain spiritual in such an atmosphere?

We are given the information, *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam*: Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in this age of Kali will save you. But if you think, "No, I don't believe it. How can these names, simply singing or reciting names save me? Yes, I want to get out of this material world, but how can this chanting help me?"—this is offensive. Don't make up your own understanding of what the chanting does, or refuse to believe the benedictions ascribed to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Haridāsa Ṭhākura explained that the shadow of the holy name chanted even with offense, even inattentively, would give one liberation. One doubter heard and said, "Haridāsa Ṭhākura, you are exaggerating. How can it be that just by the shadow of the name one gets liberation?"

Haridāsa Ṭhākura replied, "Don't doubt it. This is the statement of *śāstra*. The holy name is so great that Ajāmila chanted the word *Nārāyaṇa* at the time of his death, and he was saved. Do not be doubtful."

"You may say that," the man said, "but if the shadow of

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the holy name does not give liberation, then I shall cut off your nose."

So everyone was very much offended by this man, who later lost his own nose because Kṛṣṇa took the insult to His devotee so seriously. If it's in the *śāstra*, don't take it differently—imagination, interpretation, or exaggeration. What the *śāstra* or *guru* or *sādhū* says about the holy name is authoritative; it is not for some upstart to interpret. The name of Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa. It is not a symbol; it is not a physical *yoga* for breathing. Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is His name. As you can't speculate on inconceivable Kṛṣṇa by argument and logic, so also the name is inconceivable. You can only understand it in *paramparā*. Don't try to interpret the holy name.

THE SEVENTH OFFENSE, a very great offense, is to commit sinful activities willfully while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes this is practiced in different religions: one gets forgiveness from the priest by confessing his sins, but then he immediately commits the sins again. Certainly the representative of God is empowered to release you from sins, if you actually ask for forgiveness, but not that you deliberately go out and sin again. "This chanting process is a very good instrument because it will purify me from the sins that I intend to repeatedly commit." This is offensive treatment of the holy name. And if repeatedly, repeatedly, a person does not reform in activity, then he cannot expect that just by asking forgiveness the thing is resolved. There has to actually be reform.

You have promised the spiritual master before the fire, before the devotees, before the Deities. Now don't make plans

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for sinful life. "This is my plan. I will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, I will commit some sinful activities, and the chanting again will cleanse me. But I have no intention of actually stopping these sinful activities. I will use the chanting for my benefit." This mentality—confessing sins, getting benediction, and continuing sinning—is condemned. It will greatly hamper your advancement. We may wonder, "Oh, I have been chanting for so long. Why don't I feel effect?" This is why. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "You can chant vociferously for millions of years and not make advancement, if you do not chant as a devotee and try to avoid these offenses."

We may make a mistake; that can be rectified. But if you actually plan to make a career of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and breaking the rules, then you will not advance at all. It will ruin your devotional creeper. Be honest and sincere. The *śāstras* are so deep, people cannot understand them. Even the sages at Naimiṣāranya are asking, "Please explain them to us." Therefore, to simply follow the scriptures is not sufficient. But you have to follow someone who can explain the scriptures: *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*.

If you chant the holy name of God, follow these rules, and are sincere, you will have realized the conclusion of the *Vedas*. If we can stay fixed like that—"Now the spiritual master is the representative of God. He gave me this name. I cannot break these rules. I don't care what anyone says. I just have to stay compact. Even if I don't know so many things, this one thing I have to do"—then you go to the topmost perfection.

When we take initiation, we take on responsibilities we did not have before as nondevotees. Now if we commit offense, it is even more shameful than the offense of the nondevotee, just as a policeman who steals is more shameful than an or-

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dinary citizen. So being given this great gift, we shouldn't use it as an instrument in sin.

One may think, "I am very weak. I was brought up in a different way. I cannot follow the rules and regulations, but I will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." But deliberate wrongdoing is offensive. If you are going to commit sinful activities and try to clear it up by chanting, then you are misusing the holy name. The name is not meant for cleaning up your dirty situation, so that you can again do some dirty thing with a clean slate, and again chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and again do a sinful activity. Don't use the holy name in your nefarious plans like that. Approach the holy name when you want to serve Kṛṣṇa, glorify Kṛṣṇa, and ask Kṛṣṇa to take you back in eternal devotional service. That is the power of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Anyone practicing chanting for some time knows himself its good effect. He can feel that it is purifying him. I remember in the beginning when I was going to chant at the temple, I asked a former friend of mine to come with me. He chanted with us, and afterwards I asked him what he thought of it. He admitted that it was very refreshing. So people can feel that this cleansing brings happiness. We also know that by chanting one is cleansing himself from sinful desire, and this also brings relief. But if you take advantage of this cleansing yet deliberately do not stop your sinful activities, this is the greatest offense. You cannot commit some sinful activity like taking intoxication or committing illicit sex and then afterwards take to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa with no real intention of stopping your sinful activity, using the chanting as a part and parcel of your sinful life. Just like these people who become very drunk. The next morning they have a hangover, so they take Alka Seltzer or something like that. The idea is get some relief

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and then again get drunk. They are not taking the medicine to stop forever but so they can enjoy again.

So if anyone uses Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* in this way, this Hare Kṛṣṇa which is actually Kṛṣṇa Himself, which is only intended for developing pure love of God, then this is a very great offense. So many terrible sins can be committed in this world, even murder. Still these sins can be forgiven by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. But if you commit offense to the holy name, then how can you be released? The holy name is our last hope. So avoid this seventh offense at all costs. Be very careful not to fall into some kind of inadvertent, deliberate sinful life in the name of being a devotee. Don't pick up bad examples from others' bad activities. Be exemplary. You have to reform.

Take the holy name in earnestness. You have vowed to chant at least sixteen rounds every day and to obey the four rules; they go together. When Jagāi and Mādhāi were forgiven of all their sins as they took the holy name, Lord Caitanya also said, "But now no more sins. Whatever you've done is of no consequence, so you don't have to bother about it. But no more. Now chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and be peaceful." That is the nature of the forgiveness of Kṛṣṇa; He can forgive anything. But now don't sin any more. And this is possible if we simply take our position as the servant and depend on Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's right direction.



THE EIGHTH OFFENSE is to consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa to be a pious ritual like those described in the *karmakāṇḍa* section of the *Vedas*. It is again an offense to misunderstand the nature of the holy name and to chant for some pious material cause.

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One prays to God for relief from material things. "Please God, see that my family gets some money. Please improve my health. Please see that I get a nice wife, that my business improves." Chanting should not be used like that—for good health, or for some nationalistic cause, or to bring about some change in the weather, or to get some money, or even for some humanitarian cause. We cannot take it as a material, pious act, chanting the holy name to gain some utilitarian, material thing from God, as we try through pious activity. There is even a group that openly chants for material benefits. At their meeting, testifying to the power of the *mantra*, someone will say, "I have my experience that I wanted a guitar, and I chanted the *mantra*, and the next day I got this guitar. So it is a very good *mantra*."

One can pray to God, and that's pious. But we don't chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to approach God in a material way. Don't use the name as that kind of prayer. Only utter the name when you want to serve Kṛṣṇa. "O Kṛṣṇa, O energy of Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service." Not, "O name of Kṛṣṇa, O energy of Kṛṣṇa, please serve me." We don't chant like that. When you want to glorify the Lord, you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. You serve God. And one service is—*śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*—chanting His name. Chant like that. Don't chant to God to help you with some mundane situation. Chant to become His devotee, not for some material benefit. We should not think that chanting is like pious activity or materialistic religion where the worshiper is trying to get some material benefit in exchange for his little bit of God consciousness. If you glorify Kṛṣṇa as His eternal servant, you *automatically* receive all benefit.

