

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam

Emanated from the lotus mouth
of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

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Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam

1. Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam by Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
2. Śrī Bhajana-Rahasya by Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
3. Related Verses from Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta with Srila Prabhupada's Purport
4. Vivṛti Commentary by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati Ṭhākura
5. Śikṣāṣṭākam songs from Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Gītāvalī

Why Harinama Sankirtanam is
exclusively glorified amongst all
the other limbs of Devotional
Service?

2.3.158

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 (kṛṣṇasya nānā-vidha-kīrtaneṣu), foremost is His nāma-saṅkīrtana (tad-nāma-saṅkīrtanam eva mukhyam). It is deemed the best (tat śreṣṭha-tamaṁ mataṁ) because it can evoke (svayaṁ janane śaktam) at once (drāk) the treasure of pure love for Kṛṣṇa (tat-prema-sampad).

Of all types of
Kīrtana, Kṛṣṇa-nāma-
saṅkīrtana is the best
Why?
Bcoś tñ an st oco eva ke pure love

Besides nāma-saṅkīrtana, chanting of the Lord's names, there are other ways of performing kīrtana, such as reciting the Vedas and Purāṇas, speaking one's own narrations of pastimes of the Lord, singing devotional songs, and offering prayers.

Nāma-saṅkīrtana, however, is the best of all, because it can at once independently awaken love of God in the heart.

Lord Viṣṇu's messengers are personally convinced of this, and as implied by the unspecific expression matam ("it is considered"), this is also the opinion of many other spiritual authorities.

When relished with
love → the nectar of the
delights the heart.
∴ who can describe the
unequaled glories?

śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmāmṛtam ātma-hṛdyam
premnā samāsvādana-bhaṅgi-pūrvam
yat sevyate jihvikayāvirāmaṁ
tasyātulam jalpatu ko mahattvam

When relished (samāsvādana) with love (premnā) in countless ways (bhaṅgi-pūrvam) through service rendered (yat sevyate) constantly (avirāmaṁ) by the tongue (jihvikayā), the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name (śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmāmṛtam) delights the heart (ātma-hṛdyam). Who can describe (kaḥ jalpatu) the unequalled excellence (atulam mahattvam) of that nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name (tasya)?

2.3.160

sarveṣāṃ bhagavan-nāmnāṃ
samano mahimāpi cet
tathāpi sva-priyeṇāśu
svārtha-siddhiḥ sukhaṃ bhavet

Ever though all
names are equally great
& easily achieved most quickly
chanting the name he himself holds
dear

Though all names of the Lord (sarveṣāṃ bhagavan-nāmnāṃ) are
equally great (samano mahimāpi cet), a devotee (tathāpi) most
quickly (āśu), most easily (sukhāṃ) achieves his goals (svārtha-
siddhiḥ bhavet) by chanting the name he himself holds most dear
(sva-priyeṇā).

Since the Supreme Lord's names are all infinite in their glories, one name cannot be greater than another.

Primary Secondary

Cintāmaṇi stones may appear in different forms, but they all have the same power; any cintāmaṇi can produce whatever a person wants.

Nonetheless, if a devotee is especially attracted to a particular name, that name will most quickly and easily carry him to perfection.

absorption → love & delight

Thus the devotees who favor the name Rāma like to cite the declaration by Lord Śiva sahasra-nāmabhis tulyam/ rāma-nāma varānane: "My dear beautiful wife, the name Rāma is equal to one thousand names of Viṣṇu." (Padma Purāṇa, Uttara 72.335)

Since they have
different likings each
name of the Lord is dear
to one person (or) another.
↓
∴ all names of the Lord are
dear

2.3.161

vicitra-ruci-lokānām
kramāt sarveṣu nāmasu
priyata-sambhavāt tāni
sarvaṇi syuḥ priyaṇi hi

Since people differ in their likings (vicitra-ruci-lokānām), each name of the Lord (sarveṣu nāmasu) is dear (priyatā-sambhavāt) to one person or another (kramāt). All the names of the Lord (tāni sarvaṇi) are therefore dear (priyaṇi hi syuḥ).

