

THE TEMPLE OF THE HEART

Five Paths to the Temple of the Heart

PAÑCĀNGA BHAKTI – FIVE PATHS LEADING TO THE TEMPLE OF THE HEART



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| 1. <i>sādhū-saṅga</i> | association with devotees |
| 2. <i>nāma-kīrtana</i> | chanting the holy name of the Lord |
| 3. <i>bhāgavata-śravaṇa</i> | hearing <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> |
| 4. <i>mathurā-vāsa</i> | residing at Mathurā |
| 5. <i>śrī-mūrtira śraddhāya sevana</i> | worshipping the deity |

NĀMA-KĪRTANA

The second of the five powerful practices for becoming absorbed in Kṛṣṇa is *nāma-kīrtana*, chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Those living in this world cannot perceive Kṛṣṇa; the material senses can't grasp the all-spiritual name or form of the Lord. Yet we are told to meditate on Him in order to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. This is a contradiction. To solve it, Kṛṣṇa takes a form that can be perceived by a materially conditioned soul, a sound incarnation: the holy name. Kṛṣṇa's holy name is therefore the first contact a conditioned soul can have with Kṛṣṇa. The *Padma Purāṇa* states that "... the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical."

(quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 17.133)

THE HOLY NAME REVEALS HIMSELF STEP BY STEP

When most of us begin to chant, we don't yet have full faith that Kṛṣṇa and His name are identical. We perceive Kṛṣṇa's name as simply a name, or only a mantra. Later, we grow from that position.

There are three levels on which we can understand the holy name:

- 1) The *ādhibhautika* level: one sees the name as a combination of letters different from the person to whom the name refers.
- 2) The *ādhidāivika* level: one sees the name as a mantra, as divine energy.
- 3) The *ādhyātmika* level: one sees the name as a person.



Photo by Mickey Shah

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes chanting on the *ādhyātmika* level like this: “The purification of chanting *harer nāma* means as soon as you chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa immediately you will see the form of Kṛṣṇa, you will realize the qualities of Kṛṣṇa, you will immediately remember the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. That is pure chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.”

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lecture, 6.2.11, January 16, 1971, Allahabad).

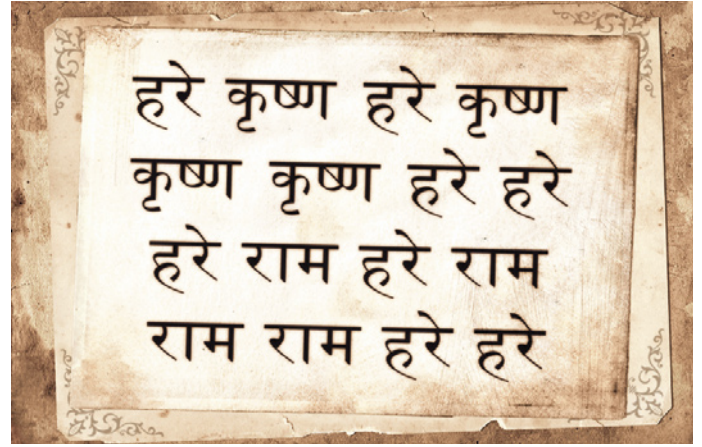
How can we reach this level of pure chanting? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes that it happens gradually (*kramāt*), in steps. The gradual taking of these steps, of course, is only possible for those who chant daily. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī states,

syāt kṛṣṇa-nāma-caritādi-sitāpy avidyā-
pittopatapta-rasanasya na rocikā nu
kintv ādarād anudinam khalu saiva juṣṭā
svādvī kramād bhavati tad-gada-mūla-hantri

“The holy name, character, pastimes, and activities of 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.”

(The Nectar of Instruction, verse 7)

Just as the rising sun gradually dissipates the darkness of night, the holy name gradually dissipates the *avidyā* in our hearts and reveals its glories more and more.



HOW TO CHANT IN A WAY THAT WILL INDUCE KṚṢṆA TO REVEAL HIMSELF

1) Chanting with Sambandha

Chanting with *sambandha* means leaving your own little world to connect with Kṛṣṇa while you chant. Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura states in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* (3.15) that if we chant with no awareness of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we will attain only a shadow of the holy name, not the real name. What happens when you eat only the shadow of a meal? You will remain hungry and feel the need to go elsewhere to satisfy your appetite. Similarly, if we only experience the shadow of the holy name, we will miss the spiritual essence and will feel our progress is not satisfactory. To end “shadow chanting” Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura recommends a simple meditation to fix the mind on a correct understanding of our position in relation to Kṛṣṇa (*sambandha-jñāna*):

- I am an atomic particle of consciousness and Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant.
- Kṛṣṇa is the infinite conscious entity and my only master.
- The material world is the prison meant to reform my absent-minded tendencies.

(Harināma-cintāmaṇi, 3.25)

2a) Chanting with a Service Attitude

As Rūpa Gosvāmī mentioned, we cannot perceive Kṛṣṇa with our material senses. But Kṛṣṇa can choose to appear on our tongue. He does so when we chant in a mood of service. In the twelfth chapter of *The Nectar of Devotion* Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “For persons who are not inclined to clean the dust from their hearts and who 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.”

Don’t keep things as they are. Benefit by the chanting process by becoming a servant of the holy name. Then meet the Lord in the temple of your heart.



2b) How to Chant in a Service Mood

- Chant aware of the mantra’s meaning: My dear Rādhā, my dear Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service.
- Avoid offenses while you chant and become a servant of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- Pronounce the mantra clearly, hear it attentively, and finish your daily quota of rounds every day.
- Offer your body, mind, heart, and time to Kṛṣṇa.
- As you mature in your chanting and your devotion, learn about the more advanced techniques of chanting in a mood of *sevā* so that you can serve the Lord with love while you chant.
- Distribute the nectar of the holy name to others through *kīrtana*, and explain the glories and methods of chanting to those whose faith has been awakened.

SIDEBAR: HOW TO ACCEPT PRASĀDA IN A SERVICE MOOD

We use the tongue in chanting, but we can also use it to accept *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. Here are some tips how to eat with a service attitude and thus purify the mind and heart:

- Serve *prasāda* on a pure, clean plate (best is a new banana leaf!).
- Never sit higher than the *prasāda*. You are the servant and the *prasāda* your master.
- Be mindful to accept only as much *prasāda* as you need.
- Chant the prayer “*śarīra avidyā-jāl ...*” before eating. Learn the prayer’s meaning and meditate on it.
- Become aware that *prasāda* is the Lord’s food remnants and that He has given them to you out of His kindness.
- While accepting the *prasāda*, be peaceful. If you talk, speak only about pleasant – preferably spiritual – things.

Respect the *prasāda* and don’t commit offenses to it. (Committing an offense means to turn away from the service mentality.) Cultivate the attitude that “This food was offered to Kṛṣṇa and touched by His lips, and I have to respect it.” This attitude will inform you how to serve *prasāda*.

PS. The inhabitants of Jagannātha Purī show so much respect to Lord Jagannātha’s *mahā-prasāda*, that they do not even wash their mouths after eating it, fearing the offense of spitting out particles of *prasāda* as they rinse their mouths. Instead, they carefully rinse their mouths, then swallow the water with whatever food particles remnants!