Even after initiation if I have to suffer from my past, if there is some token punishment from Kṛṣṇa for my ultimate

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purification, I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, not with desire for relief; rather, "O Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Please save me from *māyā*—*māyā* in the form of miseries, *māyā* in the form of material pleasure. Please engage me in Your service." When one goes on chanting like that, he becomes eligible to go back to Godhead.

As we said, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa can bring liberation, but that is not its purpose. The purpose of chanting is beyond liberation. It's to glorify God, to serve Him. Chanting is service to Kṛṣṇa. We are praying to be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. So just chant in the mood of glorifying Kṛṣṇa: "Kṛṣṇa, You are very great. I am very tiny. Without You, I am nothing. But I am so small, please help me chant. Please engage me in Your devotional service." Not, "Please Kṛṣṇa, make this come about. Make that come about." Don't make the name serve you, but serve the name. You have to understand that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is pure spiritual glorification of service to God. Kṛṣṇa is pleased to hear His holy name uttered by His pure devotee. This love of Kṛṣṇa that we want so much will be enhanced more and more as we chant just like that—helplessly. "O Kṛṣṇa, O energy of Kṛṣṇa! Please, I'm chanting, but I'm still stuck. Please, bring me into Your spiritual energy, free of all these *anarthas*. I just want to serve You."

We chant to serve God, by calling His name. He likes very much our chanting His holy name to develop our love for Him. Not that He is in need, an incomplete person—"You please chant." No. He is complete in Himself, and He has unlimited servitors. He doesn't need your extra chanting, but He's very pleased if you serve Him by chanting His holy name—"O Kṛṣṇa, O energy of Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service. Hare Kṛṣṇa." He is pleased to hear His name chanted by His

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fallen devotees. "He's coming back to Me. He's trying to approach Me by chanting My name. Very nice." The substance of the chanting is to please Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa can take care of everything else.

Our initiation into the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is actually a glorification of God, a spontaneous, authorized process to request the Lord, "Please accept us in Your service. Please accept us in the disciplic succession, and please let us chant the holy name so that we can become Your pure servants." We are not praying for some material benefit; that is ritualistic religion. This Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting is not that, material; it is purely spiritual from the soul to God.

So chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is transcendental to material results. But it gives the best results, for everyone. It spreads the benediction of the holy name. Therefore, Lord Caitanya says *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-niroāpaṇam*. "All glories to the chanting of the holy name. It cleanses the heart of all the dirt accumulated for many lifetimes and puts out the fire of repeated birth and death. It is the ultimate of all transcendental knowledge, it increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it gives us a taste of the nectar for which we are always anxious." He glorifies the holy name for its good work among mankind. As the moon turns full in the sky, day after day, as one chants Hare Kṛṣṇa in the society of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees, the benediction of the moon of Lord Caitanya will increase and increase, even in Kali-yuga, and everyone will benefit. Their own moon of love of God will grow. It is far more than some pious activity.

One chants Hare Kṛṣṇa: "My dear Lord, You may do whatever You like with me. You may make me brokenhearted by not being before me. You may handle me roughly in Your

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embrace. But I am Your servant always. I want to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in that way." Study these *Śikṣāṣṭaka* verses and you can understand how to chant in pure devotion.

The chanting is the fallen soul's cry for Kṛṣṇa. "Please engage me in Your Lordship's service." That is the best we can do, the best service for Kṛṣṇa and for others also. Whatever desire we have to help others is best enacted on the purified platform of devotional service, spreading the glories of the name to others, because only by the holy name can anyone become free of suffering in this age. So take the holy name and give it to others. That is service. But don't make the name your servant or even think of it as some prayer in the service of humanity. It is purely transcendental glorification of Kṛṣṇa by the devotee, in pure devotional service. And that is the most auspicious welfare work for the entire universe.

THE NINTH OFFENSE is to instruct the glories of the holy name to a faithless person. Only one who is pious and austere can appreciate the confidential nature of the holy name—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Although we should introduce everyone to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa, we should not describe the intimate glories of the Lord to someone who is inimical, because that will just increase his blasphemous attitude. Better that we try to approach innocent persons who are at least a little receptive.

Although preaching is meant for the nondevotee, we should not preach to the outright atheist who blasphemes the holy name. In our preaching, of course, everyone is faithless, but we should avoid prolonged exposure to blasphemy, what to speak of presenting the intimate glories of the holy name

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sing and chant while doing different things, but when we chant our rounds, we have to be most attentive. If not, then again it is *aparādha*, an offense. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is *mantra-yoga*. You have to chant and hear.

In the very technique of *mantra-yoga* it is offensive not to be attentive. Each form of *yoga*—*haṭha-yoga*, *kriyā-yoga*, *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*—sitting postures, controlling the breathing—is meant to control the senses. And you control the senses so that you can control the mind. And you control your mind so that you can think of the Supreme Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa. Our *yoga* also controls the senses; we control the mind by two senses. So one sense is vibrating, speaking with the tongue, and the other sense is hearing. If these two senses are fixed, then you can control your mind. We speak Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and we hear.

So you have to be attentive to this technique. Don't think of different things. It's mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Sixth Chapter. You can't get up and go here and there; you can't do business; you can't do anything, except this *yoga*. That is the whole idea. Stop your other activities, sit down, meditate. So when we sit and meditate, we should not do anything else. You sit tight and hear and chant, hear and chant—for only two hours a day. Until you become offenseless in your chanting, you can't progress to a higher stage or to the higher taste. We have to go from offensive to offenseless, and go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The best way is to hear yourself chanting the actual names, Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. This is the way to chant without losing attention. One's mind should be fixed on the sound. As Prabhupāda has written, the mouth should move. One should not slur Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. He should not fall asleep while chanting in his so-called *bhajana*. As Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna in prac-

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ticing *yoga*, "Wherever the mind wanders due to its restless and flickering nature, you have to drag it back." So this applies to our chanting. You have to chant with attention. Remain awake and chant with devotion.

Most of the offenses concern the *life* of the devotee. His life is chanting, but his life's activities have to be pure in order to chant. Our movement depends on offenseless chanting, and spiritual advancement depends on offenseless chanting, whatever your particular service is. At the same time, to take to the mercy of the holy name and grow spiritually, you must avoid the sinful activities: illicit sex, gambling, intoxication, meat-eating, and be very faithful in service to the spiritual master. This combination will make the perfect advancement.

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July 30, 1981

Gīta-nāgarī

Today I began a new, serious attempt to increase my chanting of rounds. I feel significant hope of progress. Externally this is only a vow to increase the number, but my hope is to make a far-reaching improvement.

Prabhupāda states that the tenth offense in chanting is not to have transcendental attachment to the holy name, even after hearing the relevant instructions. My desire is to put an end to offensive chanting.

Otherwise, how long will this tasteless, offensive chanting continue? When will I know something more?

July 31

Overall, I feel good about this chanting increase. It is certainly ultimate; we have to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at the time of death. So I am trying, by increasing the quantity of my practice, to increase my transcendental attachment to the name.

August 1

Even this little increase I resist. I do have some extra time, within executing my prescribed duties. But my mind balks, "Why are you going around chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, as if in imitation of Haridāsa Ṭhākura?" To be alert so that I never give up preaching work for chanting *japa* is all right. But I think my rascal mind, on the plea of detecting a wrong mentality within, wants to reject my rigorous plan for increased chanting. Why? Because "I" will find it too dry and tasteless. But

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that is the very reason I want to increase and try to improve by increasing.

