

THE TOUCHSTONE OF THE HOLY NAME



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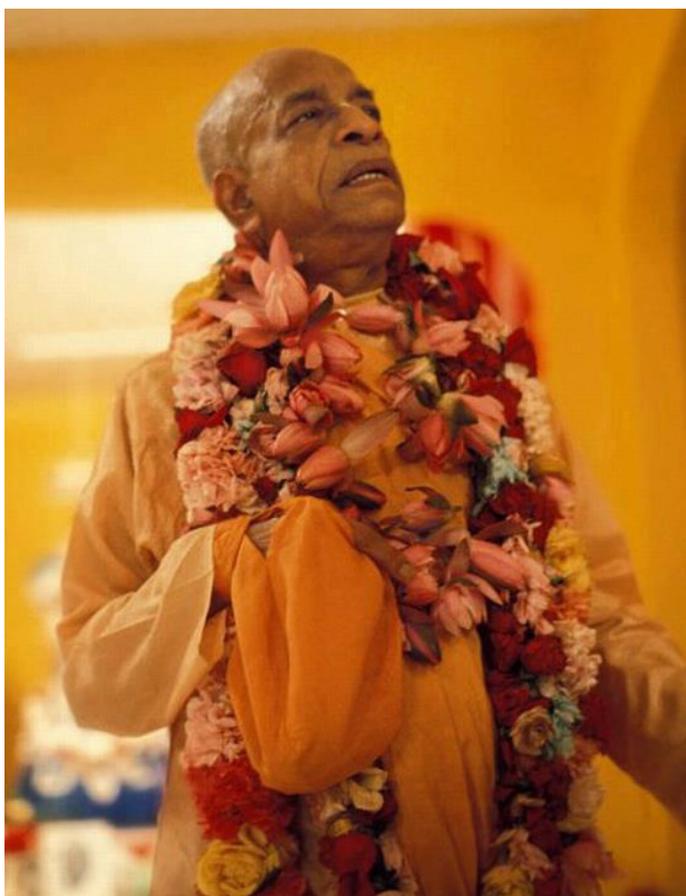
2) CHANTING WITH SAMBANDHA

Deep in our hearts all we want and need is the shelter of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. At the moment we are not always aware of this and cultivate other desires. Kṛṣṇa mercifully takes note of our desires and fulfills them in such a way that it brings us forward on our spiritual path (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 5.19.27). Eventually we realize that all along we've been under the shelter of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and always will be. No matter what phase we go through in our life, as long as we remain connected to Kṛṣṇa, we will continue to progress.

Philosophically speaking, *sambandha* is exactly that: an understanding of one's relationship to Kṛṣṇa that facilitates the realization of spiritual truths. Our spiritual life will not function if we are not properly connected to Kṛṣṇa. It is also not possible to chant properly without a connection to Kṛṣṇa. We need to experience a bond to Kṛṣṇa. This bond is so sweet that even if one has material desires, Kṛṣṇa thinks, "Okay, my dear devotee, I know you harbor those other desires, but still you will come to me at the end." We must know this both in regards to our own material desires and those of others who struggle with material desires and feel helpless. If we keep our connection to Kṛṣṇa, our *sambandha*, we will become pure after sometime. This is the secret of *bhakti*.

Sambandha jñāna means to know deeply from the heart that you are an eternal soul and that Kṛṣṇa is your master. Only if you have this attitude can you experience the true sound of the holy name. Why? Because you are connected. It becomes easy to access deep levels of Kṛṣṇa consciousness if you chant with this kind of connection.





THREE LEVELS OF CHANTING

There are three levels of chanting:

- 1) *nāmāparādha*
chanting with offences
- 2) *nāmābhāsa*
chanting with the endeavor to avoid offences and
- 3) *śuddha-nāma*
pure chanting when the sun of the holy name has arisen on the horizon of the heart and the clouds of offences have been fully dissipated.

Most of us are chanting on the second stage, on which we cannot perceive the sun of the holy name due to clouds – self-constructed difficulties – which cover us. In order to advance toward *śuddha-nāma*, we have to stop producing “clouds”. There are two types of clouds: ignorance and *anarthas*. Ignorance refers to a dull consciousness which is not aware of the soul’s identity and its relationship to Kṛṣṇa. The *anarthas* are of three types: weakness of the heart and mind (grief, distress and other problems), hankering for temporary things and offences. To blow all the clouds away we need to strengthen our *sambandha jñāna* and avoid the offences during chanting. Once the clouds have dissipated the sun of the holy name shines forth and gives the blessing of *prema* to the devotee.

MEDITATION TO STRENGTHEN YOUR SAMBANDHA JÑĀNA

Bhaktivinoda Thākura (*Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, 3.25) offers three simple meditations for strengthening one’s *sambandha jñāna*:

- 1) I am not the body, I am in fact a soul and Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant.
- 2) Kṛṣṇa is the infinite conscious entity and my only master.
- 3) The material world is the prison meant to reform my absent-minded tendencies.

This is expressed in a wonderful *śloka* from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 22.33):

*‘kṛṣṇa, tomāra haṇa’ yadi bale eka-bāra
māyā-bandha haite kṛṣṇa tāre kare pāra*

One is immediately freed from the clutches of māyā if he seriously and sincerely says, ‘My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, although I have forgotten You for so many long years in the material world, today I am surrendering unto You. I am Your sincere and serious servant. Please engage me in Your service.’

