

Name—an Incarnation.

BY SWAMI SRI HARI BABAJI.

नाममकारि बहुधा निजसर्वशक्ति-
स्तत्रार्पिता नियमितः स्मरणे न कालः ।
एतादृशी तव कृपा भगवन्ममापि
दुर्दैवमीदृशमिहाजनि नानुरागः ॥

'For the welfare of mankind, out of sheer compassion Thou hast, O Lord, incarnated Thyself in Thy Names surcharged with Thy full power and potency. There is no restriction of time, capacity or condition for their remembrance. So bounteous and beatific is Thy mercy ! Yet how unlucky of us to have no sincere love for Thy Names' !

Inestimable is the glory of the Divine Name. It is as unfathomable as the glory of the Divine Himself. The Name is *Brahma*. The Lord with His infinite glory and grandeur comes to this earth in human semblance simply in order to help us in our onward march to the Supreme Goal and to bless His Bhaktas. For the same mission is His incarnation in the shape of the Name. This incarnation of God in the form of the Name is fuller in the *Kali Yuga* than in any other age. Such is the infinite mercy of the Lord for the fallen and helpless beings of this age. A man who is in deep sleep wakes up when we call out his name and responds to our call. Will not, then, He who is all-pervading, all-powerful, ever wakeful and all-knowing, nay, who is ever waiting to hear the wail and cry of the poor and the distressed, run to our rescue when we call Him by His Name, just as a cow runs to its new-born calf ?

HOW TO MUTTER THE DIVINE NAME ?

Never mind, if in the beginning you do not feel within yourself an

unflinching faith in, unflinching devotion to, or integral love for the Name, or if you are unable to concentrate your mind on the same. The Name Itself will induce all these virtues in you and will qualify you for the highest Bliss. Once an aspirant enquired of a sage as to how to practise *Nāma-Japa*. The sage in a most fanciful manner replied "Bāṇi-Bāṇa ! Bāṇi-Bāṇā !! Bāṇi-Bāṇa !!!" The purport of this queer expression was this: In the beginning you may not have a liking for the Name, its repetition may appear to you a burdensome task like the twisting of a rope (*Bāṇa*). You should go on with the practice, however tiresome and tedious it may appear to you at first sight. By and by it will become a habit (*Bāṇa*) with you and you will find it difficult to do without it. And ultimately the Name will enter your very soul just like an arrow (*Bāṇa*). It will pierce your heart and enter into the very depths of your being. The eight sattvic Bhāvas will then appear in your person and you will have attained the object of your life.

Devotees from different parts of Bengal used to flock at Puri to have a *Darśana* of Śrī Gourāṅga Mahāprabhu. Once some devotees approached Śrī Mahāprabhu with a request to point out the characteristics of a true Vaiṣṇava. Mahāprabhu replied, "Know him to be a Vaiṣṇava who takes the Name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa even once in twenty-four hours." In the following year when a devotee put the same question again, Mahāprabhu said, "He alone is a Vaiṣṇava who is absorbed in repeating the Name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa all day and night without interruption." Again, in the following year the devotees

put the same question, on which Śrī Chaitanyadeva replied, "He alone is a *Vaiṣṇava* whose very sight reminds us of the Name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

PRACTISE THE NAME WITHOUT
ANY SELFISH MOTIVE AND ONLY
WITH A SENSE OF DUTY

Once it so happened that the prophet Mohammed came wandering to a hermitage in a wilderness and halted there for the night. The hermit went out to beg food for the prophet. The latter noticed a slab of stone lying there with the impressions of hands and feet, knees and head imprinted thereon. On enquiry a disciple of the hermit told him that the hermit said his prayers on that slab and the repetition of the practice had left impressions on the same. Mohammed was taken by surprise when he heard this and admired the devotion of the hermit whose unremitting practice had made impressions on the hard stone. Surely his heart, too, must have been deeply impressed, he thought and rebuked himself saying that he had never felt such an attraction for prayer. But Mohammed was taken aback when he heard a voice from heaven saying that not a single prayer of that hermit had been accepted till then. Meanwhile the mendicant returned from the village and wondered why the prophet looked so gloomy and dejected. Mohammed told him all that had passed during his absence. Hearing this, the mendicant fainted out of joy and remained in that trance for the whole night. At day-break, when the hermit returned to his senses, Mohammed asked him why he felt so overjoyed the previous night on which the hermit replied, "Although you say none of my prayers have been accepted by the Lord, I feel gratified to learn that He is cognizant of my prayers. It is enough for me. The rest I leave to God. If He accepts my

prayers, so much the better; and if He does not, I am equally happy. I have done my duty by obeying His commandments. As to the acceptance of prayer, I wish there were none whose prayer is accepted after mine."

