

# Hari-Nāma-Cintāmaṇi

## The Touchstone of the Holy- Name

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# Chapter – 4

## Blasphemy of Vaiṣṇavas

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gadādhara-prāṇa jaya jāhnavā-jīvana  
jaya sītānātha śrīvasādi bhakta-gaṇa

- Śrī Caitanya said: "O Haridāsa, now describe in detail the offenses to the holy name."
- Haridāsa answered, "By Your power I will say what You make me say."
- "Offenses to the holy name are analyzed as ten, according to scripture."
- One should be fearful of committing these offenses.
- They are as follows:

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1. To blaspheme or criticize the Vaiṣṇavas.
2. To consider that other living entities, such as the demigods, are independent of Kṛṣṇa.
3. To disobey or disrespect the guru.
4. To disrespect scriptural authority.
5. To interpret the meaning of the name and to think that the glories of the name are imaginary.
6. To commit sinful activity on the strength of the holy name.
7. To give the name to the unfaithful who are not ready to accept.
8. To consider the holy name as karma and pious activity.
9. To be inattentive while chanting the holy name.
10. After having taken correct knowledge, being aware of the glories of the name, to remain attached to the material world of "I and mine," and ultimately reject the name."

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- These shall be described one after another.
- The first offense, known as sādhu-nindā, criticism of Vaiṣṇavas, is very harmful for those wanting to progress in spiritual life.
- First let us define what sādhu or Vaiṣṇava is.
- In the Eleventh Canto of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Kṛṣṇa enumerates to Uddhava the characteristics of a sādhu:

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- dayālu—merciful,
- sahiṣṇu—tolerant,
- sama—equal,
- droha-śūnya-vrata—penance without injury to the body,
- satya-sāra—truthfulness,
- viśuddhātmā—purified,
- parahita-rata—engaged in the welfare of mankind,
- kāme akṣubhita-buddhi—intelligence free from lust,
- danta—restrained,
- akiñcana—devoid of concept of ownership,
- mṛdu—gentle,
- śuci—clean,
- parimita-bhojī—regulated eating and other habits,

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- śāntamān—peaceful,
- anīha—apathy to materialism,
- dhṛimān—patience,
- sthira—steadiness,
- apramatta—attentive, alert,
- sugambhira—very grave,
- vijita-ṣaḍguṇa—conquering over the six gunas, (hunger, thirst, lamentation, envy, old age and death),
- amānī—not expecting honor from others,
- mānada—giving respect to others,
- dakṣa—skillful,
- avāñcaka—nonhypocritical,
- jñānī—knowledgeable of the scriptures.

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- By these characteristics one can know who is a sādhu.
- However, here there are two types of characteristics: principal and marginal.
- The principal characteristic is exclusive surrender to Kṛṣṇa, while all others are dependent upon it.
- By some good fortune one may get the association of Vaiṣṇavas, and then attain a taste for the name, chant the name and take shelter of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.
- This becomes the chief characteristic, and by continuing to chant the name, all the other characteristics make their appearance.
- Therefore they are called marginal or accompanying.



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- Though secondary to the principal characteristic, they will certainly appear in the body of a true Vaiṣṇava or sādhu, as an effect of proper chanting of the holy name.
- On the other hand, the status of gr̥hastha, brahmacārī, vānaprastha and sannyaśī, śūdra, vaiśya, kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa of the varṇāśrama system, and their respective habits and qualities, are external distinctions which in no way determine who is a sādhu.
- The chief characteristic of a sādhu is his complete surrender to Kṛṣṇa, which is not dependent on a certain varṇa or āśrama.

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- Through the example of Raghunātha dāsa, Śrī Caitanya taught how the gr̥hastha Vaiṣṇava should act.
- The married man should enter household life with a mind steadily fixed on service to Kṛṣṇa, not enamored by sense gratification, and in this way the householder can gradually cross the ocean of material existence.
- Instead of playing as a false renunciate (markaṭa vairāgī), enjoying with the senses in the cloth of a sannyāsī, it is better to take only those things necessary for survival in the material world, while cultivating nonattachment.
- One should always be internally fixed on Kṛṣṇa, though externally one may act according to one's social custom in varṇa and āśrama. Kṛṣṇa quickly delivers such gr̥hastha Vaiṣṇavas.

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- When Raghunātha dāsa gave up household life, the Lord gave him instruction on the life of renunciation:
- "One should neither listen to materialistic conversations, nor speak materialistic topics to others.
- One should not eat fancy food, or wear fancy clothing.
- One should always chant the holy name, respecting all, without expecting honor, and meditate on eternal service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vraja within one's mind."

