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4) RELEASING THE ANCHOR

The tenth offence against the holy name is maintaining one's material identity. There are strong reminders in the *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* of how important it is for us to wake up from illusion and act on the spiritual platform: "That low person who is obsessed with the conception of 'I' and 'mine' and who will not develop attraction to the holy name even after hearing its glory is an offender to the holy name." Elsewhere, it is written, "A person who is initiated into the chanting of the holy name but who remains very strongly attracted to sense gratification and thinks of his material body in terms of 'I' and 'mine' will fall from the path of devotional service."

The pure soul is covered by different layers: the false ego, intelligence, mind and body. As long as we identify with any one of these coverings we will not be able to act on the spiritual platform. We have to give up our identification with our costume and come to our real identity. Especially when you chant you cannot allow yourself to keep this illusion near to your heart. If you sit down to chant and keep the anchor of the boat of your spiritual endeavors in this material world by staying in your dream world of "I am the body, the role I play etc." – then it won't work. Don't even maintain a false identity of being a Hare Kṛṣṇa spiritualist.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura recommends a simple meditation (*Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, 3.25) that will bring you to the right understanding for chanting:

- I am an atomic particle of consciousness and Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant.
- Kṛṣṇa is the infinite conscious entity and my only master.
- The material world is the prison house meant to reform my absent-minded tendencies.

Here is a powerful prayer to facilitate this awakening:

*'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.'"

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya, 22.33)

The holy name will only reveal himself to you if you have eyes to see him. And these eyes open if we learn to chant the holy name from a spiritual position of purity.



EXERCISE: Connect with Kṛṣṇa

When we chant the holy names we look for a connection to Kṛṣṇa. We want to disconnect from the usual mental noise and connect with the spiritual realm. We need to learn how to be alone with Kṛṣṇa and then we will gain strength from that contact. The following meditation exercise can help you enter the space where you can meet Kṛṣṇa during chanting.

1. Sit tall and focus on the sounds you presently hear. Focus on the objects you see. Just become aware of the present reality. This will help you to withdraw your thoughts from the busy day or from any other thoughts and emotions.

2. Now start to focus on your breathing. Become aware of your incoming and outgoing breath. Just observe the flow of your breathing for some time. This practice will calm your mind and prepare you for the next steps.

3. Bring your attention to the heart. While being in your heart space, pray:

“I am by nature the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, but by misfortune, due to being inimical toward Him from time immemorial, I have been identifying myself with the body and been continuously wandering 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, by the mercy of my spiritual master I know that I am the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, that I am an infinitesimal spiritual being, completely apart from the gross and subtle body. Now, by the order of my spiritual master, following in his footsteps, I have obtained the good fortune of being able to serve his lotus feet and the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara [for the names of the Deities one is worshiping].”
(Pañcarātra-Pradīpa)



5. Mentally go to the holy Yamunā River. Enter the Yamunā slowly and respectfully. Offer some water to the Yamunā in your palms. Pray, “O River Yamunā, you are the blissful spiritual water that gives love to the son of Nanda Mahārāja. You are the same as the water of the spiritual world, for you can vanquish all our offenses and the sinful reactions incurred in this life. You are the creator of all auspicious things. O daughter of the Sun-God, kindly purify us by your pious activities.”

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya, 3.28)

Slowly move further into the river. Dip into the river three times and notice how your material identity recedes more and more with each dip. On the opposite bank you see Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara being worshiped beneath a tree by their associates. Turn to them in prayer...

ACTING FOR KṚṢṆA

If you want to change the quality of your spiritual life, a good place to start is by consciously acting for Kṛṣṇa. Everything you use to accomplish a task has been given to you by Kṛṣṇa – your intelligence, body, mind and other resources. As devotees we want to acknowledge this through our consciousness and actions. When you purposefully engage your abilities in Kṛṣṇa’s service and don’t deny that they were given to you by him, he will reciprocate by giving you more abilities and resources for service.

