NĀMA RUCI - CHANTING WITH TASTE



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DISCOVERIES *****

ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam

Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step.

1.) The Effects of Chanting

- Chanting the holy names without offenses cleanses our heart from all unwanted things.
- Chanting attentively invokes Kṛṣṇa's blessings.
- Once you receive blessings, you will develop a natural inclination to serve. I.e. a variety of services will blossom in your heart. And this means your life becomes auspicious.
- With such blessings and auspiciousness, you will welcome the queen of *bhakti* into your heart.
- Further on, you will reach the desired goal of realizing that the holy name and Kṛṣṇa are identical.
- Then you advance quickly on the path of divine love and experience its different blessings like swimming in an ocean of bliss.



2.) How Chanting brings Us to the Highest Realization

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explains that chanting of the holy names is the *parama upāya* or the most feasible means of salvation in this age of *kali*. (*CC*, *Antya* 20.8)

Furthermore, the Śrīmad- $Bh\bar{a}gavatam$ (7.15.42) tells us about the $k\bar{\imath}rtana$ arrow where the Vedic mantra is the bow, the pure living entity himself is the arrow, and the target is the Supreme Being.

In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda asserts that, chanting *nāma-sankīrtana* of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-*mantra is the gift of Caitan-ya Mahāprabhu and the most feasible way for attaining *prema*.

If we want our arrow to hit the target, if we want to reach Kṛṣṇa, we must learn to utilize this powerful process of chanting the holy names in a proper way. For this reason, Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave us instructions on this so that we know how to use the *kīrtana* arrow in the right way.

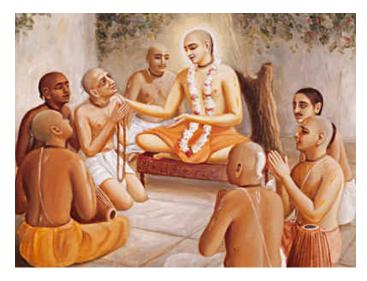
3.) The Process of Bhajan Rahasya

As you advance in chanting, the holy name will reveal more and more of its astonishing glories. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura compared the advancement in chanting the holy name with the blossoming of a flower which will show more and more of its various features like form and fragrance, as it grows from a bud into a beautiful flower.

- The bud of love is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power the holy name possesses if it blossoms a little further it takes our heart to Kṛṣṇa.
- When if fully blossoms it takes us to Vṛndāvana and reveals the Lord's pastimes to us
- In this way it will also reveal our spiritual form and always keep us close to Kṛṣṇa..

Kṛṣṇa takes the form of the holy name to purify our hearts and shows us first that we are a spirit soul.





Where do we start?

Bhaktivinoda Thākura says:

- 1) Learn to chant with full attention
- 2) And, chant avoiding offenses

The result of following these two steps is that we realize that we are an eternal spirit soul, separate from both body and mind.

When we hear, remember and chant properly, Kṛṣṇa enters our heart and removes everything dark from it, like the five elements that cause misfortune (ignorance, false ego, attachments, hatred, envy, and absorption in material life). He removes anarthas, controls our mind and senses and gives us realizations. Just like the wind removes all traces of clouds in the sky, Kṛṣṇa removes every trace of misfortune in us. Once we have realized that we are the spirit soul (sambandha-jṇāna), different from the body and mind, the holy name will reveal Kṛṣṇa's spiritual form to us.

In this way we have to nourish our faith (*śraddhā*) and experience the process of chanting. Experience is the most powerful teacher and the most powerful proof there is for us.

4.) Summary

We can invest our absolute faith in chanting as the main process, the parama upāya, because Kṛṣṇa himself is identical with his name and when his name is chanted Kṛṣṇa comes into the heart and becomes active there by dispelling the darkness of avidyā, or ignorance which clouds us. In this way, Krsna very nicely attracts us more and more. Hence, our process starts with śraddhā - we must have faith. Depending on your faith or your lack of faith the holy name will reveal itself. Chanting is not like a mystic yoga process where everything is dependent on our own efforts. No, chanting is a process of bhakti and bhakti depends entirely on Kṛṣṇa, not on us. Of course we give our endeavor, but ultimately our advancement is only possible by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. One who really makes advancement in chanting is one who has faith. Did you know that the faithful are rewarded with divine strength?

PRACTICE ****

1.) The Marketplace of the Holy Name

There is a market place of the holy name where the currency is transcendental faith. It does not matter what our qualifications are because if we approach the holy name with faith alone, Kṛṣṇa will multiply our faith many times more and in this way increase our ability to receive ever greater degrees of revelations of the holy name. But we cannot cheat in this market place. What we want is to develop more and more faith, over and over again develop and strengthen our śraddhā. On our own we would not go very far, but with Kṛṣṇa's blessings and mercy we can enter the flowing river of the holy name.

To strengthen our faith we can meditate on the *bhūta-śuddhi* prayers, which put us in a place from where we can approach the holy name with the right attitude: A clear understanding of who we are and the unique opportunity we have obtained.

I am by nature the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, but because of my misfortune I have been inimical toward him from time immemorial. Therefore I have identified myself with my body and wandered continuously in the cycle of birth and death in the material world, suffering the burning, threefold miseries. Now as a result of some unimaginable good fortune, my spiritual master's mercy has enabled me to know that I am Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant, an individual spiritual being, completely apart from the gross and subtle body. So by the order of my spiritual master I have obtained the good fortune of serving his lotus feet and, following in his footsteps, the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Śrī Rādhā Śyāmasundara.

And we can add in our mind: Now I can chant the holy name in a mood of humble service.





2.) Focus on the First "Hare"

As the root of all offenses is inattentive chanting, we would like to remind you of the powerful technique for concentrated chanting which we learned on the retreat: Focus on the first "Hare" of the mantra. When chanting, we can aim to focus all our attention on the first "Hare" of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, and in this way "Hare" becomes like a door through which we enter the flow of the mantra. Over and over again, aim to bring your full attention to the first "Hare". When you succeed in this, try to keep your attention on the other parts of the mantra as well. In this way, you bring your mind into the mantra and the mantra into your mind. It is like entering a gentle flowing river. Focus on the first "Hare", keep your attention there, and let the mantra guide you along its own sweet flow.

3.) Meditate on the Person whose Mantra You Chant

As you chant the mantra you really want to make contact with the personalities of the mantra, i.e. with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. By all means, you have to step into the presence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa while you chant. Therefore, in our tradition, devotees sit in front of the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and while chanting address the deities in glorification.

A taste for something comes when you do a certain activity entirely. Therefore, align your body, mind and heart to the practice of chanting the holy names. Aligning the body means to pay attention to proper posture and pronunciation. Aligning the mind means to remain concentrated and bringing the mind always back to the mantra (focusing on the first "Hare"). And, aligning the heart means to chant in a prayerful mood; glorify Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, begging them to accept you. When we are aligned in this way, bringing our whole personality into the chanting of the holy names, we are able to approach the altar of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa where Kṛṣṇa may reveal himself to us if he wishes to show us his mercy.