My contention is that I can improve my role in ISKCON (which is mostly preaching—speaking the philosophy and giving realized guidance) if I taste pure devotion, and therefore improving my chanting is a priority job.

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Is Never Boring Or Tiring.

“A devotee is inspired by the Supersoul within the heart to advance in devotional service in a variety of ways. The devotee does not feel hackneyed or stereotyped, nor does he feel that he is in a stagnant position. In the material world, if one engages in chanting a material name, he will feel tired after chanting a few times. However, one can chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* all day and night and never feel tired. As *chanting is increased*, it will come out new and fresh. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī said if he could somehow get millions of ears and tongues, then he could relish spiritual bliss by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. There is really nothing uninspiring for a highly advanced devotee.”

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.30.20, purport

August 2

“... My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names (there are no hard and fast rules), I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting.”

—*Śikṣāṣṭaka*

August 4

“The holy name, character, pastimes and activities of

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Kṛṣṇa are all transcendently sweet like sugar candy. Although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of *avidyā* (ignorance) cannot taste anything sweet, it is wonderful that simply by carefully chanting these sweet names every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root."

—*Upadeśāmṛta*

August 5
Potomac

Reaching the quota today was a struggle. I thought, "I can chant so many rounds at Gītā-nāgarī but not while traveling." But somehow I made it by 9 P.M. (I even thought of staying up with the lights out and finishing when it seemed I couldn't do it.) I thought, "This isn't preaching. I should sacrifice this quota in favor of preaching." But then I thought, "Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is ultimate. It is what you must do at the time of death. The most important thing for me to achieve is pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness." By the last round I really felt that I was *praying*. I also thought how the chanting, when you *are* praying (not just counting off numerical beads and names), is literally transcendental—above and beyond all other considerations—surrender at His lotus feet.

August 6

*satataṁ kīrtayanto mām
yatanyaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ*

Viṣṇu Purāṇa: "If even for a moment remembrance of Vāsudeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is missed, that is the greatest loss, that is the greatest illusion, and that is the greatest anomaly."

kṛṣṇa-sambandha vinā kāla vyartha nāhi yāya

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Cc. *Madhya* 23.22: "Not a moment should be lost. Every moment should be used for Kṛṣṇa or connected with Him."

Twenty-five rounds. I really want to keep it up. It's beneficial. It makes me feel I am more prepared for the end of my life—chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa now. I must chant at times throughout the day in order to reach the quota. That *must* is beneficial.

August 8

Flew from D.C. to Vancouver.

August 9

Vancouver (*Ratha-yātrā*)

". . . chanting His name and all such activities are transcendental. None of the gross or subtle senses shall be otherwise engaged. Such realization of transcendental activities by the devotee is made possible by many, many years of apprenticeship in the devotional service, but simply by attraction of love of God in the Personality of Godhead as it was developed in Nārada Muni, by hearing, is highly effective."

—*Bhāgavatam* 1.5.27, purport

August 11

Chanting this quota is becoming a part of my daily *sādhana*. I'm very grateful that Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa have allowed me to undertake this little increase. It is an insignificant increase in one sense, but I very much value it in my life. I plan to suspend it during the upcoming 8-day writing period and then to return to it. I have to keep it by my own willpower. It can save me.

August 12

"A person who is actually a follower of Śrī Bhaktivinoda Thākura must immediately accept the request of Lord Caitanya

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Mahāprabhu by offering respectful obeisances unto His lotus feet and thus beg from Him the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. If one is fortunate enough to beg from the Lord this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, his life is successful."

—Cc. Ādi 9.36, purport

August 13

Today I went down to the bare 16 rounds minimum, because I am on an 8-day marathon until August 20th, writing the biography at a disciple's house away from the temple and all other obligations. When I return to the Vancouver temple, however, it will be crucial that I immediately return to 25 rounds.

August 19

Today I returned to my quota of chanting 25 rounds. I should keep it up now. The main joy I feel comes, I think, just from fulfilling the increased vow itself, but I think the deeper benefits must be there and by and by I will see them—just as, by and by, the preoccupied plane passenger notices the increased altitude of his plane.

August 20

"Revival of the dormant affection or love of Godhead does not depend on the mechanical system of hearing and chanting, but it solely and wholly depends on the causeless mercy of the Lord. When the Lord is fully satisfied with the sincere efforts of the devotee, He may endow him with His loving transcendental service. But even with the prescribed forms of hearing and chanting, there is at once mitigation of the superfluous and unwanted miseries of material existence."

—*Bhāgavatam* 1.7.6, purport

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August 21

I heard of war and it was as if I had forgotten death.

ahany ahani bhūtāni

gacchantīha yamālayam

śeṣāḥ sthāvaram icchanti

kim āścaryam ataḥ param

"At every moment the souls are flocking to the house of death, but a foolish person thinks he will not die. This is the most amazing thing."

—*Mahābhārata* 313.116

Death is certain. And not only is death predicted, but man's death and man's suffering. If this is so, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is certainly vital. *Ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ*. It is that which we must do at the end of life.

August 22

"In this verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we find the words *puraiva puruṣādvadhṛto dharā-jvaraḥ*. The word *puruṣā* refers to Kṛṣṇa, who was already aware of how the whole world was suffering because of the increase of demons. Without reference to the supreme power of the Personality of Godhead, demons assert themselves to be independent kings and presidents, and thus they create a disturbance by increasing their military power. When such disturbances are very prominent, Kṛṣṇa appears. At present also, various demoniac states all over the world are increasing their military power in many ways, and the whole situation has become distressful. Therefore Kṛṣṇa has appeared by His name, in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, which will certainly diminish the burden of the world. Philosophers, religionists, and people in general must take to this movement very seriously, for man-made plans and devices will not help

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bring peace on earth. The transcendental sound Hare Kṛṣṇa is not different from the person Kṛṣṇa.

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto
'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

—*Padma Purāṇa*

There is no difference between the sound Hare Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa the person."

—*Bhāgavatam* 10.1.23, purport

*August 23
Janmāṣṭamī*

Twenty-five rounds completed.

I gave initiation to 16 devotees today.

August 25

Traveling all day from Vancouver to Philadelphia.

The vow is the main thing, the vow to keep it up, and a conviction that it must be kept up if possible.

*August 30
Gītā-nāgarī*

I really felt happy chanting my last required rounds from dusk to nightfall walking around outside my cabin.

Yes, I will have to die and leave this place.

To avoid the prostitute, Haridāsa Ṭhākura pleaded that he had to finish his prescribed rounds. I also can avoid *prajalpa* by the plea of finishing my 25 rounds. But if there are preaching, fighting duties, I can't avoid them by chanting "in a secluded place." But the taste of increased vow, the knowledge of the strength it is giving, is important for preaching.

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August 31

One thing gained by increasing *japa* is that one is able to chant more. This may sound like a truism. What does it mean, by chanting more I am able to chant more? It means that what is very difficult in the beginning, namely enduring the bitter taste of unrealized chanting, becomes easier. It is Rūpa Gosvāmī's famous maxim that the jaundiced patient will become cured by taking the medicine of the holy name.

I remember our old flyer, "Stay High Forever, No More Coming Down." In this case, the "high" is to stay transcendental. It does not mean to be intoxicated; it means to be above the clouds of the material modes of fear and attraction. By chanting I can understand that I am not this body—I'm the servant of Kṛṣṇa. This is the greatest gain.

