

Nāmāparādha

— Excerpts from Bhakti Vikāsa Swami's *Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava*, Vol 2.

From every quarter of Bengal the rhythmic choruses of *kīrtana* resounded, accompanied by the clangor of *khol* and *karatālas*, uplifted hands, swaying bodies, and intermittent whooping. Even young lads could quote the universally known *harer nāma* verse.

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nasly eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.
(Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa)

Yet chanting was mostly undertaken not for the sublime purpose introduced by Caitanya Mahāprabhu – to cultivate an attitude of selfless loving service to Kṛṣṇa – but to gain piety for achieving material gain or for removing obstacles to sensual happiness and worldly comfort. Widespread faith in the holy names had let to their being invoked aberrantly as mystic deterrents to epidemics or to hasten the advent of overdue rain. And especially, since *harināma* eradicates all reactions to sins, *kīrtana* mitigated people's fear of Yamarāja – and thus arose the pernicious yet persistent misconception that those who chanted the holy names need not observe common morality.

Although Bengal reverberated with the names of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Hari, no one was becoming purified by that offense-ridden chanting. Contrarily, the sinful propensities of such offensive chanters often exceeded that of persons with no claim to piety. Hence Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura ruefully referred to *prākṛta-sahajiyās'* chanting as being like that of parrots or a gramophone.

“Can *kīrtana* really be considered genuine if some worthless people without any ardor for *Hari-seva* come together and howl? True *Hari-saṅkīrtana* is that of genuine devotees, who serve Hari according to the principals enjoined in the *Vedas* and allied *śāstras*. *Kīrtana* is not *Hari-saṅkīrtana* if conducted for the prevention of cholera or pox epidemics, for prosperity in trade, or for *lābha-pūjā-pratiṣṭhā*. Such *kīrtana* is *māyā-kīrtana*.”

— **Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's Śrī Caitanya's Teachings, p 122**

“The holy name is never revealed to one in the bodily conception of life, who thinks in terms of “I” and “mine.””

— **Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's Prākṛta-rasa-śata-dūṣaṇī 4.**

“Making a pretense of *harināma*, people are waltzing their way to hell.”

— **Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's Śrīla Prabhupādera goloka-vāṇī 1.286**

Nevertheless, most putative Vaiṣṇavas were unaware of their wrongdoing and were astonished by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's expose of it. They had been raised with the misconception that Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu were so merciful and the holy name so powerful that devotees are automatically exempt from scriptural injunctions delineating moral codes and gradual spiritual upliftment. On hearing him describe *nāmāparādhas*, surprised listeners would wonder why they had never previously received these important instructions, whereupon Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī would clarify that it was the duty of the guru not only to give the name of Kṛṣṇa to his disciple, but to inform him of and instruct him to stop committing the ten *nāmāparādhas*:

Without taking shelter at the lotus feet of *śrī-guru* there is no *harināma*. Not knowing the difference between *nāma* and *nāmāparādha*, many persons accept mud instead of milk. Thus it is absolutely essential to know the right object of worship. Why we should perform *bhajana*, which *bhajana* should we do – understanding this is called initiation from *śrī-gurudeva*. *Dikṣā* is the pastime of imparting *sambandha-jñāna*.

— Śrīla Prabhupādera goloka-vāṇī 3.155

Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's conclusion was that a pseudo-guru who teaches only about the holy name's power of absolution simply deludes his supposed disciples. Without training his disciples in *sambandha-jñāna*, and by failing to instruct them to avoid *nāmāparādha*, their recitation of *nāma* could not progress beyond *nāmābhāsa*, which can never give rise to *prema*. Thus everything said by such a cheater in the dress of a *guru* is *nāmāparādha*.

“Kali resides where there is meat-eating, gambling, illicit sex, intoxication, and the search for money, so these vices should be given up by serious reciters of the holy name.”

— ŚB 1.17.38-39

It is prescribed to chant *kīrtana* loudly. One who does not profusely and loudly glorify the Lord will be gobbled up by the snake of time. Those who cannot appreciate that chanting the Lord's names is the highest display of mercy recommend chanting in the mind; yet by advocating to chant internally, not aloud, they simply encourage people's eagerness to talk nonsense. Mahāprabhu forbade this. He said, *kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*: “One should constantly glorify Hari.” To loudly utter the name, pastimes, and qualities of the Lord is called *kīrtana*. Whoever chants in a loud voice is a magnanimous person; a showbottle *paramhaṁsa* is not.

It is prescribed to perform *kīrtana* with body, mind, and words. All of these should simultaneously be engaged in *kīrtana*. If the mind does not perform *kīrtana*, it will think of other things; then there will not really be *kīrtana* of Kṛṣṇa. What does Nārada do? At all times he is absorbed with all senses in *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. What does Śiva do through his five mouths? He chants *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. What does Brahmā do through his four mouths? He chants *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. Vyāsa, Śuka, the Kumāras, and Śeṣa all chant *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. All in our

line of *gurus* chant about Kṛṣṇa. Not one of them observed *mauna-dharma*. *Bhāgavata-dharma* does not mean *mauna-dharma*; it means *kīrtana-dharma*, *saṅkīrtana-dharma*.

— Śrīla Prabhupādera goloka-vāṇī 1.300-304