



Amṛta Vāṇī 1 *The Journey of Faith*

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## 1) THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

There is only one way for us to experience and understand Kṛṣṇa – that is through revelation. This is because the only instruments available to us (the mind and senses) which facilitate our experiences at the moment are material. On the contrary, Kṛṣṇa and his name are purely spiritual and uninvolved with this world (see Cc. Madhya, 17.133-134). This means that our material mind will remain forever unable to understand Kṛṣṇa's name until Kṛṣṇa chooses to show himself to us. This happens when we embark on our personal journey of *śrāddhā*, faith.

*Śrāddhā* is different from faith in the ordinary sense of the word of “believing something”. *Śrad* means “heart” and *dhā* means “to give”. So *śrāddhā* is something a step deeper than faith because it is something that happens when you give your heart to something or someone. In Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura's *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* (chapter 2) it is discussed that the holy name reveals himself to those who give their heart to him. *Śrāddhā* is the only qualification for true chanting. This means that no other qualification is required, but if this qualification is not met, the holy name will remain a stranger. Like a stranger, he may be in close physical proximity to us and yet remain unfamiliar because he has not revealed himself to us.

The journey of faith begins with *komala-śrāddhā*, slight faith. At this stage the contamination of doubt has been removed from our hearts to a great extent and we have developed a favorable attitude towards Kṛṣṇa and the practice of attaining him, in other words chanting of the holy names. Over time this slight faith will grow stronger and stronger until it is completely mature and firm.

These are the different blessings of our growing faith:

**Vīrya** the strength to continue our practice with determination and overcome obstacles like lust and greed

**Smṛti** remembrance of the instructions of the scriptures and *sādhus* that especially comes to our aid in times of need

**Samādhi** attaining spiritual experiences in which Kṛṣṇa can be found

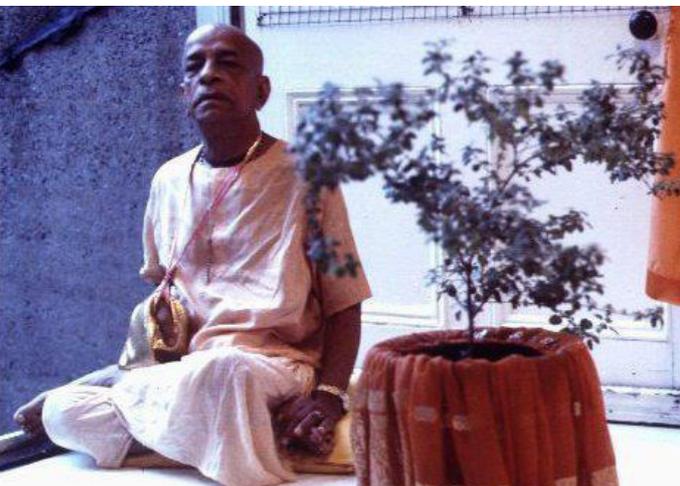
**Pragya** experiencing the eternal nature of reality, a clear distinguishing between the soul and the body, realizing Kṛṣṇa

### Giving Your Heart to the Scriptures

Besides investing *śrāddhā* into the holy name, it is crucial to place faith in the scriptures. As conditioned souls in this world we are blind, but the scriptures open our eyes to the world that lies beyond our senses – the spiritual reality. The scriptures bring us closer to understanding what Kṛṣṇa is really like, which in turn will inspire us to continue travelling the road back to him.

### EXERCISE: Realizing the Nature of the Name

An aid on the way to realizing that Kṛṣṇa's holy name is non-different from him is to worship the name like a deity, like a person. Vaiṣṇavas in our lineage do this by worshiping a picture or card with the *mahā-mantra* written on it. You can read the names while you chant and worship them by offering them a *kānti-mālā*, fresh water, shoes, incense and a peacock feather. Think of the holy name as a person – as Kṛṣṇa. Here is an example from Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura's Śaraṅgati prayers:



# ŚRĪ NĀMA-MĀHĀTMYA

## THE GLORIES OF THE HOLY NAME

1

*kṛṣṇa-nāma dhare koto bal  
viṣaya-vāsanānale, mora citta sadā jwale,  
ravi-tapta maru-bhūmi-sam  
karna-randhra-patha diyā, hṛdi mājhe praveśiyā,  
variṣoya sudhā anupam*

What power does the name of Kṛṣṇa possess? My heart constantly burns in the fire of worldly desires, just like a desert scorched by the rays of the sun. The holy name, entering the core of my heart through the holes of my ears, showers unparalleled nectar upon my soul.

2

*hṛdoya hoite bole, jihvāra agrete cale,  
śabda-rūpe nāce anukṣan  
kanṭhe mora bhaṅge swara, aṅga kāṅpe thara thara,  
sthira hoite nā pāre caraṅ*

The holy name speaks from within my heart, moves onto the tip of my tongue, and constantly dances on it in the form of transcendental sound. My throat becomes choked up, my body shivers again and again, and my feet cannot remain still.

3

*caḅṣe dhārā, dehe gharma, pulakita saba carma,  
vivarna hoilo kalevara  
mūrchita hoilo man, pralayera āgaman,  
bhāve sarva-deha jara jara*

Rivers of tears flow from my eyes, perspiration completely soaks my body, all my skin thrills with rapture, my hairs stand on end, and my complexion turns pale and discolored. My mind grows faint, I begin to experience devastation, and my entire body is shattered in a flood of ecstatic emotions.

4

*kori' eto upadrava, citte varṣe sudhā-drava,  
more ḍāre premera sāgare  
kichu nā bujhite dilo, more to' bātula koilo,  
mora citta-vitta saba hare*

While causing such an ecstatic disturbance, the holy name showers liquid nectar on my heart and drowns me in the ocean of divine love of Godhead. He does not allow me to understand anything, for he has made me truly mad by having stolen away my mind and all my resources.

5

*loinu āśroya jā'r, heno vyavahāra tā'r,  
varnite nā pāri e sakal  
kṛṣṇa-nāma icchā-moy, jāhe jāhe sukhī hoy,  
sei mora sukhera sambal*

Such is the behavior of him in whom I have taken shelter. I am not capable of describing all this. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is independent and thus acts on his own sweet will. In whatever way he becomes happy, that is also my way of happiness.

6

*premera kalikā nām, adbhuta rasera dhām,  
heno bala karaye prakāś  
īṣat vikaśi' punaḥ, dekhāy nija-rūpa-guna,  
citta hari' loya kṛṣṇa-pāś*

The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power he manifests that when his holy name starts to blossom a little further, it then reveals his own divine form and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa.

7

*pūrna vikaśita hoiyā, braje more jāya loiyā,  
dekhāy more swarūpa-vilās  
more siddha-deha diyā, kṛṣṇa-pāse rākhe giyā,  
e dehera kore sarva-nās*

Blossoming fully, the flower of the holy name takes me to Vraja and reveals to me his own love-dalliance. This name gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Kṛṣṇa's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mine.

8

*kṛṣṇa-nāma-cintāmaṇi, akhila rasera khani,  
nitya-mukta śuddha-rasa-moy  
nāmera bālāi jata, saba lo'ye hoi hata,  
tabe mora sukhera uday*

The name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental touchstone, a mine of all devotional mellows. It is eternally liberated, and the embodiment of pure *rasa*. When all impediments to the pure chanting of the holy name are taken away and destroyed, then my happiness will know its true awakening.