As the plane flies higher, the city buildings look smaller and smaller, and then one goes above the clouds. So as one increases his chanting, and to some degree simply by increasing the quantity, he leaves behind so many temporary, agitating thoughts. Success is learning how to stay in transcendental consciousness and at the same time deal with all contingencies, take on all difficulties, and go through all things, remaining transcendental by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Progressive chanting is like cooking *halavā*. One mixes farina with water, and sometimes it seems it won't solidify into the right texture. One has to mix and mix the liquid mixture. Then at a certain point everything catches, and the *halavā*'s texture comes out. So by chanting and chanting, one wonders when his chanting will actually come to the mature point, but then like the *halavā*, suddenly it all begins to come together.

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What is unwanted is the mentality of trying to cash in. One gets a little savings, and rather than build it up, he wants to cash it in. He gets excited about the slightest advancement and wants to right away paint pictures in words, or to enjoy ecstatic bliss. But one should just go on and on, not expecting any respect or admiration as an advanced chanter of the holy name. *Trñād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā / amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*—"In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly."

September 2

As I began to think seriously of an intensive writing schedule for *Līlāmṛta* work, it occurred to me the vow of 25 rounds might have to go. The quota takes an extra 1 1/2 hours. That's a lot of time. Yet I have the ability if I want.

The increased vow keeps me aware—in an essential, total, and proper emotional way—that I will have to chant at death. It makes me more likely to continue chanting in time of emergency. It helps me preach better on that same point.

But if writing needs the time, I can't vow to take less time with my disciples and Godbrothers who want to see me. That is already determined. I need to see them and to answer their letters.

Less sleep?

Faster rounds?

It could be said that this extra chanting is appropriate for *Parikṣit Mahārāja*—and this I also must do at the end—but it is not conducive to a full workload of service.

So when ready to actually introduce the writing schedule, I should do so, and see what happens to the chanting.

It seems, at least, that at any opportunity I will now be more inclined to increase my *japa*—not that after 16 rounds

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I never touch my beads again for the rest of the day, having "finished" my rounds.

September 3

The above entry practically signals the end of my vow of 25 daily rounds. I'm soon adding serious writing of *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* to my daily life. To chant 25 rounds, I calculated, takes me some 4 hours, 15 minutes. I can't afford so much time.

I told Maṇḍaleśvara this, but he thought my keeping the vow seemed important. I agreed, citing how the extra chanting helps me deal with ISKCON controversies, with their discussions of things not Absolute, of things that may or may not be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Then he asked if I could chant faster. Welcome suggestions, both to keep the vow and to try chanting faster.

Today I chanted some of the rounds faster. It sounded a little odd, rushed, but 25 rounds now becomes possible in less time. Maybe I will be able to keep the quota. Prabhupāda has said 16 rounds should be done in 2 hours, whereas I always take longer. So why not "rush it" or pick up speed to reach the pace that he himself kept (as we hear on his *japa* tape) and that he recommends to us. At that pace I should be able to do 25 rounds in a little over 3 hours. That much time I could afford. So let me speed it up, chant at a fast clip, even if at first it seems rushed or odd to me.

Try not to give up the quota that keeps you in advanced consciousness of the holy name, even while adding writing to your daily life.

September 7

Question: But can you chant at high speed for the whole

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duration? Isn't that like trying to sprint for a long distance?

Answer: Well, if you are so tired that you can't keep up speed, then maybe you should put aside *japa* until the time you can keep it up. Admittedly, it is strenuous.

Question: But where is such time?

So the answer to the question depends on my complete schedule, including my writing. For the present, at least I will try to keep the quota. I'll chant faster.

September 8

Twenty-five rounds. Good to be back on quota. It seemed easy to do 25. I'm assuming this mechanical aid of speed, with the mechanical quota of 25 rounds, will lead to churning my dormant love for the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. It (*ruci*) won't happen until He is pleased with me, due to my service attitude.

A Madhyama-Bhāgavata Is Always Chanting.

As in the previous year, one of the inhabitants of Kulīna-grāma submitted a petition to the Lord, saying, "My Lord, kindly tell me what my duty is and how I should execute it."

The Lord replied, "You should engage yourself in the service of the servants of Kṛṣṇa and always chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. If you do these two things, you will very soon attain shelter at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

"A person who is always chanting the holy name of the Lord is to be considered a first-class Vaiṣṇava, and your duty is to serve his lotus feet."

Purport:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says that any Vaiṣṇava who is constantly chanting the holy name of the Lord should be considered to have attained the second platform of Vaiṣṇavism. Such a devotee is superior to a neophyte devotee

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who has just learned to chant the holy name of the Lord. A neophyte devotee simply tries to chant the holy name, whereas the advanced devotee is accustomed to chanting and takes pleasure in it. Such an advanced devotee is called *madhyama-bhāgavata*, which indicates that he has attained the intermediate stage between the neophyte and the perfect devotee. Generally a devotee in the intermediate stage becomes a preacher. . . an intermediate devotee is greatly attracted to chanting the holy name and by chanting he is elevated to the platform of love. If one chants the holy name of the Lord with great attachment, he can understand his position as an eternal servant of the spiritual master, other Vaiṣṇavas, and Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus the intermediate Vaiṣṇava considers himself *kṛṣṇa-dāsa*, Kṛṣṇa's servant. He therefore preaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to innocent neophytes and stresses the importance of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

—Cc. *Madhya* 16.69-72

A Mahā-Bhāgavata Makes Others Chant Just By His Presence.

The following year, the inhabitants of Kulīna-grāma again asked the Lord the same question. Hearing this question, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu again taught them about the different types of Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "A first-class Vaiṣṇava is he whose very presence makes others chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa."

Purport:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says that if an observer immediately remembers the holy name of Kṛṣṇa upon seeing a Vaiṣṇava, that Vaiṣṇava should be considered a *mahā-bhāgavata*, a first-class devotee. Such a Vaiṣṇava is always

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aware of his Kṛṣṇa conscious duty, and he is enlightened in self-realization. He is always in love with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and this love is without adulteration. Because of this love, he is always awake to transcendental realization. Because he knows that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the basis of knowledge and action, he sees everything connected with Kṛṣṇa. Such a person is able to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa perfectly. Such a *mahā-bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇava has the transcendental eyes to see who is sleeping under the spell of *māyā*, and thus he engages himself in awakening sleeping conditioned beings by spreading the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He opens eyes that are closed by forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa. Thus the living entity is liberated from the dullness of material energy, and is engaged fully in the service of the Lord.

—Cc. *Madhya* 16.73-74

Simply By Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Everything About Kṛṣṇa Becomes Revealed, Because This Is The Proper Process For Actual Purification.

“If I simply say that Kṛṣṇa is God, it will not be appreciated. You will make so many protests, ‘Why should Kṛṣṇa be God?’ But actually Kṛṣṇa is God. *Ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi*. Not only is Kṛṣṇa God, but His name is also God. Just like you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa’s name. Kṛṣṇa’s name, His form, Kṛṣṇa’s qualities, His pastimes and entourage are all Kṛṣṇa, but—*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi*. *Nāmādi* means beginning from His name. We can understand Kṛṣṇa beginning from His name. When His name is perfectly chanted, then His form, His pastimes, qualities, and all other things in relation to Kṛṣṇa become revealed. *Ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ*. But these blunt senses cannot appreciate what is

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Kṛṣṇa. Then how will He be appreciated? *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*—when we engage our tongue in Kṛṣṇa's devotional service. Kṛṣṇa consciousness begins with the tongue, not the eyes—some rascals want to see Kṛṣṇa, but all they'll see is their 'guru mahārāja.' Such rascals will thus see that so-called 'Kṛṣṇa,' but in order to see the *real* Kṛṣṇa one has to purify the eyes, purify the senses by engaging them (beginning with the tongue) in Kṛṣṇa's service, not that I, or anyone or any scientist can 'see' and automatically become perfect."

