

Hari-Nāma-Cintāmaṇi

The Touchstone of the Holy- Name

by Śrīla Saccidānanda
Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Chapter – 12

Inattention While Chanting

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jaya jaya mahāprabhu jaya bhakta-gaṇa
yānhāra prasāde kari nāma-saṅkīrtana

- Haridāsa spoke, "To Sanātana Gosvāmī in Purī and to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa when You travelled to South India, You taught the importance of performing one's chanting without inattention.
- Inattention is counted as one of the aparādhās.
- Even if one successfully overcomes all the other offenses in chanting, and one is chanting continuously, love of God may not come.
- One should know that the reason for this is that one is committing the offense known as pramada, or inattention. This offense will block progress to prema.

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- "Pramada may mean madness, but here the meaning is inattention or carelessness.
- It is from this offense that all other offenses spring.
- The wise men recognize three types of inattention: indifference or no attention, laziness, and distraction (attraction to other objects).
- "By good fortune, after getting faith, a jīva will take up the name.
- By chanting regularly, counting on a Tulasi mālā carefully, he will develop attraction for the name.
- However, until that attraction has actually developed, one must be very careful about how one chants.

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- Naturally, the common man, having attachment to material things, will be attracted to these things even while chanting.
- Though chanting japa daily, if his taste is elsewhere, he will show indifference to the name.
- His heart will not be absorbed in chanting the name but in some material object. How can that benefit him?
- He may chant 64 rounds counting strictly on his japa beads, but in his heart he has not received one drop of the taste of the name.
- This indifference or apathy towards the name is one type of inattention.
- In the heart of a materialist it is unavoidable.

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- "If indifference or lack of attraction for the name is present, one should take association of Vaiṣṇavas who are properly chanting in some place sheltered from the material influence.
- By chanting in that situation, his absorption in material things will be reduced; being inspired by the conduct of the Vaiṣṇavas, he will give up that fault.
- Gradually the heart will get attraction for the name and will be anxious for the nectar of the name.
- The advanced devotees have recommended that one live in a place where Kṛṣṇa had His pastimes, near Tulasi, in the company of Vaiṣṇavas and gradually increase the period of chanting.

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- Quickly the taste for material objects will go.
- Another remedy is to carefully chant in a room by oneself with the door locked, or concentrate on the name by covering the eyes, ears and nose with a cloth or the like to prevent stimuli from the exterior.
- Carefully chanting in this way, an attraction or taste for the name will develop and indifference will be suppressed.
- "If one chants with a sluggish mind, or after chanting a little, one has to stop before finishing his round, it is called laziness.

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- From this, one's taste for the name cannot develop.
- The remedy for this is to take association of Vaiṣṇavas who do not waste time in material activity, but constantly chant and remember the holy name, being absorbed only in the name.
- One should follow in their footsteps.
- When one sees how the true Vaiṣṇava or sādhu does not waste time in useless pursuits, he will develop a taste to do likewise.
- In his mind he will think, "very good."
- By this, enthusiasm will come to the lazy mind and he will overcome the offense of laziness or inertia.

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- One will become determined to increase his chanting everyday.
- By this eagerness in his rounds and by the mercy of the devotees, the offense of inertia will quickly go away.
- "One should be careful to eliminate the third type of inattention—distraction.
- From distraction all types of inattention are born.
- This fault resides in attraction for women (or men, in the case of women) and wealth, attraction for material success or victory, desire for position, and the cheating propensity.
- If one has attraction in any of these categories, one will naturally be inattentive to the holy name.

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- One should be careful to eliminate these fixations by following the proper Vaiṣṇava behavior.
- On ekādaśī and appearance days one should stop thinking of eating and all day and night chant in the association of devotees.
- In this way one will joyfully engage in devotional activities, listening to scriptures of the Lord in association with the Lord's servants, in the Lord's dhāma.
- Gradually the bhakti portion of one's mind will increase and the mind will rejoice in hearing topics about Kṛṣṇa.
- The higher taste will come and the lower taste will go.

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- Upon hearing songs about Kṛṣṇa from the mouths of the pure devotees, one's mind and ears will taste the real nectar.
- In this way the desire for low material objects will disappear and the heart will be constantly fixed and attracted to singing the name.
- By avoiding the offense of distraction, one will be able to indulge in the nectar of name.
- "One should thus never be inattentive to complete one's prescribed number of daily rounds.
- This should be noted day by day.
- When chanting these prescribed rounds, one should avoid the different types of inattentiveness.

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- Giving up the desire to increase the number of rounds for show, one should attempt to first concentrate nicely on what one can manage.
- Therefore, the devotee starts by chanting with full concentration in a peaceful place for a short time.
- He will always be praying to the Lord that he will chant clear, attentive rounds with the mind fixed on Kṛṣṇa; for on one's own one cannot accomplish anything.
- Kṛṣṇa's grace is necessary to cross the ocean of material existence. Being anxious in heart, one should beg for mercy, and because Kṛṣṇa is merciful, He will help.
- Whoever does not try for that mercy is very unfortunate."
- That person who has attained the ornament of the touchstone of the holy name still aspires for the two feet of Haridāsa Ṭhākura.