

Chanting Is the Most Excellent Form of *Bhakti*

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*preṃṇo 'ntar-aṅgam kila sādhanottamam
manyeta kaiścī smaraṇam na kīrtanam
ekendriye vāci vicetane sukham
bhaktiḥ sphuraty āśu hi kīrtanātmikā*

Some think that remembering, rather than chanting, is the essential means of devotional practice, the means that most effectively leads to *prema*, for *bhakti* in the form of chanting appears quickly and easily, and in only one sense, that of speech, which is not itself alive and conscious.

*bhaktiḥ prakṛṣṭā smaraṇātmikāsmiṇ
sarvendriyāṇām adhipe vilole
ghore baliṣṭhe manasi prayāsair
nīte vaśam bhāti viśodhite yā*

Superior *bhakti* in the form of remembering, they think, appears within the mind—that turbulent, frightful, and mighty chief of all the senses—when by serious efforts the mind has been brought under control and fully purified.

*manyāmahe kīrtanam eva sat-tamam
lolātmakaika-sva-hrdi sphurat-smṛteḥ
vāci sva-yukte manasi śrutau tathā
dīvyat parān apy upakurvad ātmya-vat*

But we consider chanting to be alone the most excellent form of *bhakti*, better than remembering, which appears only in one's own turbulent heart. For chanting harnesses not only the faculty of speech, which it engages directly, but also the mind and sense of hearing. And chanting helps not only the person practicing it but others as well.

*bāhyāntarāśeṣa-hṛṣīka-cālakam
vāg-indriyam syād yadi samyatham sadā
cittam sthiram sad-bhagavat-smṛtau tadā
samyak pravarteta tataḥ smṛtiḥ phalam*

If the sense of speech, which sets all the external and internal senses in motion, is brought under constant control, then the mind becomes stable and can properly engage in transcendental remembrance of the Lord. Remembrance thus develops as the fruit of chanting.

—Śrī *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Vol 2, 3.146-149



kṛṣṇasya nānā-vidha-kīrtaneṣu

*tan-nāma-saṅkīrtanam eva mukhyam
tat-prema-sampaj-janane svayaṁ drāk
śaktam tataḥ śreṣṭha-tamaṁ mataṁ tat*

Of the many ways to chant Kṛṣṇa's glories, foremost is His *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. It is deemed the best because it can evoke at once the treasure of pure love for Kṛṣṇa.

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmāmṛtam ātma-hṛdyaṁ
premnā samāsvādana-bhaṅgi-pūrvam
yat sevyate jihvikayāvirāmaṁ
tasyātulaṁ jalpatu ko mahattvam*

When relished with love in countless ways through service rendered constantly by the tongue, the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name delights the heart. Who can describe the unequaled excellence of that nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name?

*sarveṣāṁ bhagavan-nāmnāṁ
samāno mahimāpi cet
tathāpi sva-priyeṇāśu
svārtha-siddhiḥ sukhaṁ bhavet*

Though all names of the Lord are equally great, a devotee most quickly, most easily achieves his goals by chanting the name he himself holds most dear.

*vicitra-ruci-lokānāṁ
kramāt sarveṣu nāmasu
priyatā-sambhavāt tāni
sarvāṇi syuḥ priyāṇi hi*

Since people differ in their likings, each name of the Lord is dear to one person or another. All the names of the Lord are therefore dear.

*ekasminn indriye prādur-
bhūtaṁ nāmāmṛtaṁ rasaiḥ
āplāvayati sarvāṇin-
driyāṇi madhurair nijaiḥ*

When the nectar of the Lord's name appears in just one sense, all the senses are flooded with their own sweet tastes.

*mukhyo vāg-indriye tasyo-
dayaḥ sva-para-harṣa-daḥ
tat prabhor dhyānato 'pi syān
nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ varam*

Appearing mainly in the sense of speech, the Lord's name gives pleasure to the chanter and to others. So even greater than meditation on the Lord is His *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

*nāma-saṅkīrtanam proktaṁ
kṛṣṇasya prema-sampadi
baliṣṭhaṁ sādhanam śreṣṭham
paramākarsa-mantra-vat*

The *saṅkīrtana* of Kṛṣṇa's names is praised as the best and most powerful means to attain the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. It is like a potent *mantra* that can attract precious objects from a distance.

*tad eva manyate bhakteḥ
phalaṁ tad-rasikair janaiḥ
bhagavat-prema-sampattau
sadaivāvyabhicārataḥ*

Because *nāma-saṅkīrtana* invariably leads to the treasure of pure love for the Lord, true connoisseurs of devotional service consider *nāma-saṅkīrtana* the very fruit of *bhakti*.

—*Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Vol 2, 3.158-165



*sal-lakṣaṇam prema-bharasya kṛṣṇe
kaiścid rasa-jñair uta kathyate tat
preṇo bhareṇaiva nijeṣṭa-nāma-
saṅkīrtanam hi sphurati sphuṭārtyā*

According to some knowers of *rasa*, the real sign of a person full of *prema* is this: As he performs *saṅkīrtana* of the name he worships, the full force of spiritual agony erupts in him by the weight of his own love.

*nāmnām tu saṅkīrtanam ārti-bhārān
megham vinā prāvṛṣi cātakānām
rātrau viyogāt sva-pate rathāngī-
vargasya cākrośana-vat pratīhi*

Like the distressed crying of the *cātaka* birds on a cloudless day of the rainy season, or the lamenting of a flock of *cakravākī* birds when parted from their husbands at night, the *saṅkīrtana* of the Lord's names arises when one is burdened by too much pain.

Nāma-saṅkīrtana in fact appears only when prema has been enhanced in a special way. Prema enriched with transcendental hankering results in saṅkīrtana. To help us understand, the Vaikuṅṭha-dūtas mention, by way of analogy, the cātaka and cakravākī birds. The plaintive call of the cātakas, sounding like priya priya ("my dear one, my dear one!"), resounds on cloudless days of the rainy season. And the lament of the cakravākīs fills the sky when their husbands are absent at night. In such a way, nāma-saṅkīrtana arises when one feels separation from the Lord in pure love of God. The true way of doing bhagavan-nāma-saṅkīrtana is to call out to one's beloved Lord in agony, expressing one's feelings in various sweet songs to attract Him. As the philosophical

maxim states, siddhasya lakṣaṇam yat syāt/ sādhanam sādhakasya tat: “The practitioner and the means of practice should be in accord with their goal.”

— **Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, Vol 2, 3.166-167 + p**