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class 1.16.6
Los Angeles

Very Seriously By Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa By The Grace Of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura Will Save One From The Allurement Of Women.

"A *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, *sannyāsī*, and *brahmacārī* should be very careful when associating with women. One is forbidden to sit down in a solitary place even with one's mother, sister, or daughter. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement it has been very difficult to disassociate ourselves from women in our society, especially in Western countries. We are therefore sometimes criticized, but nonetheless, we are trying to give everyone a chance to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and thus advance spiritually. If we stick to the principle of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* offenselessly, then, by the grace of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, we may be saved from the allurements of women. However if we are not very strict in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, we may at any time fall victim to women."

—Bhāgavatam 5.6.3, purport

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September 16
Philadelphia

Today I took a tailspin—20 rounds only. What can be done? So many duties, meetings, real obligations in terms of extending myself to others and giving my time. I didn't feel it was terribly wrong—but I am sorry to lose this numerical strength. Tomorrow is the monthly BTG meeting, and I'm likely to again fall short. Then off to the Caribbean—the same thing. Then, off to a writing marathon, where it may continue.

Therefore, I introduced speed in rounds, but that is hard. also in these non-ideal surroundings. I miss walking down the solitary woodland paths at Gītā-nāgarī. Yet I must visit these other places and preach. Certain places are better for chanting, and when in those places, I should especially go after the numerical strength.

So if I fail to maintain the quota regularly in upcoming days, I don't think I'll lose my resolution to return to it as soon as possible.

September 17

Every morning I meet half an hour with the disciples, chant two rounds, and read a selection about chanting. This morning we read that chanting will be tested at the time of death.

The tendency, as recorded here, is to think and work at chanting in terms of numbers, quota, speed per round, ability, and inability to keep the vow. But chanting the Lord's names goes beyond that.

The body is temporary. The soul is eternal, with qualities of bliss and knowledge. Now he has forgotten himself due to the body. The body is the total effect of *karma* and the modes of nature. We have to endure the body's changes and do our duty. Chant.

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September 18
Trinidad

This morning we drove early from Philadelphia to New York City, and then flew 6 hours to Trinidad. Chanting *japa* while waiting in the customs line at Trinidad airport.

September 19

Traveling to unusual places, climates, schedules, is very difficult on the vow to chant steady, meditative rounds. I have lost exact count, although I am above 16 rounds. Tropics. Uncertain of my scheduled activities, and even uncertain of our place, staying at an Indian member's house.

Part of the achievement at *Gītā-nāgarī*, it seemed, was that in a peaceful, idyllic, controlled setting you were able to keep up your count and also to enter into the pure relish of the holy name, without guilt—why am I relishing the holy name when I should be out preaching? At least for limited periods, as long as preaching and *writing* are going on, I could chant extra rounds without guilt. Rather, I told myself, what I need most is to be pure, so let me chant. The gains realized by chanting in a peaceful place—conviction that the name will protect me unto death, conviction that the name is *Kṛṣṇa* as He is to be realized at the end when all other work has to be wound up, conviction that a chanting “workshop” atmosphere improves this very important method of devotional service—all these gains would have to be realized also in a nonpeaceful atmosphere in order for them to take on their full worth.

You purposely entered the nonpeaceful atmosphere to preach. To preach means you have to tolerate the nonpeaceful—opposition, irregular hours, travel, counselling new people, business, etc. There is no avoiding the conclusion that if you seriously and regularly refuse to enter such

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nonpeaceful preaching opportunities, when they are actually prescribed duties, then you are *bhajanānandī*, which is not highly thought of by lovers of Kṛṣṇa like Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda. I don't think I'm doing that. But here in this notebook I am encouraging an irrepressible yearning that has increased in me in the last year—to chant and realize Kṛṣṇa in His name, to go to the name as shelter. So if ideal circumstances improve my *japa*, then take them as they arise, but never by turning down serious preaching duties or opportunities.

September 20

It's 5:30 P.M., 23 rounds done. Six rounds I chanted on beads of devotees to be initiated. This in itself is a great responsibility in chanting—that I am somehow a giver of the holy name in *sampradāya*. So I have to be a good chanter, since I am a spiritual master, serving the holy name by awarding *hari-nāma dīksā*.

Chanting in circumstances where I have to be quiet, I continue fingering the beads, counting, reciting in my mind. My tendency and ability to do this increases.

Also in sleep, dreaming—whenever a flicker of consciousness comes and I am in control, then I push through the *mahā-mantra* and then slide again into dreams; but wherever a space of deliberate consciousness comes, I make my desperate prayer, a message—cry for survival—the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

September 22
Guyana

Today, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, I found time to do more than 25 rounds. We flew to Guyana, then a 45-minute car ride to West Demerara. Guyana's sights, sounds, and smells, and my

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own personal self—I could describe these things, but for this notebook I am concerned for *japa*. So it was done.

September 24

Preaching to guests last night was as good as chanting on beads. This is a *japa* notebook, and although looking for the advantages for the cause of *japa*, I have to admit that such preaching is also chanting. Chant whenever you can, without cutting back on other things. There is time to be found if you are not lazy, if you are willing to chant and count the holy names, rather than sleep when not needed or daydream.

Today 16 rounds done by 6:00 A.M.—a fast, concentrated pace. But to do more will be a problem as I have meetings all day. Finished with about 23.

September 25

Today, a travel day, from Guyana to New York. 25 rounds done by 3:00 P.M. The day wound up with over 7 hours air travel, 3 1/2 car, and I chanted 29 rounds. *Jaya!*

September 30
Gītā-nāgarī

I need inspiration to keep going. Duty isn't enough, because I don't have to chant 25 rounds. Inspiration: while putting the little bead bag in the hand of my Prabhupāda deity, while putting his extended finger into it, I felt, "Yes, chanting is bliss, is the way to Kṛṣṇa." Then I wanted to go and chant like him.

But even the peaceful atmosphere seems to hang on me, and doubts come, "Why are you here trying to chant extra rounds? What does it mean? Why do it? Why are you just chanting? Why do you do these extra rounds after 16? Why

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have you attached so much importance to chanting at a certain speed and to chanting extra rounds?" One answer is this is my response to the advice to "always, constantly chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

"Please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

I am, I am.

October 1

5:00 P.M., so far 19 rounds.

I don't *feel* like doing more. What do you think of that, oh *japa* reformer?

Well, somehow I got 25 done before the day ended. It feels good—the accomplishment. The next morning also knowing I persisted and got it done continues as a good assurance.

"Our duration of life is not very long, and there is no certainty when we shall be ordered to leave everything for the next stage. Thus it is our duty to see that not a moment of our life is wasted in topics which are not related with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Any topic, however pleasant, is not worth hearing if it is devoid of its relation to Kṛṣṇa."

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.16.6, purport

Such a quote makes you want to be chanting. Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is certainly related to Kṛṣṇa, and the time is never lost, even if only mechanically the name is uttered.

October 4

Every morning I have a *japa* class about a half hour long. With a small group of disciples I sit and chant. I read from a compilation about chanting the holy name. I also talk about chanting. This morning we read a selection about how chanting helps control the restless mind, from Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture published in the first American issue of *Back to*

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Godhead. He said, "It does no good to absent-mindedly chant the name of Kṛṣṇa while your thoughts are elsewhere. Chanting will bring our uncontrolled mind under control." These readings help us focus on the importance of what we are doing—chanting.

