

Hari-Nāma-Cintāmaṇi

The Touchstone of the Holy- Name

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- Prema alone is the purpose of the life of jīvas.
- Bhāva, which is the soul's feeling, develops into prema.
- Turning their face towards Kṛṣṇa, the more jīvas progress, the more they approach the temple of prema.
- Thus, in considering the candidacy for prema, we meet at the outset with two kinds of circumstances: one is an intense longing for the unattained prema, the other is the stage when the pedestal of prema is already reached.
- There is no higher stage beyond the latter one—an incessant rasa in an undivided unique tattva of that region.

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- Those devotees with an utter craving for prema but who are still on the way to it are again divided into two classes according to their love of seclusion or bustee: the first are called viviktānandis, who are close followers of approved usages, the others are known as gostyānandis and are ever happy in preaching.
- Deep meditation on Godhead is the discipline of premī bhaktas and glorifying or singing the name of Kṛṣṇa is their preaching.

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- In the state when there is an intense longing for the unattained prema, the premī bhaktas are exclusively devoted to Kṛṣṇa—utter self-surrender marks them out.
- The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the Gītā have very highly eulogized such refugees.
- If a devotee does not take absolute shelter under the cool shade of the gracious feet of Kṛṣṇa, why speak of prema?
- He remains quite in the dark even about bhāva.
- A self-surrendering devotee should only accept things that are favorable to prema-bhakti, and should deny everything—whatever it may be—that is antagonistic or unfavorable to it.

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- Such a devotee believes that Kṛṣṇa is the only protector, that nothing else or no one else but Kṛṣṇa can save or protect him.
- He has not the least doubt that Kṛṣṇa alone protects all.
- Devotees firmly and sincerely believe themselves to be very humble and insignificant.
- The faith of an earnest and exclusive devotee is that he himself can do nothing, that not even a straw moves without the will of Kṛṣṇa.
- Extremely self-surrendered devotees prefer to most exclusively embrace Śrī Nāma to every other feature of devotion.

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- They have a more intense appetite for singing and meditating upon the holy name than for anything else.
- Of all the means of bhajana, the name of Bhagavān is most purely spiritual.
- In describing the absolute duties, the Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa has spoken of the glories of chanting and contemplating the holy name as the best—it has been given the foremost place.
- The śāstras declare that there is not the least difference between Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's name because the real nature of His name is spiritual—the holy name manifests Himself as the caitanya-rasa-vigraha of Kṛṣṇa.

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- Those who desire to realize the form of Kṛṣṇa and the form of the holy name must try to realize their own cit-svarūpa.
- The practitioner of bhakti can never be dexterous in his adoration of God so long as he does not realize spiritual truth.
- So, how can he attain his object of pursuit?
- The attainment of an absolute conception of spiritual truths causes the amelioration of bhajana. Here we shall say something on this subject.
- Many a time we have pointed out (in the Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta) with quotations from the śāstras that every jīva is a spiritual molecule, that the residence of Kṛṣṇa is a spiritual kingdom, that Kṛṣṇa is the spiritual sun, that devotion to Kṛṣṇa is a spiritual inclination, and that Kṛṣṇa's name is cid-rasa-vigraha.

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- Now, we venture to show the relation between spirit and those devotees who are extremely anxious for prema, and then we shall show the means to the attainment of the highest bliss of the soul.
- If we have spiritual merit earned in previous births, transcendental felicity will be enkindled in our heart.
- We have no appetite (ruci) for the knowledge of Brahman, which is restricted to realization of mere cit only; for, spiritual sportive pastimes have no place in it.

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- The Savior of the Iron Age, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, declares the Vedas to be the only judge and reveals their nine prameyas (subject matters).
- There is a broad discussion on it in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- The Vedas have proved jīvas to be spiritual atomic parts of the Deity.
- Jīvas are like rays from the sun, Kṛṣṇa; so the spiritual form of the jīvas must be identified with the spiritual form of Godhead.
- But the difference lies in the fact that Kṛṣṇa may be compared with the full sun, while the jīvas are His innumerable rays.
- Kṛṣṇa is Lord of lords—the jīvas are His eternal servants.

