

The Ten 'Namaparadhas'.

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सन्निरासति नामवैभवकथा श्रीशेखरोभेदधी-
रश्रद्धा गुरुशास्त्रवेदवचने नाम्यर्थवादभ्रमः ।
नामास्तीति निषिद्धवृत्तिविहितत्यागौ च धर्मान्तरैः
साम्यं नामजपे शिवस्य च हरेर्नामापराधा दश ॥

The efficacy of the repetition of divine name is described in scriptures at several places. This is evident from the enumeration of *Kirtana* as one of the ninefold devotional methods of adoring the Almighty. Above all, in the tenth chapter of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*, while enumerating His manifold manifestations the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says: 'यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि' thus showing the superiority of 'जपयज्ञ' (muttering the Divine Name) over all other sacrificial rites. Out of numerous sayings scattered all over the scriptures we shall content ourselves by quoting only one or two statements to show that the efficacy of repeating the Divine Name is supported by scriptural authority.

प्रमादात् कुर्वतां कर्म प्रच्यवेताध्वरेषु यत् ।
स्मरणादेव तद्विष्णोः सम्पूर्णं स्यादिति श्रुतिः ॥

The substance is this—to err is human in religious rites, as it is everywhere, and therefore, if at the end of a ritual the performer resorts to the devotional remembrance of the Lord Viṣṇu, his flaws inadvertently committed during the performance of the rite are repaired and his performance turns into a perfection. The above is a quotation from *Sūta-Saṁhitā*:—

'नमः शिवाय' मन्त्रोऽयं वारोषा वशवर्तिनी ।
अहो मोहस्य माहात्म्यं नरकं यान्ति मानवाः ॥

The 'नमः शिवाय' (Obeisance to Śiva) *Mantra* occurs in the Vedas. The author of the above verse figuratively shows the efficacy of this *Mantra* as follows:—

The *Mantra* is before our eyes and conspicuous and the tongue is at our beck and call; oh how wonderful is the power of Ignorance that men go to hell in spite of such a handy equipment.

The meaning is made more clear in the verse quoted below:—

षडक्षरेण मन्त्रेण पुष्पमेकमपि द्विजः ।
लिङ्गस्योपरि संदध्यान्न स भूयोऽभिजायते ॥

If one belonging to the twice-born classes offers even once a flower to the Divinity with the recital of the above *Mantra*, which with the letter 'ॐ' prefixed to it makes itself six-lettered, rebirth becomes a past history with him.

A famous verse in Hindi, which is on the lips of even a man in the street, says:—

रामनाम सब जपत है, दस ऋत जपै न कोय ।
एक बार दस ऋत जपै, कोटि यज्ञ फल होय ॥

The couplet denotes a higher aim than mere recitals. 'दस ऋत' means avoiding the ten faults or pitfalls the reciter is liable to, which rob him of the full fruit of his labour, which is equivalent to that accruing from a crore of sacrificial rites and which is acquired through a single recital.

Let us now explain these ten pitfalls in order as below:—

(1) VITUPERATION

This may be directed against noble persons or high scriptural authority or the sacred Mantras, in short, against anything that is good.

If the recital is accompanied with this fault it fails in its mission of propitiating the Almighty.

(2) DILATING ON THE EFFICACY
OF THE SACRED NAME BEFORE
THOSE WHO HAVE NO
FAITH IN IT

This has a derogatory effect on the innate power of the recital. There is a story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* being recited before a mere worldly man. At the end the fellow expresses his utmost satisfaction to the reciter but doubts as to who was the devil—Rāma or Rāvaṇa ? This came as a shock to the reciter who calmly gave the following reply: "Well, my friend, it was neither Rāma nor Rāvaṇa who was the devil, it is I who am the devil inasmuch as I recited the epic before you." The following verse describes the feelings of dietary articles served to a good or bad man as the case may be:—

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने श्रोत्रिये गृहमागते ।
क्रीडन्त्योषधयः सर्वा यास्यामो परमां गतिम् ॥
अष्टशौचव्रताचारे विधे वेदविवर्जिते ।
रोदित्यन्नं दीयमानं किं मया दुष्कृतं कृतम् ॥

The substance is that dietary articles rejoice when falling in the hands of the pious and weep when they get into the hands of the sinful. This shows that the recital of mantras or divine names gets vitiated and loses much of its value when performed before those unfitted to hear it.

(3) SEEING DIVERSITY IN THE
LORD OF LAKṢMĪ AND ĪŚĀ
(VIṢṆU AND ŚIVA):

Differentiation between Śiva and Viṣṇu is a great hindrance in spiritual progress; nay, partiality to one at the expense of the other leads rather towards degradation than uplift.

शिवस्य हृदयं विष्णुर्विष्णोश्च हृदयं शिवः ।
एतयान्तरं मत्वा रौरवं नरकं व्रजेत् ॥

Viṣṇu is the heart of Śiva and Śiva the heart of Viṣṇu. Differentiation between them leads one to the worst hell.