I was just out walking. Suddenly, walking back towards the cabin in the rather cold October sunlight, my surroundings seemed unfamiliar and I experienced a discontinuity of thought, like the feeling you have when you suddenly wake up, especially in the middle of the day, and try to grab hold of an identity. Then I thought, "Yes, at this time especially, it is important that you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—when you do not know where you are, when nothing is familiar. Such a state will come one day, when, familiar or not, you will have to leave everything that is so-called familiar, even your body and the well-worn path to your house; and that is the working of inevitable time to bring you to death." At that time, when nothing can be grabbed onto and you have to leave even your own mind's thoughts, then you must be able to CHANT HARE KṚṢṆA. If then instead you try to grab hold of that which can no longer save you, if you cry out to that which you are leaving, then that action becomes *karma*, and again you come back to the material world and play at being familiar and comfortable and ambitious and living, as if it were permanent. So I want to do all my duties and have normal consciousness, yes, but I want to become attached to this chanting, chanting deeply, attached to the holy name.

Do your duty, but maintain an aloofness from whatever is not lasting. Attachment to chanting and hearing is the essence of Kṛṣṇa conscious work in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Don't shirk the nitty-gritty work of ISKCON but don't become

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caught up in temporary anxiety or pleasure. The art is of being on the mark—Kṛṣṇa conscious. The chanting and hearing is essence. Even when dealing with a practical problem, Śrīla Prabhupāda was seeing it and soon speaking of it in absolute terms. Chanting especially promotes this: leave everything aside and chant the holy name. Then we can take up even our most demanding preaching duties in this world with vigor and endurance.

October 5

Twenty-five rounds by 2:30 P.M. I couldn't help flirting with the idea of someday chanting continuously for a stretch, of giving up all responsibilities and staying in India and just chanting—"I want to become purified so that I can write about Prabhupāda." But I thought then, "Why don't you go on chanting at least a few extra rounds (above 25) even now; why wait for India? Just chant for a few months." But I don't think you could do it, nor is it practical. Yet the thought of desiring it was encouraging. I feel something is awaiting, if I could let go and chant even for a month.

At first such chanting would seem difficult, but once past a certain stage you just go on and on. The chanting does not go on automatically; you have to keep on deliberately chanting. But your will begins to allow you, with no other thought except the next bead, the next round, and with no serious deception or play-ecstasies—but just chanting, actually, constantly. It is a giving up of responsibility, and yet it is not void, or sleep, or sense gratification. It is one thing—*japa vrata*, *brhad vrata*.

October 8

Very busy preaching day up to 10:00 P.M. in two different

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cities, Philadelphia and Delaware; yet, somehow, even while riding in the car, I managed to complete 25 rounds. (The last round was done late.)

So this shows that somehow, even when very busy, you can complete the quota.

"Oh *brāhmaṇas*, just accept me as a completely surrendered soul, and let Mother Ganges, the representative of the Lord, also accept me in that way, for I have already taken the lotus feet of the Lord into my heart. Let the snake-bird—or whatever magical thing the *brāhmaṇa* created—bite me at once. I only desire that you all continue singing the deeds of Lord Viṣṇu."

—*Bhāgavatam* 1.19.15

October 10
Potomac

Twenty-five rounds.

I really doubt you will be able to do it tomorrow—the installation of Śītā-Rāma in Washington, D.C. But rise and see how many rounds you can do.

October 11

A very successful festival of Śrī Rāma Vijayotsava. 16 rounds.

October 13

Today a doctor was feeling my pulse. I was quiet and the room was quiet, while he timed the pulse. I thought to myself, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa . . ." Then I thought how I don't take the chanting seriously; but it is, after all, the spiritual process that will be most available and most approachable in that time of emergency—death—when all other

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facilities for meditation and remembrance are removed. Therefore it is very important to practice chanting as much as possible, even if you can't keep your time of demise in your mind.

From *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Nāmāṣṭakam*:

" . . . O Lord, in this poem, which describes Your glories, I do not ask for anything other than devotional service to You. Please grant that to me."

The above makes me think of someday writing something also about the holy name. That is going on in a certain level in *Sādhu-bhūṣaṇām's* "Japa Reform Notebook."

October 14
Baltimore

I see this numerical strength and speed as somewhat mechanical adjustments, but if they are attended to, that is also devotion, *prīti*, and thus Kṛṣṇa will help me further.

Speed is good for me because when I am chanting, say at the rate of seven minutes, fifteen seconds per round, then I am going at a driving pace and concentrating.

But sometimes it goes slow, linked also with my physical condition, low energy, drowsiness. So when my energy is too low, I put aside the chanting. Anyway, today I chanted 25 rounds. I also took part in *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana* in the downtown streets of Baltimore for the benefit of the fallen souls.

"If one properly finishes chanting the prescribed number of rounds of *hari-nāma*, he is elevated step-by-step to the highest platform, *uttama-adhikārī*."—*Nectar of Instruction*

*jāta-nāmāparādhe tu
pramadena kathaṅcana*

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*sadā saṅkīrtayen nāma
tad-eka-śaraṇodbhavet*

"If, somehow or other, one accidentally commits offenses while chanting the holy name, he should take the constant chanting of the holy name as the remedial measure to counteract those offenses."

*nāmāparādha-yuktānām
nāmāny eva haranty agham
aviśrānti-prayuktāni
tāny evārtha-karāṇi ca*

"The holy name removes the sins, even of those who chant offensively, provided they chant constantly. The holy name grants all spiritual opulences to them."

*October 17
Gītā-nāgarī*

Going off walking alone, timing, pushing, determined to get a quota done. It is important, I tell myself, because in these days everyone is looking for purity. "How glorious are those, even though born as dog-eaters, who are chanting the holy name."

*October 22
En route to India*

I must drop the quota. The main reason is the last few days I've decided to work more on the biography. That commitment is the greatest I have, and the extra time taken to do 25 rounds must now be sacrificed. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

5

EPILOGUE/ SIXTEEN PARAGRAPHS ON CHANTING

He hopes in early morning that he will finger his beads in the quiet room, and yet his dreams indicate his roaming mind.

"The holy name is Kṛṣṇa Himself"; he knows this is true; he has known it for over a decade.

Far away he hears a train, nearby a sound; someone moving; his right hand enters the string of beads, and thumb and forefinger grip the first one with instant hope.

Chanting with offense cannot produce the relish of the pure holy name but only the shadow of the name. "That is what I can expect," he thinks, but he knows the name's power can overcome him.

Great saints also in sacred quarters like the courtyard of Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda beneath a mosquito net in his room in Bombay at 3 A.M. having just dictated the *Bhāgavatam* purports—great saints chant. And so another devotee chants in their footsteps, peacefully bowing to the order of the *guru* and knowing in his heart that it is true. He would rather die than abandon this. But it has been years; still his mind and habits prevent the pure name from entering his ears.

Even the shadow of the name brings liberation, just as the first rays of the dawn chase away the ghosts and thieves of the night. "Yet still I live in the shadow of the name," he thinks. "Should I even aspire to rise? Let me try first to stay awake, free of illicit desire, properly pronouncing Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Even I can be transformed.

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The beads of wood pass through his fingers; *japa* begins for the tiny *jīva*, pacing and calling out to Kṛṣṇa in pre-dawn solitude.

It cleans the heart of the dust accumulated from many lifetimes; it extinguishes the fire of repeated birth and death. It is not so easy. But even the shadow-name uttered by a shadow devotee, even the first step, counts a million times better than anything else.

He has the beads properly in his hands and the name on his lips. He walks, but tires. But if he sits, he sleeps. They say even the beginner is engaged in love of God, just as an unripe mango is a mango even though not like the ripened mango.