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- There is no denying the fact that the residential home of Kṛṣṇa is in the Paravyoma, or Goloka, which is all-spiritual.
- Vaikuṅṭha, cij-jagat, etc. all refer to that spiritual region.
- The Vājasaneyya Upaniṣad speaks of the form of Kṛṣṇa to be purely spiritual; the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad describes the eternal powers of Kṛṣṇa, who is superior to the best and higher than the highest.
- The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad shows bhakti to the cid-rasa, and, coming to conceive Kṛṣṇa to be the life of lives, the wise, after discarding all garrulity, dry wisdom and vain arguments, dive deep to see the bottom of their soul.
- They, after realizing the Deity by dint of pure intuition, run after devotion.

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- He who does this is a brāhmaṇa, i.e., a Vaiṣṇava devotee of Kṛṣṇa.
- Such has been shown to be the nature of bhakti, or devotion.
- As the Cāndogya Upaniṣad states: "O Maitreya! The soul alone is to be seen, heard, reflected, meditated upon and realized by spiritual organs.
- All is then known to us beyond any doubt. That soul (Kṛṣṇa) is dearer than one's son, dearer than wealth, for He is omniscient.
- Things that are sense-pleasing are never worth endearment; from the pleasure of the Great Soul all joy proceeds."
- Thus the eternal relation of happiness between Kṛṣṇa and the jīva is prema.

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- What exact connection does there exist between this manifested and visible mundane world and the spiritual sphere?
- In going to search after spiritual truths, more often than not we are deluded.
- After deep contemplation and discrimination, we conclude spirit to be something opposite to matter.
- Pressing our worldly reasoning too far, we leave cid-rasa to the background and are satisfied with an imaginative inarticulate and incomplete conception of spiritual Brahman.
- This is only an imagination of the cit-svarūpa of Brahman.

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- In such a stage, Brahman is immutable, incorporeal, invisible or formless, without attributes and dry of prema—this uncommon perception is like the "sky-flower!"
- And being unable to know the name, form, attributes and pastimes or diversions of that cit-svarūpa, we turn to being inactive.
- Hence it is that all portents of jīvas come to pass due to this dry wisdom. This is well illustrated in the conversation between Vyāsa and Nārada.
- It is clear from the above that you never can know the spiritual sportive pastimes of para-brahma if you are dazzled by the mere cit-svarūpa of Brahman, which is only a semblance of the eternal light of cit.

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- Brother, look ahead! Enter into the kingdom of Godhead after dashing through the brilliance of pure and simple cit.
- There you will be able to realize the spiritual pastimes of Godhead, then you will be able to taste the ambrosia of an incessant brahma-rasa.
- No longer will your soul remain wooden-like.
- The name, form, attributes and līlā of the Supreme Being are manifested not by any earthly light, but by a spiritual flame.
- The sun, moon, stars, lightning and fire of this earth are quite unfit to give light to that other spiritual horizon.
- This spiritual light, which is far beyond worldly lights, brightens that region.

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- It is only a perverted reflection of that light that we think supplies us with light; but in fact, it does not.
- While describing brahmapūra (the region of Brahman), the Cāndogya Upaniṣad gives us a comprehensive knowledge of it.
- The spiritual kingdom as displayed by the spiritual light is an ideal to this base earth.
- There is not the least tinge of baseness; while, on the contrary, only an all-pervading daintiness is its sweet affair.
- The fourteen mundane worlds are only a perverted reflection of that sphere; the gross sun is a reflection of that light and its subtle reflection is seen in the mundane rays of dry wisdom arising from mind, conscience and consciousness.

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- Our gross senses believe the gross sun to be a flash of luster, and we are proud of the earthly knowledge which is gained by dint of the eight processes of yoga that are actions of the subtle intellect, conscience and ego.
- All these are seemingly natural workings of engrossed jīvas.
- Listening to the advice of Nārada, while Dvaipāyana Ṛṣi (Vyāsa) was completely absorbed in the single and natural deep meditation of the soul, he fully and clearly saw the name, form, attributes and pastimes of the Supreme Person.
- He also saw māyā, the shadow of para-śakti, as having no other shelter than the Absolute Truth, and understood the anarthas of jīvas, the atomic cit-tattvas, who are engrossed, fascinated and enslaved by māyā.