A doubting person might ask whether only some of the Lord's names are worshiped and others neglected.

In fact, however, every name of the Lord has its devotees.

The word hi in this verse indicates that this is certainly true.

Some Vaiṣṇavas prefer one particular name of the Personality of Godhead, and some are attracted to two names, three, or several.

When the nectar
appears in just one
sense - if flooded one
other senses with their
own sweet tastes

ekasminn indriye prādurbhūtam nāmāmrtam rasaiḥ
āplāvayati sarvānindriyāṇi madhurair nijaiḥ

When the nectar of the Lord's name (nāmāmrtam) appears (prādurbhūtam) in just one sense (ekasminn indriye), all the senses (sarvānindriyāṇi) are flooded (āplāvayati) with their own sweet tastes (nijaiḥ madhurair rasaiḥ).

In this way, every enjoyment possible is derived from nāma-saṅkīrtana.

2.3.163

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

Appearing mainly
in the sense of speech,
Nāma-saṅkīrtana siva pleasure
to the chanter & others.
∴ HNS → Smaraṇam.
(or)
dhyānaṁ.

Appearing (udayah) mainly (mukhyo) in the sense of speech (vāg-
indriye), the Lord's name (~~tasya~~) gives pleasure (harṣa-daḥ) to the
chanter⁽⁺⁾ and to others (sva-para). So (tat) even greater than
meditation on the Lord (prabhor dhyānataḥ api varam) is His
nāma-saṅkīrtana (nāma-saṅkīrtanam syād).

2.3.164

nāma-saṅkīrtanam proktam
kṛṣṇasya prema-sampadi
baṣṭham sādhanam śreṣṭham
paramakarṣa-mantra-vat

ANS is the
best & most powerful
means to attain kṛṣṇa
prema

The saṅkīrtana of Kṛṣṇa's names (kṛṣṇasya nāma-saṅkīrtanam) is praised (proktam) as the best (śreṣṭham) and most powerful means to attain (baṣṭham sādhanam) the treasure of kṛṣṇa-prema (prema-sampadi). It is like a potent mantra that can attract precious objects from a distance (parama ākarṣa-mantra-vat).

If one wants the ultimate success in spiritual life, one must take shelter of nama-saṅkīrtana, as the Vaikuṅṭha-dūtas proclaim exuberantly in this verse.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.2.39–40) describes how nāma-saṅkīrtana nourishes the devotee:

śṛṇvan su-bhadrāṇi rathāṅga-pāṇer
janmāni karmāni ca yāni loke
gītāni nāmāni tad-arthakāni
gāyan vilajjo vicared asaṅgaḥ

Hearing (śṛṇvan) the most auspicious birth and activities (su-bhadrāṇi janmāni karmāni ca) of Kṛṣṇa (rathāṅga-pāṇeh) which are sung by all people (yāni loke gītāni) and singing (gāyan) his names which describe those activities (tad-arthakāni nāmāni) while having no attachment to anything else (asaṅgaḥ), a person should without shame wander in the world (vilajjo vicared).

evam-vratah sva-priya-nāma-kīrtyā
jātānurāgo druta-citta uccaiḥ
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmāda-van nr̥tyati loka-bāhyaḥ

Regulated with such devotion (evam-vrataḥ), chanting the name of
his dear Kṛṣṇa (sva-priya-nāma-kīrtyā), he develops prema
(jātānurāgo). His heart melts (druta-citta) and he laughs loudly
(uccaiḥ hasaty), weeps, wails and sings (atho roditi rauti gāyaty).
He dances like a madman (unmāda-van nr̥tyati) without regard for
the public (loka-bāhyaḥ).

BCOS HNS leads to
Kṛ. Prema, Respects
consider HNS as the
very fruit of Bhakti

2.3.165

tad eva manyate bhakteḥ
phalam tad-rasikair janaiḥ
bhagavat-prema-sampattau
sadaivavyabhicārataḥ

Because nāma-saṅkīrtana invariably leads (sadā eva avyabhicārataḥ) to the treasure of pure love for the Lord (bhagavat-prema-sampattau), true connoisseurs of devotional service (tad-rasikair janaiḥ) consider (manyate) nāma-saṅkīrtana (tad eva) the very fruit of bhakti (bhakteḥ phalam).