Tired, he sits, nods, and discovers his mind has traveled throughout the universe of human and subhuman desires. He slaps at his mental image, and his attention returns to the name. But this corrective act is performed *ad infinitum*—where is the hope that it will permanently correct him? Even if he has no such hope, still there is the corrective slap, again, and he has a willingness and a firm resolve to correct again and again. Back to the name, back to Godhead.

Just the utterance will save him, as it saved Ajāmila. He pours out so many names, all imperfect from the chanter, like poorly manufactured products from a defective assembly line—and yet each name retains its perfection.

He is confused at his own unwilling recitation of the names; he is illusioned by false ego, totters, and seeks physical rest. "When will I ever succeed?"

He is like a mountain climber. He gropes a hand forward and tries to lift his body, depending on the firmness of the thin ledge above. His foot probes, looking for a safe ledge below, as he continues his upward climb through the sheer height of

SIXTEEN PARAGRAPHS ON CHANTING

mind. The rope around his waist is held firmly far above by the Lord, who is personally lifting the soul—then why is it so difficult?

He chants as a watchman does his rounds, guarding the property, happy in his duties, guarding to make sure his voice utters only the name. And with his watchman's searchlight he constantly pierces into the darkness of the wandering mind. As a watchman, he does his rounds.

Guides of the holy name, please grant the extra spark of mercy to the slow chanters of Your holy names! Ah, but You have already done this! Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu has gone to unlimited lengths to deliver us by this easiest and sublime method. It is up to us. Now if we refuse! No, it is unspeakable. We must accept—we will not remain so fallen.

The Vaiṣṇava poet declares that he must have been cursed by Yamarāja and therefore has no taste for devotional practices. Yet it is also true that Śrīla Prabhupāda has come and rescued us from our own distaste for *bhakti*. By his chanting and dancing we are attracted, and by his order we go on patiently, placing the *mahā-mantra* on our heads and aspiring to serve Him.

APPENDIXES

1,2,3

HARE KṚṢṆA AND THE JESUS PRAYER

I WAS WITH HIS DIVINE GRACE Śrīla Prabhupāda in Australia in 1974 when he spoke on several occasions to church leaders and audiences of seminarians. While telling about Lord Caitanya's universal *saṅkīrtana* movement of chanting God's holy names, Śrīla Prabhupāda would explain that Christians could also take part by chanting the name of Jesus Christ. He pointed out that the word *christ*, coming from the Greek word *christos*, is philologically related to the name *Kṛṣṇa*. He also said that if, along with chanting *Christos*, Christians would give up slaughtering animals and eating meat, they would advance in spiritual realization.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has written about the universality of chanting the names of God:

The Lord is the proprietor of all the universe, and therefore He may be known in different places by different names, but that does not in any way qualify the fullness of the Lord. Any nomenclature which is meant for the Supreme Lord is as holy as the others because they are all meant for the Lord. Such holy names are as powerful as the Lord, and there is nothing to bar anyone in any part of the creation from chanting and glorifying the Lord by the particular name of the Lord as it is locally understood. They are all auspicious, and one should not distinguish such names of the Lord as material commodities.

There is an old Christian tradition that stresses the chanting of the holy names of God. The *Philokalia*, a collection from eleven centuries of early Christian writings, documents that

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certain early fathers of Eastern Christianity gave exclusive importance to the recitation of the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." These early fathers lived in solitary, eating only a little bread and water. In their practice of constant prayer, they used breathing exercises and concentration on the heart, reminiscent of *haṭha-yoga* techniques from India. Yet although the severe austerities and divine insights of these fathers are inspiring, hardly anyone now can expect to adopt such a life of constant solitude.

The practice of chanting the Jesus Prayer was also current in nineteenth-century Russia, as described by the wandering renunciant-author of *The Way of a Pilgrim*. This book is an autobiographical account of a pilgrim who, having discovered the virtues of the Jesus Prayer, wandered homeless through the forests and towns of Russia, requesting whomever he met to recite the prayer constantly.

But how many Christians today would follow the pilgrim's example of denying himself earthly pleasures and simply wandering with a backpack and a little bread, chanting the name of Jesus Christ? Today we are accustomed more to seeing "born-again" Christians justify a life of subdued hedonism in the name of religion. Popular evangelists urge their followers to send them money and pray to God for wealth and material blessings.

These extreme contrasts—on one hand the life of austerity and detachment from the material world and on the other hand the life of materialistic Christianity in which God wants *us* to enjoy the world—are too often the only alternatives open to Christians. For sincere Christians, this presents a serious problem.

A modern reference that touches on the same problem is

HARE KṚṢṆA AND THE JESUS PRAYER

J. D. Salinger's book *Franny and Zooey*. I had never read this book, but I had heard that it mentions the chanting of *japa*. Zooey says,

It's nothing new, for God's sake. It didn't just start with the little pilgrim's crowd, I mean. In India, for God knows how many centuries, it's been known as *japam*. *Japam* is just the repetition of any of the human names of God. Or the names of his incarnations—his avatars, if you want to get technical. The idea being that if you call out the name long enough and regularly enough and *literally* from the heart, you'll get an answer. Not exactly an *answer*. A *response*.

As the story goes, Franny, sickened with the phonies in the world and with a college system that teaches knowledge but not wisdom, takes up chanting the Jesus Prayer. While in a restaurant with her shallow boyfriend, she faints in desperation and is taken home, where she emotionally withdraws, cries, and continuously chants the Jesus Prayer. Her concerned parents and her brother Zooey try to persuade her to become her old self again, and finally Zooey brings her out of her isolation by advising her not to hate the phony people of the world but to remain detached. Since Franny is an actress, she should not retreat from the world but work as an actress in service to God.

Yet Zooey's philosophy is sentimental. His advice leaves much to be desired, as he himself admits:

When you first felt the urge, the *call*, to say the prayer, you didn't immediately start searching the four corners of the world for a master. *You came home*. . . . So if you look at it in a certain way, by rights you're only entitled to the

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low-grade spiritual counsel we're able to give you around here, and no more.

A genuine spiritual master would have been able to give Franny much more practical help in spiritual life, for he would have been able to explain the art of precisely how to render service to the Lord by chanting His name and at the same time offering the results of one's work to Him in devotion.

The name of God is identical with the Supreme Lord Himself; therefore, by chanting God's names a devotee comes in direct touch with the Lord. One need not cut himself off from the world, because the whole material world is the energy of God and can be used in His service. Without expert guidance, however, one's philosophy is bound to be incomplete, and he will either want to renounce the world or enjoy it for himself. A devotee can become an actress, or for that matter a lawyer, a welfare worker, a humanitarian, or a family person in the service of God. But one has to learn the art of performing all activities as service to Him.

The process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness offers many facilities to help pilgrims, whether Christian, Hindu, Muslim, or whatever. There's the worship of God in His Deity form in the temple. There's the process of offering food to Kṛṣṇa and accepting the remnants as His mercy. These spiritual practices are pleasant, easy, and powerful. A materialist cannot understand how God and His name can be the same or how God's Deity form can be nondifferent from His original form. But these absolute facts are stated in the Vedic scriptures and understood by pure devotees.

If a pilgrim does not know how to worship the Deity form of God or how to offer Kṛṣṇa delicious food and then eat the spiritual remnants—if his only choices, therefore, are either to

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reject this world and chant in solitude or, on the contrary, to think that God sanctions a life of materialistic enjoyment, including even animal slaughter and illicit sex—then he is at a great disadvantage, despite his prayers or his professing the name of God. Only by following the guidance of a genuine spiritual master can a devotee of God, a chanter of God's names, pass through all the difficulties of living in the material world and attain the pure and eternal devotion to Kṛṣṇa that is the ultimate fruit of chanting.