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- Further realizing that such jīvas can come to perceive their own personal forms if absorbed in a profoundly meditative bhakti-yoga, he compiled the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which describes the spiritual pastimes of Bhagavān.
- The forgetfulness of his own eternal form and the form of Kṛṣṇa is the foremost anartha of a jīva, whence arises his aversion to Kṛṣṇa, as a result of which he is revolved by the wheel of māyā on the path of karma. Thus the world is full of weal and woes.
- When jīvas take shelter under bhakti, after discarding the basely turned endeavors of the mundane wise reasoning of the eight processes of yoga, of the karma-mārgīs (followers of karma or fruitive acts), and of the arguments of the Sāṅkhya school of the jñāna-mārgīs (seekers of dry wisdom) which vainly try to refute things that are not God or His concerns, then only are the pure rays of spiritual intuition enkindled in them by being naturally absorbed in divine contemplation.

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- The worldly pleasures then prick them like piercing thorns, and Kṛṣṇa prema is awakened in the heart.
- By these means only can they be blessed by the grace of Kṛṣṇa—the spiritual sun.
- This divine grace is the only means for washing away all stain from the mind and for progressing forward towards the ever-shining land of Kṛṣṇa.
- A sincere faith in pure devotion is the root cause of this unlabored restraint of the senses together with the mind, and confinement of the soul in a deep contemplation on Godhead.
- When the happy moment came, Dvaipāyana Ṛṣi became doubtful about the rules and methods of karma-kānda and vain jñāna-kānda.

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- In reply to the question of his spiritual preceptor, Śrī Nārada Gosvāmī, he said, "O Lord, no doubt I have realized all the truths you advised, still my soul, I know not why, finds no contentment! O son of Brahmā, be kind to tell me the unimaginable and indescribable secret that lurks behind it. I beg this of you, being greatly troubled at heart."
- Then Nārada Gosvāmī replied, "O Vyāsa, you have not striven to give as vivid a picture of the pure spiritual pastimes of Bhagavān, as you have in the Vedānta-sūtras and Mahābhārata of the four main objects of human pursuit, viz., virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation.
- It is due to this shortcoming of yours that you enjoy no contentment.

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- Therefore you have committed a great and heavy omission by giving too high an eulogy of castes and stages as the religion of the soul.
- If any one, leaving aside such a conventional religion of the self, engages himself in the service of Hari, but slips before reaching the goal, he suffers no loss to speak of.
- On the contrary, if he strictly sticks to conventional religion, being utterly unmindful of Hari bhajana, what worthy and exalted goal can he attain thereby?"
- It is clear from the above that there is no second help but Hari bhajana. A jīva can attain his highest goal if he embraces the holy name as the means to Hari.

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- Vyāsadeva then followed up this bhakti-yoga by absorbing himself in an easy meditation on Godhead.
- "Easy" is used here to show that devotion to Kṛṣṇa is most innate in the jīvātmā.
- Because it is an inherent and eternal religion of the jīvas, it is called the "easy" universal religion of every jīva.
- Its workings develop in the following manner.

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- When jīvas come to realize that the path of karma does not give them eternal good, whether it be the eighteen inferior karma-yoga or the eight subtle processes of yajña—neither can ever lead them to the highest goal, service to Kṛṣṇa, which is their soul's religion—or again when they are fully convinced that there is not the least chance to attain perpetual happiness by mundane wisdom or limited knowledge that aims at the spiritual kingdom—both gained by endeavor of the subtle frame of mind, ego, etc.—finding no shore to catch, they thus, by the grace of sādhus and the spiritual preceptor, cry out to Kṛṣṇa from the deepest recesses of their heart: "O Kṛṣṇa! O You Deliverer of the fallen! Although I am Your eternal servant, I am fallen into the deep abyss of the world and am badly dashed from shore to shore by its drowning waves of troubles and tribulations. Take me up, my Lord, to the shade of the cool dust of Your lotus feet. Oh! Have mercy on this wretched self!"
- Then the all-merciful Lord lovingly takes all jīvas up to His feet.

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- When with sincere thrills of joy and tears trickling down their cheeks they constantly chant, hear and remember the name of Kṛṣṇa, they gradually reach the stage of bhāva.
- Appearing in their heart, Kṛṣṇa erases all stain from their mind.
- Having thus cleansed their heart graciously, He blesses them with His own prema.
- Extreme humbleness and utter devotion are necessary to call Kṛṣṇa to the heart.
- Then, when earthly knowledge, reasoning and striving are completely burnt to ashes, the soul's eyes can perceive Bhagavān and His associated counterparts.