According to many pure devotees, nāma-saṅkīrtana is not only the best means of devotional service but the final perfection itself.

Of course, prema is the final goal of bhakti, but nāma-saṅkīrtana so quickly and infallibly leads to prema that the two are considered virtually identical.

S'ravanam → S'ravanam + HNS → prema
Archanam → Archanam + HNS → prema
HNS → HNS → prema.

Wherever prema is seen to have developed, one can presume that nāma-saṅkīrtana must have been performed.

Nāma-saṅkīrtana is the necessary and sufficient cause of prema.

2.3.166

According to some
rasa-jñes → JLR
reliable source of
is
Manifestation of SP-ecstasy
when one starts HM

sal-lakṣaṇam prema-bharasya kṛṣṇe
kaiścid rasa-jñair uta kathyate tat
premṇo bhareṇaiva niṣeṣṭa-nāma-
saṅkīrtanam hi sphurati sphuṭartya

According to some knowers of rasa (kaiścid rasa-jñair), the real sign (sal-lakṣaṇam) of a person full of prema (kṛṣṇe prema bharasya) is this (uta kathyate tat): As he performs saṅkīrtana (saṅkīrtanam) of the name he worships (niṣeṣṭa-nāma), the full force of spiritual agony (sphuṭa ārtya) erupts in him (hi sphurati) by the weight of his own love (premṇo bhareṇa eva).

Other expert Vaiṣṇavas consider saṅkīrtana and prema to be
altogether the same.

They are mutually the cause of one another and therefore
nondifferent.

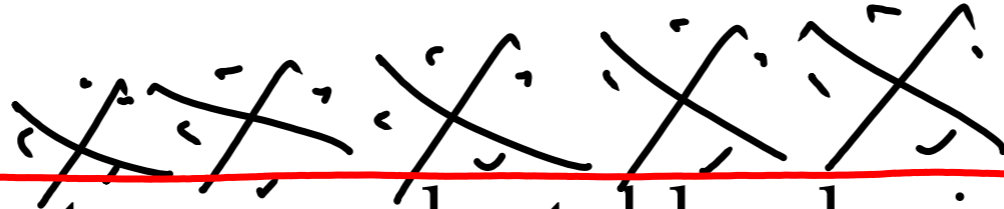
2.3.167

Like the distressed
& crying of the cataka
& cakravāka birds in
separation from their
respective husbands
↓
the saṅkīrtana
arises when
one is burdened with
too much pain

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

Like the distressed crying (ākrośana-vat) of the cātaka birds (cātakānām) on a cloudless day (megham vinā) of the rainy season (prāvṛṣi), or the lamenting (ākrośana-vat) of a flock of cakravāki birds (rathāngi-vargasya) when parted from their husbands (viyogāt) at night (rātrau), the saṅkīrtana of the Lord's names (nāmnām tu saṅkīrtanam) arises (pratīhi) when one is burdened by too much pain (ārti-bhārān).

(Nāma-saṅkīrtana) in fact appears only when prema has been enhanced in a special way.



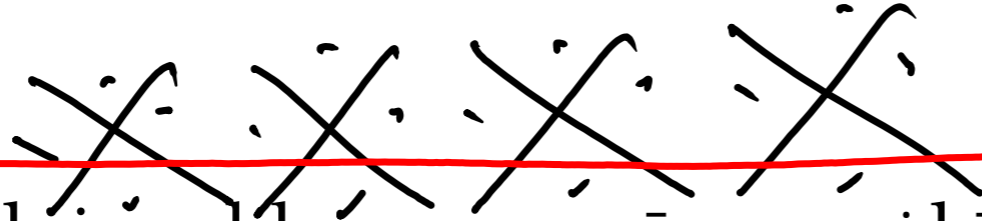
Prema enriched with transcendental hankering results in saṅkīrtana.

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 bhāgavan-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."