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- "The principal characteristic is one, namely, surrender to Kṛṣṇa's name, which will prevail in all sādhus, no matter what varṇa or āśrama, gṛhastha or sannyāsī.
- However, according to āśrama or varṇa, the secondary characteristics will differ to some degree.
- And even if there appears some bad element or fault in a person, if he has the chief characteristic, surrender to Kṛṣṇa, he must be considered a sādhu, and to be respected and served by all.
- This is Kṛṣṇa's statement in Bhagavad-gītā.

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- "When one has developed a taste for chanting the pure name, it is said that chanting just one time will destroy the influence of all past sins.
- Some remnants of those sins may still remain, but they will completely vanish by the influence of the holy name.
- Since these traces of sin will quickly go, that person is known as the most righteous person.
- Of course, if the materialist sees those traces of sin in a Vaiṣṇava sādhu, he may consider that the sādhu is just like a materialistic sinner.
- If he should criticize the sādhu because the sādhu has a trace of sin coming from previous sinful activity, he is committing sādhu-nindā.
- He is to be considered a rascal because of his fault of criticizing a Vaiṣṇava; and by this nāma-aparādha (offense unto one who has surrendered to the name) he falls directly under the wrath of Kṛṣṇa.

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- "It is concluded that one who is solely devoted to Kṛṣṇa and sings His name is known as a sādhu.
- Other than the devotees of Kṛṣṇa, no one else is considered to be a sādhu.
- One who considers himself a sādhu is filled with material pride.
- But one who thinks himself to be the lowest rascal, humbly takes shelter of Kṛṣṇa and sings Kṛṣṇa's name, is the real sādhu.
- Knowing himself to be less than a blade of grass, considering himself like a tree of tolerance, not expecting honor for himself and giving honor to all other living entities, he chants the name and attains attraction for Kṛṣṇa.

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- "If a person of the above qualities chants the holy name even once, he is considered a Vaiṣṇava, and should be respected.
- The Vaiṣṇava is the friend and spiritual leader of the universe; he is an ocean of mercy to all living entities.
- Whoever criticizes such a Vaiṣṇava goes to hell birth after birth; for there is no path for real liberation other than bhakti, and bhakti is obtained only by the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- "In the pure Vaiṣṇava resides Kṛṣṇa's energies of bhakti, hlādinī and samvit.
- Thus by contacting a Vaiṣṇava one can also receive Kṛṣṇa bhakti. For this reason also, the food remnants, the foot water and the foot dust from the pure Vaiṣṇavas are three powerful articles for creating bhakti.

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- If one stays near a pure Vaiṣṇava for some time, one can receive the bhakti energy flowing from his body.
- If one can bind that energy within one's heart, after having developed strong faith, bhakti will develop and one's body will begin to tremble in ecstasy.
- Thus, by living close to a Vaiṣṇava, soon devotion will appear in one's heart.
- First, such a person will begin chanting the holy name, and then, by the power of the name, he will receive all good qualities.
- This is the particular power of the uttama adhikārī.



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- "A Vaiṣṇava may be criticized on four counts: his caste by birth, previous sins or faults in this life, an unpremeditated accidental act of sin, and present traces of previous sinful activity.
- Though all these conditions may be present in a Vaiṣṇava, they are insubstantial grounds for criticism of a Vaiṣṇava.
- One who so blasphemes a Vaiṣṇava will be punished by Yamarāja.
- Because the Vaiṣṇava is spreading the glories of the Lord's name, the Lord does not tolerate such criticism of a Vaiṣṇava.
- Giving up dharma, yoga, sacrifice and jñāna for the name of Kṛṣṇa, the Vaiṣṇava is the topmost person.
- Criticism is a serious offense. Furthermore he does not criticize the scriptures or the demigods, but simply takes shelter of the name.

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- "One should rather eagerly take the dust from the feet of a Vaiṣṇava, regardless of whether he is a gr̥hastha or sannyaṣī.
- One will treat him only according to his advancement as a Vaiṣṇava, which is based upon his degree of attraction to the holy name.
- Such things as caste or āśrama, wealth, learning, youthfulness, beauty, strength or number of followers are not factors.
- "It goes without saying that one who has taken shelter of the name will not indulge in sādhu-nindā.
- One who criticizes a sādhu is not situated in bhakti, but in aparādha against bhakti. A serious person therefore would not indulge in criticism, but associate with, hear from and serve the sādhu.

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- "Because association with those who are not devotees is bound to produce disrespect for devotees (sādhu-nindā), the devotee is careful to avoid such association.
- Materialistic association or asat-saṅga is of two types: association with women and association with those devoid of devotion to the Lord.
- Association with women means associating with women not according to Vedic tradition.
- This association with women which is not authorized by scripture is divided into association with women outside of marriage for the purpose of sex life and association within marriage where one is controlled by one's wife.