For this the devotee should cultivate the mentality as depicted below:—

सीयराममय सब जग जानी । करौ प्रनाम जेरि जुग पानी ॥

Realizing the presence of Rāma and Śitā in every object, I bow with folded hands to all. A devotee should realize his object of worship as pervading the whole universe and leaving nothing for him to despise. The noble and saintly Maheśwara Bhaṭṭa has beautifully said in the verse given below:—

ये ये भक्तजना निजेष्टशरणाः श्रेष्ठं सदोपासते
ते जल्पन्ति मृधान्यदैवतमिदं मन्यामहे नो वयम् ।
असार्कं तु शशाङ्कशेखरपदद्वन्द्वैकनिष्ठात्मनां
सर्वं खल्विदमम्बिकेश्वरमयं चित्ते जगद्भासते ॥

We cannot approve of the mischievous attitude of those who term other deities as worthless or powerless in comparison with the deities of their belief. Having secured a firm footing at the feet of the moon-crowned deity (Śiva), we realize all manifestations to be His. If nothing is left beside the Lord of *Ambikā* (Pārvatī), where shall we find the object of any malignant attack ? All devotees should develop such a state of mind.

(4) WANT OF FAITH IN THE
INITIATOR

This is also a great drawback. One ought to think twice before he selects a *Guru*. The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* predicates two attributes of the *Guru*—'श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्'. A *Guru* must be well-versed in the scriptures and firmly established in *Brahma*. A casual selection unmindful of these two qualifications often leads to repentance and disbelief. The choice must fall on one who has thorough knowledge of the Vedas and their subsidiary sciences and is free from lust and anger. Lack of faith in such an initiator results in the loss of efficacy of the *Mantra* communicated by him.

(5) LACK OF FAITH IN THE
PRESCRIBED SCRIPTURAL
METHODS

The Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Chapter XVI
of the Divine Song (*Bhagavadgītā*) says:—

यः शास्त्रविधिसुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥

A man cannot attain the supreme stage nor happiness nor any spiritual power who acts wantonly and does not follow the prescribed scriptural methods. This secret can be explained by a common illustration from our daily life. Suppose a man wishing to post a letter encloses an anna piece with it instead of affixing a stamp of that value outside, the result would be that the anna piece would be pocketed by some unscrupulous hand of the Postal Department and the letter torn to pieces. Any other deviation will send the letter to the dead-letter office instead of to the addressee. The reason is that the sender has not followed the prescribed method for communication. Unritualistic methods may perhaps produce an effect reverse to that desired by the performer. Hence the pronouncement from the divine lips in the verse quoted above.

(6) LACK OF FAITH IN THE VEDAS

The scriptures unanimously declare that Vedas are the origin of all Dharmas—“वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम्”. Want of faith in the root will decidedly go to induce in us an attitude of disbelief towards its subsidiary branches and will ultimately lead us to discredit the efficacy of *Nāma-Japa*, the very subject matter of this article.

(7) SMELLING EXAGGERATION
IN THE EULOGY OF 'NAME'

‘रामेति द्वयक्षरं नाम जपन्मुक्तिमवाप्नुयात् ।’

A devotee constantly reciting the two-syllabled name of Rāma attains salvation. One who smells exaggeration in the above eulogy of *Nāma-Japa*

decidedly falls short of the desideratum. It is a drawback.

(8-9) TRANSGRESSION OF THE
EXPRESS INJUNCTIONS OF THE
ŚĀSTRAS AND PURSUIT OF
FORBIDDEN PRACTICES

If a man tells lies, practices violence or takes recourse to other immoral practices and feels secure under the belief that recital of the Divine Name is going to absolve him of all sins, he surely labours under delusion. *Nāma-Japa* used as a license for any wanton act is not conducive of beneficial results.

(10) PLACING NĀMA-JAPA ON AN
EQUAL FOOTING WITH OTHER
DHARMAS

Parallelisms drive us into the deep and unfathomable mire of sophistry. *Nāma-Japa* is one of the processes of concentration and divided concentration is no concentration at all.

हरे राम हरे राम राम हरे हरे ।

हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे ॥

The *Mantra* cited above occurs in the *Kali-Santarāṅgopaniṣad*. It consists of sixteen names of the Almighty. The maximum number of repetitions prescribed for this *Mantra* is three and a half crores. Now if anybody were to replace one of these names by another name adopted by another religion feeling that the Almighty is one everywhere, that would not be conducive of the desired result.

These are the ten pitfalls to be avoided in *Nāma-Japa* so as to enable one to derive full benefit from its practice. According to the canons of Indian Logic a cause which is free from all counteracting influences, becomes capable of producing the desired effect; so it is here. These ten pitfalls are to be avoided in order to derive full benefit from 'Nāma-Japa'. In the end let a devotee remember that 'Nāma-Japa' itself is a means to atone for all these faults.