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- If after discarding the company of asat fellows—those who are attached to the fair sex and those who are nondevotees of Kṛṣṇa—one embraces the company of the good or sat, before long he attains firm faith and then through the stages of niṣṭhā, etc., reaches the ladder of bhāva.
- Those whose hearts are crooked will beyond any doubt stumble downwards to hell.
- The fortunate ones who earnestly long to ascend the terrace of prema, do sincerely and incessantly chant the name of Kṛṣṇa in the company of sādhus.
- They do not have any appetite for any other feature of devotion.

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- When in a short time by the grace of the holy name the heart becomes closely attentive, the fruits of religious forbearance, control over sensual appetites, religious observances, withholding the breath by way of religious austerity, abstract religious contemplation, steady abstraction of the mind and indifference to external impressions are very easily gained without paying the least heed to any of these.
- The holy name alone is a complete suspension of the fleeting mental operations.
- The more the heart is transparent, the more the diverse pastimes of the spiritual kingdom play in it.
- The flow of the milk of this happiness is so very fast running that no other means can give even the smallest drop of it. The jīvas should desire no other wealth than this grace of Kṛṣṇa.

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- The holy name is spiritual; wisdom, vows, meditation, abnegation, mental quietness, virtue, contrivance—none of these can ever equal the name.
- Know it for certain that the holy name is the highest salvation, the holy name is the highest end, the holy name is the noblest and final beatitude, the holy name is existing eternally, the holy name alone is the supermost devotion, the holy name is the highest intellect, the holy name is the topmost prīti and the holy name is the brightest remembrance.
- The holy name is the seed and the holy name is the fruit to jīvas—the holy name is their Lord and the holy name alone is the supermost object of their worship. The holy name is their preceptor.

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- The Vedas have described the spirituality of the name of Kṛṣṇa to be the highest truth.
- "O Lord! We have reasonably judged Your name to be higher than the highest and so we chant Your holy name.
- Nāma-bhajana is not bound by any rule—the holy name is beyond all virtuous acts—He is spiritual—He is virility and luster in a person.
- All the Vedas have been manifested from this holy name.
- The holy name is bliss, the holy name is ānanda.
- We can excellently be devoted to Him.

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- The holy name is worship and is to be worshiped; Your feet are to be held in veneration.
- Repeatedly we fall prostrate at Your lotus feet and anoint our bodies with the pollen thereof.
- In order to lead the soul to its highest stage, devotees mutually discuss the holy name and sing His glories.
- They believe Your name to be Caitanya in person, and always sing and hear kīrtana which is identical with Your name—they are purified by it.
- The holy name alone is sat, or ever-existing.

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- The essence of the Vedas is the holy name, who is the Absolute Truth and whose form is sac-cid-ānanda (sat—ever-existing, cit—knowing, and ānanda—all-bliss).
- O Viṣṇu, it is only by the grace of Your name that we are capable of offering these hymns to You. So we should adore and pray to Your holy name alone."
- In His own "Eight Glorious Precepts," Śrīmān Mahāprabhu has spoken of the glories of the holy name.
- He has also given a glimpse of the gradual steps of nāma-bhajana in those eight precepts.
- His śloka, beginning with "Consider yourself humbler than the grass" hints at how to adore the holy name after avoiding the ten offenses.

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- His śloka "Followers or money I want not" speaks of the selflessness of nāma-bhajana in a devotional spirit—devotion unactuated by any lustful motive.
- The śloka "O Son of Nanda" tells us how to make a plaintive report to the Lord.
- The last two ślokas describe the process of Vraja bhajana where one loves Kṛṣṇa to serve Him either in sambhoga (union) or in vipralambha-rasa (deeper union in separation) or in both after being completely and spontaneously attached to Śrīmatī Rādhā.
- The śāstras have eulogized so highly and so often the glories of the holy name that their number is legion—to describe them is to write a big volume like the Śrī Hari-bhakti vilāsa.

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- So we hardly have any more space in this small volume to discuss them at length.
- Thus, stopping here with the glories of the holy name, we attempt a very short survey of the processes of nāma-bhajana.
- Devotees who are desirous of ascending the terrace of prema should remember a few points even before entering the field of nāma-bhajana.
- Firstly, they should know for certain that the form of Kṛṣṇa, the form of Kṛṣṇa's name, the form of service to Kṛṣṇa and the form of Kṛṣṇa's servants are eternally free—eternally spiritual!
- Kṛṣṇa, His abode and paraphernalia are all spiritual and beyond the grasp of māyā, the illusory energy. No mundane consideration exists in sevā, or service.