"IF THIS WERE MY LAST COLUMN . . ."

On sitting down to write this column, I am suddenly struck by the question: "What if I were to die tomorrow and these were my last words—what would I say?" And a similar question: "What if the world were to end soon and this were my last column—what would be the most urgent and relevant message I could deliver?" If this were my final editorial, should I perhaps analyze the gasoline shortage? Criticize the advertising industry? Or should I devote my last lines to naming a favorite for president of the United States in 1980? Surely I should speak the most helpful and essential message I could possibly utter:

Please chant these names of God: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Now I can almost hear some of my readers responding, "Is that all you have to say—just that we recite the prayer of your religious sect?" So I must explain that the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant is not a sectarian practice but a *mantra*, which delivers to the chanter life's highest perfection. There are so many problems in the world today, and ultimately all come from our lack of God consciousness. Stopgap political, social, and economical measures are just that; they don't reach the underlying disease. But if we chant God's name and obey His laws, that will be a practical therapy for civilization in this era when God consciousness is neglected by the leaders of nations. Our leaders will attempt anything in the way of diplomacy or force to achieve their short-sighted materialistic ends, but they have no vision for actually solving the world's problems. A solution is possible only through the education and unification of all

"IF THIS WERE MY LAST COLUMN . . ."

people on the spiritual—and nonsectarian—platform of chanting God's name and obeying His laws. Although our atheistic planmakers would have us think that turning to God is unrealistic or impractical, it's not so. Even Napoleon, as worldly-minded a leader as he was, admitted, "The sword will always be conquered by the spirit."

We don't advertise it much, but in times of distress most of us, even avowed atheists, turn to God. A few years ago in Atlanta, when a Kṛṣṇa devotee ran for mayor on a platform of God consciousness, the editor of a noted newspaper carped that chanting God's names couldn't solve man's problems. Then one day it happened that the editor was kidnapped, locked into a car trunk, and held for ransom. When finally he had been freed and reporters asked him what he had been thinking about during his confinement, he said, "I prayed to God."

And this is natural. If a man at all believes in the Supreme Lord (and a Gallup poll says 94 percent of us do), then he will call upon Him at least in a crisis. But why wait until the last gasp? Sometimes a person near death prays to God to let him go on living for just a few more years . . . in defiance of God's laws. But this is not God consciousness. A Hindi proverb says man prays to God in difficulty, but if he would only pray to God when he is well situated, then he wouldn't fall into difficulty, whether during this present life or the next. But the Vedic literatures (for that matter, all the scriptures of the world) explain that in both this life and the next, we can solve our problems by becoming devotees of the Supreme Lord.

So all devotees, regardless of their particular religious faith, have to teach people about glorifying God and obeying His commandments. Granted, gross materialists may be absorbed in their material, patchwork solutions; but at least pro-

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fessed men of God have to teach the authorized principles of God consciousness. They should never abandon the simple method of pure devotional service to the Supreme. Yet they are doing exactly that.

Once I was invited to a symposium on a Dallas T.V. show. About thirty priests, ministers, rabbis and monks spoke successively, and almost uniformly about the glories of welfare work. I suggested that the highest kind of welfare work is to tell people about glorifying God and obeying His laws, and that spiritual leaders should urge people specifically to avoid killing, adultery, gambling and intoxication. Once people start glorifying God and obeying His laws, they won't be so much in need of ordinary, mundane welfare work. The Supreme Lord will more than provide for our necessities, if only we'll recognize our relationship with Him. Even when people don't strictly follow spiritual codes, still their spiritual leaders have to engage them in chanting God's names. This is the essence of religion. One can choose to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa or Allah or Jehovah; but calling upon God's names is recommended in all the world's scriptures.

The Vedic scriptures say that all of us are spiritual souls, originally God conscious entities; but due to our association with matter since time immemorial, our consciousness is now adulterated. And the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is a sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. We are living in illusion, trying to master nature, although actually we are under the grip of her stringent laws. By working to exploit the resources of nature, we have become more and more entangled in her complexities. Despite our hard struggle to conquer nature, we are even more dependent on her. This illusory struggle against nature can at once be stopped when we revive our

"IF THIS WERE MY LAST COLUMN . . ."

eternal Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant is the transcendental process for reviving this original, pure consciousness. By chanting the transcendental vibration, we cleanse our hearts of the false mentality, "I am the lord of all I survey."

Because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the original, natural energy of the living being, when we hear the transcendental vibration of Kṛṣṇa's names, our original consciousness is revived. Of all forms of religious meditation or study, chanting God's name is both the simplest and the most effective. Even in the beginning, we can feel transcendental ecstasy beyond the material concept of life. Calling on the names of God does not require that we change our religion or nationality or social status. Anyone can take it up, provided he is properly guided.

With proper guidance, we can live in accord with the proverb "simple living and high thinking," satisfying our material needs without artificial industries and complicated urbanized life, saving time and energy for understanding our eternal relationship with God; and at the time of death we can return to the spiritual world.

So this is my message: Please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I hope I'll live quite a few more years to write more Kṛṣṇa conscious messages. But even if not, I have delivered the most urgent message. We should always give the world our best, most helpful contribution, and we should live each day in the shelter of the Absolute Truth, as if it were our last day. So why wait for the deathbed or doomsday? Please chant these names of God:

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

LETTER TO ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

DEAR ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. On this day of your appearance anniversary, I would like to recall some of your important instructions. I understand that whatever you say is coming directly from God.

You have written that of all the instructions of the spiritual master, the most important is the instruction to chant at least sixteen rounds daily of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Lord Caitanya said, *kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*: always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. But you have specified at least sixteen rounds minimum because we are not able to chant much more than this due to our restless mentalities. We are also given a minimum because we have so many preaching activities to conduct in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this age of Kali. But nevertheless, it is your most important instruction that we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I want to thank you for having given us this wonderful holy name. We have recently been studying the narration of Ajāmila. So we understand that offenseless chanting at the time of death will save us from the danger of forgetting Kṛṣṇa and thus taking birth again in the conditioned state to suffer great pain, and to risk missing Kṛṣṇa yet again and falling under the spell of *māyā*. Words cannot express sufficiently the glories of the holy name, nor can my feeble words sufficiently thank you for giving us this *mahā-mantra*. I pray I will never forget that it is the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* which can save not only me, but all the living beings in the universe. Only if they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, only if they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, only if they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—there is no other alternative, there is no other alternative, there is no other alternative in this age of Kali. Now

LETTER TO ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

I am able to grasp this with my intellect, and I pray to follow it and gain practical realization, taking the *mahā-mantra* to my tongue at all times and working to propagate the name's glories. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for bringing us the holy name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

You have also instructed us to cooperate amongst ourselves as a proof of our love for you. It is *māyā* if we fight, and you have said the danger of our own fighting within is much worse than the danger of demons fighting us. Let us keep this instruction in our hearts and actions. Let us be honest and humble with each other, like the sons and daughters who do not fight or noncooperate amongst themselves even if there is provocation, because they do not want to displease their father by such fighting.

You want us to always preach and not be lazy. We will please you by doing some solid work for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, whether in book distribution, recruiting, farm development, festivals, Gurukula—there are, it seems, no end to the varieties of preaching in this movement.

On this day of your appearance, I pray to you as my savior and the savior of the world. Please bless me by allowing me always to remain in your eternal devotional service, life after life.

*na dhanam na janam na sundarīm
kavitārṁ vā jagad-īśa kāmaye
mama janmani janmanīśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi*

“O my lord, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I do not want wealth,

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beautiful women, or followers. I only want your causeless devotional service, life after life."

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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