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- Thus, only if one is married according to prescribed rules and is following the rules for married life, in which the wife is submissive to the husband and the husband acts as a sādhu, is the association considered bona fide.
- Other types of association are considered asat.
- "The second type of asat association, association with nondevotees, is of three types: association with māyāvādīs, association with pretenders, and association with atheists.
- Māyāvādīs believe that the Lord and the jīvas are both temporary entities, and that the Lord's mūrtī form is material.
- The pretenders, though without genuine devotion or renunciation, pretend to be devotees to make a living. The atheists do not believe in any form of God.

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- Now these people may claim to be devotees, and may be accepted by the public as such, but if one rejects such people, it is not considered sādhu-nindā.
- Furthermore, one who criticizes a person who gives up these asat people should also be rejected and avoided.
- Therefore, the serious devotee who gives up asat-saṅga, which causes sādhu-nindā, and exclusively takes shelter in the name, will certainly receive the treasure of prema.
- "It may be observed that in order to proceed properly to prema, one must be able to distinguish the devotee from the nondevotee.

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- For one must avoid the aparādha of criticizing the devotee and seek his association, and simultaneously reject the nondevotee completely.
- One must furthermore be able to distinguish the types of Vaiṣṇavas according to their spiritual advancement.
- These are of three types: the materialistic Vaiṣṇava or Vaiṣṇava-prāya (almost a Vaiṣṇava) is he who has mediocre faith in Kṛṣṇa but has no service attitude to sādhus.
- Actually, such a person is not a Vaiṣṇava but the dim image of a Vaiṣṇava, Vaiṣṇava-ābhāsa.
- However, if he is not a Vaiṣṇava, how will he be permitted to associate with Vaiṣṇavas, who do not associate with non-Vaiṣṇavas?
- Therefore, this person is considered to be at the beginning stage of a Vaiṣṇava, kaniṣṭha Vaiṣṇava, upon whom the actual fixed-up Vaiṣṇavas will bestow mercy so that he becomes purified.

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- "The next higher stage of Vaiṣṇava is the madhyama-bhakta, who can recognize the important position of the Lord's devotees and thus always associates with them.
- In faith he is convinced of Kṛṣṇa's position as the Lord, the jīvas as His eternal servants, the process as bhakti and the goal as prema.
- He shows mercy to the innocent, those who have a little faith, the kaniṣṭha-bhaktas, by giving them sambandha-jñāna.
- And he avoids the enemies, asat-saṅga, understanding the different effects of the different types of association.

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- Even at this stage of madhyama-bhakta, one is considered a pure Vaiṣṇava, with the qualification of taking the real holy name, not nāmābhāsa.
- As a real Vaiṣṇava he is able to distinguish a Vaiṣṇava from a non-Vaiṣṇava, so that he may avoid asat-saṅga and sādhu-nindā and serve the advanced devotees.
- Actually he must do this for his own advancement.
- "He who experiences Kṛṣṇa as the life and soul of everything, and thus sees Kṛṣṇa situated in everything, and consequently does not make distinction between Vaiṣṇava and non-Vaiṣṇava, but simply engages in relishing the nectar of the holy name, is called the uttama Vaiṣṇava, the most advanced devotee.



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- "The kaniṣṭha-bhakta performs his devotional service at the stage of nāmābhāsa, whereas the madhyama Vaiṣṇava is actually qualified for the real holy name, and can understand and discern the various offenses in chanting the holy name.
- The uttama adhikārī is above committing offense, as he sees Kṛṣṇa expanded everywhere.
- "It can be seen that it is important for the practitioner of bhakti—whether a kaniṣṭha or madhyama bhakta—to understand in his performance of sādhana, his own position in devotional service according to his internal purity.

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- By doing this one can avoid nondevotees (asat-saṅga), and by this one can advance further.
- Therefore it is important that one come to the position of madhyama bhakta, one who is qualified to make these distinctions.
- The typical activities of a real devotee (madhyama bhakta) are to avoid sādhu-nindā and to take association of sādhus, serve sādhus and give knowledge to the innocent jīvas, while performing nāma-saṅkīrtana.
- "Being overcome with the material modes, if one commits the offense of blasphemy against a devotee, one should sincerely feel repentant and cry at the feet of that devotee for mercy and forgiveness. The devotee, who is by nature very merciful, will forgive the offender."

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- Haridāsa concluded, "According to Your order, Lord, I have discussed the first offense. This I offer to Your lotus feet."
- That person who, like a bumble bee, lingers at the lotus feet of Haridāsa, will receive the touchstone of the holy name as his life and soul.