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- The seat, room, garden, forest, Yamunā River and every other thing of Kṛṣṇa are spiritual and hence untouchable by matter.
- They are further aware of the fact that this belief is not a blind worldly faith—it is absolutely true and eternal.
- The exact forms of all these do not in truth manifest on this earth.
- Such ideas may perpetually reign in the pure heart of pure devotees.
- Here, the fruit of all these spiritual practices is self-realization.

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- Those who have realized the form of Kṛṣṇa, as well as of their own self, do before long attain vastu-siddhi (enter the eternal pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual kingdom and gain personal service of Kṛṣṇa).
- Here in this world, devotees can only get a glimpse of those immaterial things.
- The first stage to it is freedom from the bondage of māyā—the climax is prema.
- The realization of truths that are beyond the grasp of matter is called svarūpa-siddhi.
- This is true knowledge of the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and the jīvas, and when this is acquired, the endeavor for prema as a means and prema as an object of pursuit are gained.

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- The spiritual region of Kṛṣṇa, His spiritual name, His divine attributes and spiritual pastimes—all these being the necessary object of pursuit—come under prema.
- This is delineated in the Praśnopaniṣad.
- The holy name has been accepted in all respects to be an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa on this earth.
- Although He seems to be just a word, still, by His unimaginable powers, He is spiritual and is a special incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.
- As Kṛṣṇa and His name are identical, Kṛṣṇa has descended to the earth as the holy name; so, Kṛṣṇa's name is the first introduction to Kṛṣṇa. With determination to reach Kṛṣṇa, jīvas must first accept the name of Kṛṣṇa.

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- In attempting to determine the significance and origin of Hari nāma, Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī, the dearest disciple of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, writes, "Blessed are they no doubt who utter 'Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare; Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare' even with indifference. (This verse was culled from the Agni Purāṇa.)"
- 'Those who chant the holy name are free from every spot of sin.' (Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa)
- These utterings of Hare Kṛṣṇa, coming out from the lips of Śrī Caitanya, inundated the whole world with the flood of prema. Glory be to the holy name by His will!"
- Hence, Śrīmān Mahāprabhu, as mentioned in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta and in the Caitanya-bhāgavata, Himself sang and taught jīvas to count these sixteen names of thirty-two syllables on Tulasi beads.

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- Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī explains these sixteen names in the following way:
- "At the utterance of Hari, all sins are washed from the heart of the wicked.
- As the flame will burn the finger even though unconsciously thrust into fire, similarly, even the very casually pronounced holy name will burn every bit of sin within you.
- After that holy name of the Lord manifests the Absolute Truth whose form is cid-ānanda, it destroys avidyā, or illusion, and its works.
- All this is the work of Hari nāma.
- Or as He takes off the three-fold pangs of miseries, distresses and afflictions, He is therefore called Hari (lit. to steal away).

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- Or Hari is so called because He drives out all the three-fold distresses of every animate and inanimate being, or because the mind of the fourteen worlds is charmed by hearing and singing the spiritual attributes of Hari.
- Or as He, by His exceeding beauty before the loveliness and beauty of a thousand Cupids, which causes these to hide their faces in shame, He also fascinates all men and incarnations, hence He is called Hari, which in the vocative case is pronounced Hare.
- Or again, according to the views of the Brahma-saṁhitā, She who fascinates the mind of Hari by Her prema-svarūpa, attachments and love is Harā, or in other words, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu. The vocative case of Harā is Hare.

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- "The meaning of Kṛṣṇa according to the views of āgama is that this Kṛṣṇa who is ānanda in form and attracts every object, is parabrahma.
- Kṛṣṇa, when in the vocative case, is also Kṛṣṇa.
- The āgama says, 'O goddess, all guilts and sinful motives vanish from the heart at the very sound of 'rā', and the door in the form of 'ma' is attached to it in order to shut out those evils and prevent them from reentering the heart. These together give us Rāma.'
- The Purāṇas have further said that Kṛṣṇa, who is cleverer than the cleverest, more witty than the greatest wit, who is the presiding Deity of all spiritual pastimes and who is eternally engaged in spiritual dalliance with Śrī Rādhā, is termed as Rāma."