NAME—THE ONLY MEANS TO
CONQUER DEATH

Once I was overtaken by a virulent type of influenza. There was little hope of recovery for me. I was lying alone in my cottage and thought my end was near. Accordingly, I made up my mind to get up and take to the repetition of 'Harināma' in right earnest. In utter disregard of my bodily suffering I got up and began to mutter:

हरे राम हरे राम राम हरे हरे ।
हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे ॥

I had hardly repeated the *Mantra* five or six times before I began to feel light and all of a sudden my whole being was plunged in such a deep joy that there was practically no trace of any disease left in my body. I was simply wonder-struck and ran for very joy till I reached a village two miles from my cottage and had my ablutions and prayers there.

NAME HELPS YOU HERE AS
WELL AS HEREAFTER

A spiritually-minded friend of mine once told me of a dream in which he saw his late uncle in a miserable plight and great suffering. I asked him not to worry and invited him to hold a group *Kirtana* of the Divine Name then and there for the benefit of the departed soul. Many of us, accordingly, assembled on that very spot and began vociferously to chant the Divine Name shaking off all reserve and clapping our hands with great fervour. The *Kirtana* lasted for about an hour. That very night, the

gentleman again saw in a dream that his uncle was now quite happy.

There was another friend of mine whose father died of leprosy. His father had some reverence for the Name but no respect for Sādhus and Mahātmās. My friend had no means to perform the obsequies of his father according to the Shastraic injunctions. He was, therefore, in a great fix. Eventually it struck him that there was no ritual higher than *Nāma-Sankīrtana*. Accordingly the whole party of his friends began to chant the Divine Name in a chorus at the top of their voice, clapping their hands with great fervour. While thus engaged in the *Kīrtana*, two or three members of the party felt as though they saw the deceased father of their friend being taken in a celestial car to the highest heaven. This incident went a long way to entrench the faith of all those who were present there in the efficacy of the Divine Name.*

NAME—THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF ALL DIVINE VIRTUES

In certain villages it has been observed that even without any religious discourse or sermon the villagers have developed divine virtues merely as a result of *Harināma-Sankīrtana*.

They have given up pernicious habits and have begun to love one another as real brethren.

There was a barber friend of mine. He had faith in the Name from the very beginning and he used to read the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Goswami Tulasidas. He would frequently go into a trance while engaged in *Kīrtana*. His eyeballs turned upwards, he would repeatedly shout the Name of Kṛṣṇa, till he dropped down senseless on the ground. His life was completely transformed. He used to have visions of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His Divine Līlās in dreams as well as in waking life.

It is, therefore, the foremost duty and the highest goal of every individual to develop a taste and liking for the Divine Name. In the words of Mahāprabhu Chaitanya-deva: "When will that blessed moment arrive when tears of joy will well out from these eyes, my voice will be choked with deep emotion and the hairs of my body will stand on their ends while uttering Thy blessed Name, O beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa?"

नयनं गलदश्रुधारया वदनं गद्गदरुद्धया गिरा ।
पुलकैर्निश्चितं वपुः कदा तव नामग्रहणे भविष्यति ॥

(Translated)

Recite the Name of Hari: this is the only substantial thing in this world, says Daya Bai.
By devoting oneself to Hari one becomes Hari Himself, the impenetrable mystery is solved to him.
By the mere recital of the Name numerous sins are wiped out
O mind, stick to the Name of Hari with a stubborn resolve.

—Daya Bai.

* This should not be taken to mean that it is not necessary to perform obsequies and other religious rites enjoined by the Sastras, such as *Sraddha*, etc. The Divine Name is too precious to be used as a substitute for any of these worldly rites. Of course, every householder should look upon it as a sacred duty to chant the Divine Name before a dying member of his family so that the latter may hear it. This is the great service one can do to the departing soul inasmuch as it helps him in attaining the *summum bonum* of earthly existence. *Nāma-Sankīrtana* will prove highly beneficial for the departed soul even if it is performed along with other obsequial rites enjoined by the Sastras. —Editor.