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# THE KĪRTANA ARROW

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Five Powerful Tools to Bring the Chanting of the Holy Names to Perfection

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Alignment ~ Tune body, mind, and heart to achieve full presence and attention. Avoid *aparādha*.

**Relationship** ~ Enter the awareness of your eternal relationship with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Infuse your practice with this connection.

**Rendering Service** ~ Offer your chanting in the spirit of loving service. Share the glories of the holy names with others.

**Opening the Heart** ~ Cultivate the *kīrtana bhāva* of seperation and longing experienced by Gauracandra. Fill your chanting with genuine devotional feelings.

Welcome the Divine Gift ~ Live in *saranāgati* (surrender). Enter the receiver mood and patiently await your gift from Nāma Prabhu.

## W – WELCOME THE DIVINE GIFT

The fifth step requires becoming a receiver. This is possible when we accept a mood of surrender – the confidence that the holy name will give us what we need. *Bhakti* is a gift from Kṛṣṇa; we cannot attain it ourselves. But is there anything we can do to move Kṛṣṇa to bestow it? Yes. Take shelter of Him. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura asks how to move the Lord's heart:

### șad-anga śaraṇāgati hoibe jāhāra tāhāra prārthanā śune śrī-nanda-kumāra

"Whose prayer does Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda hear? The prayer of one who submits unconditionally to the sixfold path of surrender. Śrī Nandakumāra hears the prayer of those persons."

(Śaraņāgati, introductory song verse 5)



### And Jagadānanda Paṇḍit says:

"If you wish to advance on the path of pure bhakti, not many rules in spiritual practices are necessary. Simply beg for the complete shelter of Kṛṣṇa-nāma and thus purify your heart and consciousness."

(Prema-vivarta, chapter 7)

We find an example of such surrender in the life of Draupadī, when the Kauravas were trying to disrobe her in public. At that time she called out loudly the names of Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa took a long time to arrive – her aggressors were almost successful in their sinful endeavor.

Why did Kṛṣṇa take so long? Because even as she called His name she turned to Grandfather Bhīṣma, her husbands, the assembled kings, and all others present for shelter. Only when she finally lifted her arms to the sky and surrendered body, mind, and heart was her calling out to Kṛṣṇa imbued with the quality that immediately attracted Him to appear.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

"In the Mahābhārata Kṛṣṇa says: 'When I was away from Draupadī, she cried with the words He Govinda! This call for me has



put me in her debt, and that indebtedness is gradually increasing in my heart ...' The māhā-mantra is also simply an address to the Lord and His energy. So to anyone who is constantly engaged in addressing the Lord and His energy, we can imagine how much the Supreme Lord is obliged. It is impossible for the Lord to ever forget such a devotee ..."

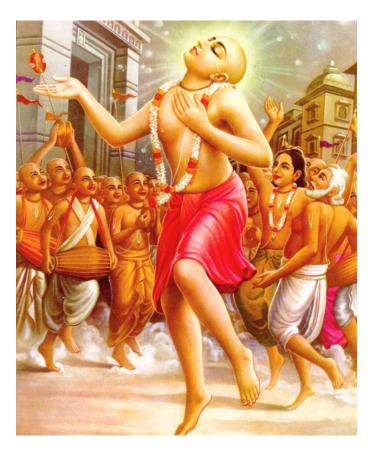
(The Nectar of Devotion, 21.17)

After explaining this point about the quality of the chanting, Bhaktivinoda Țhākura describes how the divine names bring symptoms of ecstasy to his mind and body. He opens his heart to Kṛṣṇa's name:

"Such is the behavior of Him whom I have taken shelter in. I am not capable of describing all this. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is independent and thus acts on His own sweet will."

(Śaraņāgati, Śrī Nāma-māhātmya, verse 5).

If you wish to have the full experience of the holy name, cultivate the principles of *saraṇāgati*. Even if, in the beginning, you find it difficult to live a lifestyle of surrender, bring your surrender into your chanting. Chant in a mood of seeking shelter, and take refuge in the holy name.



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"I have not come to teach you, but only to request you to please chant the name of God. Please chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, be cleansed of your consciousness and understand your spiritual identity."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda, Morning Walk Discussions with Father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, 1974)

The five powerful elements of the Kīrtana Arrow need to be practiced regularly. We should not expect to become perfect chanters overnight. Just as we have to build up our strength to run long distances, so chanting with full attention for one or two hours a day – or even ten minutes – will take practice. To help you in that practice, *japa* and *kīrtana* retreats are now being offered in various places around the world, and we highly recommend you take part in one or two or many according to your convenience. The human body you have is offering you a unique opportunity to invest in your eternal spiritual life. Please take advantage of it.

And like any practice, the Kīrtana Arrow has to be personalized. If one of the elements works well for you, please develop your chanting with it. If you can perfect your chanting with even one or two of these practices, you are sure to reach the divine lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Ultimately, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that if we wish to take shelter in the holy name, we must follow two basic practices: \* Always chant in a humble state of mind (*tṛṇād api* su-nīcena ...)

\* Chant with a feeling of longing – with the calling out of a person wanting to be saved from drowning in the ocean.

In the final analysis it's good to remember that even the most difficult things are easy when Kṛṣṇa offers His king of śaktis, His kṛpā, or mercy. Whereas Kṛṣṇa is known to bestow His mercy mainly on those who have already surrendered to Him, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy is unlimited and open to everyone in any state. Therefore devotees turn to Him in the mood taught to us by Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura:

#### dante tṛṇa dhori' gaura, ḍāki he tomār kṛpā kori' eso āmār, hṛdoya mandire

"Holding grass between my teeth, O Gaura, I call out to you! Please be compassionate toward me and come reside in the temple of my heart."

#### (Gaurānga karuņā koro)

What cannot be attained when the Lord is personally present to help?