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- Devotees who thirst for prema and are on the way to it, chant and realize this holy name of Hare Kṛṣṇa by counting on beads.
- While chanting and remembering the name, they incessantly remember His spiritual characteristics by explaining to the mind the meanings of the holy name.
- In this way, their heart is very soon freed from every spot and becomes pure and stainless; and with the morning twilight of the holy name, as the heart is purified by constant remembrance, the holy name dawns on the horizon of the transparent heart with full shining rays.

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- Those who have accepted the holy name are either self-realized devotees or are still trotting onwards to self-realization.
- Of these, the latter class of devotees are divided according to their early and advanced stages.
- Besides these, devotees who are eternally free no longer confuse the soul for the body and never identify themselves with the body or mind.
- In the early stage, devotees begin to chant the name in a fixed number, and as they gradually increase their countings, they come to a stage when their tongue does not stop for a moment from singing the holy name.

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- Although devotees in their first stage have no taste for the holy name because their tongues are cholera-stricken by avidyā, still a patient and continuous utterance of the name proves to be the only remedy.
- Later they will feel uneasy if stopped from singing the name. A constant and regardful chanting produces a supreme liking for Him.
- Zeal and earnestness to avoid offenses to the holy name are very needful in the first stage, which can be done only by an avoidance of worldly-minded men and keeping company with devotees.
- Incessant chanting of the holy name will, when the first flow has passed away, naturally increase a love for the name and kindness to jīvas.

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- In this, karma, jñāna and yoga have nothing to do.
- If their workings are strong even then, they may help the devotees of the holy name in maintaining their livelihood.
- If Kṛṣṇa's holy name is sung with a firm inclination, it will before long cleanse the heart and burn away avidyā; when avidyā vanishes, the brighter illumination of a true, unbiased abnegation and a sense of the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and jīvas will appear in the heart.
- Numberless times has this been proved to be true among the wise.

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- With a happy heart, one should recollect the meaning and form of the holy name and should pray to Kṛṣṇa with a heart-rending lamentation, and this will draw the grace of Kṛṣṇa which will lead him onward in the path of bhajana; or else, births will pass in vain like karmis and frustrated jñānis.
- Those who engage in bhajana may be divided into two distinct classes.
- Some bear only the burden, others appreciate the real worth of things.
- Those who long for enjoyment or for self-destroying salvation and are attached to worldly affairs are only yoked to the heavy load of virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation—they are unaware of the fact that prema is the best sap.

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- So, such load-bearers fail to progress in bhajana in spite of their utmost strivings, whereas the essence-seekers aiming at prema-latā very soon reach the longed-for ultimate.
- They are called prema-ruruksu (those who earnestly strive for ascending up to the region of prema); they alone can in a very short time ascend up to the sphere of prema or easily become paramahamsas.
- Thus, when one who so long simply did bear burdens, learns to love the Truth in the company of sādhus, he also soon turns to longing for prema.

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- When in previous births one has done good works looking forward to devotion, this invigorates reverence and a strong desire for service to Godhead, which then turns into an appetite for devotion in the company of devotees.
- Both bhajana and true devotees awaken sādhana-bhakti which leads to the expectation of prema.
- If one adopts the processes of sādhana as directed by true and pure devotees, he will before long almost turn mad for ascending the stage of prema where it can be tasted.
- But again, this prema will remain far in the background if he associates with half-true devotees and will not be able to exclusively devote himself to the service of Kṛṣṇa.

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- In this stage,
 - (1) his strong love for the fleeting world,
 - (2) his identification of the soul with the material frame of flesh and blood and the subtle body of the mind,
 - (3) his knowledge of things other than Kṛṣṇa, and
 - (4) his extreme servile attitude towards māyā do not allow him to regard and love true devotees—crafty thoughts beguile his heart.
- In this way, the practicers of devotion have to remain long confined to the preliminary rights of a devotee in the first stage.
- No doubt they have reliance and faith in Kṛṣṇa, but it is so tender, fickle and unsteady that they may at any moment be led away by the contradictory arguments of conflicting schools and may accordingly come into the company of so-called preceptor and sādhus.

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- In order to make steady their perturbed state of mind, they must learn by the process of deduction (the path of Śruti from a true spiritual preceptor) the true process of worship.
- A firm faith in the holy name will be awakened in the heart after worshiping the Deity in this way for a long time; then at last they will have determination for nāma-bhajana in the company of devotees.
- The case is different with those few lucky ones who have an exclusively firm faith in Kṛṣṇa's holy name; they take, by unbounded grace of Kṛṣṇa, shelter at the feet of such a spiritual guide who is an ontologist of the holy name, i.e., who has realized and does see the svarūpa (form) of the holy name.

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- Concerning the need for such a preceptor, Śrī Mahāprabhu says that though formal initiation may not be necessary, still a guide is essential in nāma-bhajana.
- The mere letters of the holy name may be had at any place and from anybody, but the profound and unknown truth that is lurking behind those letters can only be exposed by the grace of a true preceptor who is purely devoted to Kṛṣṇa.
- The grace of the spiritual guide alone can pass over from the early twilight from the ten offenses hindering the true service of the holy name.

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- Those who are devoted to the holy name have already from the beginning attained the stage of the second class of the svarūpa (form) of the holy name.
- They are practically no longer bound to nāmābhāsa (utterance of the name avoiding the ten offenses).
- Truly speaking, they earnestly desire prema—they are true prema-ruruksus.
- It is their religion to have prema for Kṛṣṇa; they make friendship with true Vaiṣṇavas, they cast kind glances at and show compassion to tender and unsteady Vaiṣṇavas, and they are indifferent to those who being puffed up with false vanity of their erudition are malicious and inimical to the devotees and Śrī-mūrti of Bhagavān.

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- Failing to distinguish right from wrong, the beginners who are confined to only the initial rights sometimes fall into deplorable conditions.
- The middle order of Vaiṣṇavas who are earnestly anxious for prema behave differently from the three previous classes of Vaiṣṇavas (those who only carry the burden, those who maintain bad association and those who strictly follow) and soon are blessed with prema, or ascend to the highest or superior order of Vaiṣṇavas. It is best to associate with this middle order of Vaiṣṇavas.
- These prema-ruruksu devotees chant and tell their beads three lacs (3 x 64 rounds) in every twenty-four hours, and they find such happiness in the holy name that they cannot spare a moment without Him; then, when no time can be kept in sleep, etc., they become incessant in their bhajana.

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- Repeated remembrance of the meaning of the holy name as explained by Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī will, by degrees, drive out all contamination from the nature of the devotee.
- Then the holy name will appear in person before the spiritual eyes of the devotee.
- When the svarūpa (form) of the holy name fully appears, it is identical with the spiritual form of Kṛṣṇa.
- The appearance of the svarūpa of the holy name is the appearance of the svarūpa of Kṛṣṇa.
- The more clearly and purely the holy name is visible, the more bhajana proceeds in the presence of His svarūpa, the more do the three elements of which primordial matter is said to be composed, namely sattva (the strand of goodness), rajas (the strand of activity) and tamas (the gloom of pride, haughtiness, etc. of the lowest inherent principal), disappear and there appear the spiritual attributes of Kṛṣṇa in the heart of the devotee.

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- Then again, when there is a happy union of the name, form and attributes of Kṛṣṇa, and devotees in their bhajana see them, the līlā (pastimes) of Kṛṣṇa is awakened by the grace of Kṛṣṇa in their pure heart as soon as they are absorbed in deep and easy, natural meditation.
- The holy name then dances incessantly on their tongue, the form of Kṛṣṇa is visible to their soul's eye, all the attributes of Kṛṣṇa are observed in their heart and the bud of līlā blooms in their soul while they are buried in meditation.
- In this stage, five conditions of the practising devotee are to be noticed: 1. śravana-daśā, 2. varāṇa-daśā, 3. smaraṇa-daśā, 4. āpana-daśā, 5. prapanna-daśā.

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- The happy mood which the devotee feels at the time of listening to the object of pursuit and the means of hearing from the lips of a true spiritual preceptor may be called śravana-daśā.
- In this stage, every bit of knowledge about how to chant the holy name without committing any offense to Him and of the processes and fitness of chanting the holy name is gained; this facilitates the continuity of the holy name.
- When fit to receive it, the strung-together beads of nāma-prema can be had from śrī gurudeva, i.e., the disciple with every delight and from the deepest recesses of his heart cordially welcomes the boon of surrendering himself to the feet of śrī guru for pure and unalloyed bhajana and receives invigorating strength and faculty from him; this is varāṇa-daśā, (the choice of śrī guru for bhajana by the acceptance of the holy name and strength from him).

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- Remembrance, contemplation, concentration, constant meditation and trance (final beatitude) are the five processes of smarana.
- From remembrance of the holy name, the devotee thinks of the form which gives him a steady conception of the attributes; this steady conception of the attributes gives him a firm conviction of pursuing the līlā of Kṛṣṇa and having entrance in the līlā, he is completely absorbed in Kṛṣṇa-rasa. This is āpana-daśā.
- By these stages of smarana and āpana the devotee can know and adore the eternal and daily līlā of Kṛṣṇa in eight different periods of the day; and when he is deeply absorbed in it, he realizes his own self and that of Kṛṣṇa. These self-realized devotees are paramahamsas.

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- Then at the time of his departure from this world, the devotee, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, becomes an associated counterpart of ideal object of his worship in Vraja, and thus attains the summum bonum of nāma-bhajana.
- When should all who are seekers after prema leave the stage of a householder and accept sannyāsa, or the fourth stage?
- The answer is that, be he in bustee (society) or solitude, in palace or bower, be he in the stage of a gr̥hastha or a vānaprastha or sannyāsī—in whatever stage he may be in, the prema-ruruksu should prefer to live in that stage only which will be favorable to the attainment of prema and should at once desert the stage that is a burden or antagonistic to his bhajana.

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- In this connection, the lives of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, Śrī Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi, Śrī Rāmananda and other personal attendants of Kṛṣṇa are worth recollection.
- They are all born paramahamsas.
- R̥bhū, Janaka, etc. in the days of yore are seen to be paramahamsa even though they led the lives of householders; while, on the contrary, finding household life to be detrimental and a bar to bhajana, Śrī Rāmānuja Svāmī, Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī, Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, all renounced the stage of a householder and accepted sannyāsa.

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- Kṛṣṇa's loving beauty is so enamoring that even the god of lust is charmed by Him and Kṛṣṇa Himself, being charmed by His own beauty and loveliness, covets the pleasure enjoyed by the best of His lovers—Śrī Rādhā, by lovingly serving such a form as His.
- So anointing Himself with the luster and complexion of Śrī Rādhā and having been imbued with Her ardent longings of love, Kṛṣṇa is ever dallying as an exemplary lover of Himself as Śrī Gaurāṅga.
- Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the essential nature of the Supreme Being—the only real and eternal truth—is the object of love, and Śrī Gaurāṅga, the possessor and distributor of that love.

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- Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously dallying with His dear consort in the groves of Vṛndāvana and tasting the extract of love succors flowing from His consort as Gaurāṅga at Navadvīpa, Himself singing Kṛṣṇa's name and teaching others how to love Kṛṣṇa and sing His name.
- In so doing, He distinguishes pointedly the real name, identical with the object Himself, from the apparent or false one which is taken profanely, blasphemously or in vain.
- He emphasizes that in this Kali-yuga worldly people indulge in (1) duplicity, (2) intoxication, (3) sensuality, (4) killing of animals, (5) mercenariness and so are unable to meditate upon or worship Viṣṇu and perform Vedic sacrifices.

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- So the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's name is the only meditation, the only sacrifice, the only worship in this Kali age—the name is the means, the name is the end.
- But it should be noted with the utmost care that Kṛṣṇa's name is not a mere combination of letters or utterance; an appearance is not identity.
- The fire and the glow worm, though similar in appearance, are not identical.
- The minutest spark of fire set consciously or unconsciously, seriously or playfully, will instantaneously burn an inflammable thing, whereas a thousand glow worms will not be able to do that, even in a thousand years.
- Kṛṣṇa's name is identical with Kṛṣṇa Himself and pregnant with all the properties and attributes of Kṛṣṇa.
- So His name, unlike all other names, is full of energy, perfect, eternal, pure, devoid of illusion and eternally free.

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- The aurora of sunrise is sufficient to dispel the darkness of night and to drive the wild animals to their lairs and thieves and dacoits to their resorts; it enables us to distinguish the various objects of senses and ushers the advent of the glowing lamp of heaven.
- So nāmābhāsa stops poverty from planting our pillows with thorns, destroys our worldly hankerings and dispels our illusory gloom so that we may see the name face to face.

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- When the ever-burning sun peeps out of the eastern horizon, its ever-effulgent rays make us see it face to face, feel its golden rays and enable us to see all objects bathed therein.
- The sun is seen and felt by us with its own rays and heat and not by the help of any other glowing object.
- The brightest candles of the universe put together cannot make the sun visible to us.
- When our dreamy nights are at an end, when we shake off our torpor, open our eyes, and turn them to the east, we see the sun of the holy name with all His glory and beauty.