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Nam-bhajan

Prem alone is the purpose of the life of *Jivas*. *Bhava* (soul's feeling) develops into *Prem*. Turning their face towards Krishna, the more *jivas* progress, the more do they approach the temple of *Prem*. Thus in considering the rights of *Prem*, we meet at the out-set with two sorts of circumstances – one is an intense longing for the unattained *Prem*, the other is the stage when the pedestal of *Prem* is already reached. There is no higher stage beyond the latter one – an incessant *Rasa*, is an undivided unique *tatva* of that region. Devotees with utter craving for *Prem* who are still on the way to it, are again divided into two classes according to their love of seclusion or bustle – the one are called *Viviktanandis* who are close followers of approved usages, the other are known as *Gosthyanandis* and are ever happy in preaching. Deep meditation on Godhead is the discipline of *Premi-Bhaktas* and glorifying or singing the Name of Krishna is their preaching.

In the state when there is an intense longing for the unattained *Prem*, the *Premi-Bhaktas* are exclusively devoted to Krishna – utter self-surrender marks them out. The *Shrimat-Bhagavata* and *Geeta* have very highly eulogised such refugees. If a devotee does not take absolute shelter under the cool shade of the gracious Feet of Krishna, why speak of *Prem*? He remains quite in the dark even about *Bhava*. A self-surrendering devotee should accept things that are only favourable to *Prem-Bhakti*, and should deny everything, whatever it be, that is antagonistic or unfavourable to it. Such a devotee's only belief is that Krishna is the only Protector, that nothing else but Krishna can save or protect him. He has not the least doubt about the fact that Krishna alone protects all. Devotees firmly and sincerely believe themselves to be very humble and insignificant. The faith of an earnest and exclusive devotee is that he himself can do nothing, that not even a straw moves without the will of Krishna.

Extremely self-surrendering devotees prefer most exclusively embracing *Sri Nama* to every other features of devotion. They have more intense appetite for singing and meditating upon *Sri Nama* than to anything else. Of all the means of *Bhajan* the Name of *Bhagavan* is most purely Spiritual. In describing the Absolute Duties, the *Sri-Hari-bhaktivilas* has spoken of the glories of singing and contemplating on *Nama* as the best – it has been given the foremost place. The *Shastras* declare that there is not the least difference between Krishna and *Krishna-Nama*, because the real Nature of *Nama* manifests Himself as the “*Chaitanya-Rasa-Vigraha*” of Krishna.

Try they must to realise their own *Chit-swarup* who desire to realise the form of Krishna and the form of *Nama*. The practiser of *Bhakti* can never be dexterous in his God-adoration so long as he does not realise spiritual truth. So how can he attain his object of pursuit? The attainment of an absolute conception of spiritual truths causes the amelioration of *Bhajan*. Here we shall say something on this subject.

Many a time we have told before (in *Chaitanya Shikshamrita*) with quotations from the *Shastras* that every *Jiva* is a spirit in molecule, the residence of Krishna is a spiritual Kingdom, Krishna is the spiritual Sun, the devotion to Krishna is a

spiritual inclination, and *Krishna-Nama* is “*Chit-Rasa-Vigraha*”. Now, we venture to show the relation between Spirit and devotees who are extremely anxious for *Prem*, and then shall show the means to the attainment of the highest bliss of the soul. If we have spiritual merit earned in previous births transcendental felicity we be enkindled in our heart. We have no appetite (*Ruchi*) for the knowledge of *Brahman* which is restricted to realisation of mere *Chit* only; for, spiritual sportive pastimes have no place in it.

The Saviour of the Iron age, Sri-Krishna-Chaitanya, declares the *Vedas* to be the only judge and shows the nine *Prameyas* from it. There is a broad discussion on it in the *Shrimat Bhagavata*. The *Vedas* have proved *Jivas* to be spiritual atomic parts of the Deity. *Jivas* are like rays from the Sun, Krishna; so the spiritual form of *jivas* must be identified with the spiritual form of Godhead. But the difference lies in the fact that Krishna may be compared with the full Sun, while *jivas* are His innumerable rays. Krishna is the Lord of lords – *Jivas* are His eternal servants. There is no denying the fact that the residential Home of Krishna is in *Paravyom* or *Goloka*, Which is all spiritual. *Vaikuntha*, *Chit-jagat*, etc. all refer to that spiritual region. The *Bajashaneyya Upanishad* speaks of the form of Krishna to be purely spiritual; the *Shwetashwatara Upanishad* describes the eternal powers of Krishna, Who is superior to the best and higher than the highest; the *Mundaka Upanishad* shows “*Bhakti*” to be *Chit Rasa*; and coming to conceive Krishna to be the Life of lives, the wise, after discarding all garrulity, dry wisdom and vain arguments, dive deep to see the bottom of their soul – they, after realising the Deity by dint of pure intuition, run after devotion. He who does this is a *Brahmin*; he who leaves this world without knowing Him is, so to say, a parsimonious fellow. But the fortunate who departs from this earth after realising the Him is alone a *Brahmin*, i.e. a *Vaishnava-devotee* of Krishna. Such has been shown to be the nature of *Bhakti* or Devotion:

O Ye Maitreya! the soul alone is to be seen, heard, reflected and meditated upon, and realised by spiritual organs. All is then beyond any doubt known to us. That soul (Krishna) is dearer than the son, dearer than wealth, for He is Omniscient. Things that are sense-pleasing are never worth endearment – from the pleasure of the Great Soul all joy proceeds. Thus the eternal relation of the eternal felicity between Krishna and Jiva is Prem.

What exact connection does exist between this manifested and visible mundane world and the spiritual Sphere? In going to search after spiritual truths, more often than not we are deluded; after deep contemplation and discrimination we conclude spirit to be something opposite of matter; pressing our worldly reasoning too far, we leave *Chit-Rasa* to the back-ground and are satisfied with an imaginative inarticulate and incomplete conception of spiritual *Brahman*. This is only an imagination of *Chit-swarup* of *Brahman*; in such a stage, *Brahman* is immutable, incorporeal invisible or formless, without attributes and dry of *Prem*. This uncommon perception is like the Sky-flower! And being unable to know the name, form, attributes and pastimes or diversions of that *Chit-swarup* only, we turn to be inactive. Hence it is that all portents of *jivas* come to pass due to this dry wisdom. This is well illustrated in the conversation between *Vyasa* and *Narada*.

It is clear from the above that you never can know the spiritual sportive pastimes of *Para-Brahman* if you are dazzled by mere *Chit-swarup* of *Brahman* which is only a semblance of the eternal light of *Chit*. Brother! look forward!! Enter the Kingdom of Godhead after dashing through the brilliancy of *Chit* pure and simple – there you will be able to realise the spiritual pastimes of Godhead, then you will be able to taste the ambrosia of an incessant *Brahma-Rasa*. No longer will your soul remain wooden-like. The name, form, attributes and *Lila* of the Supreme Being are manifested not by any earthly light but by a spiritual flame. The sun, the moon, stars lighting and fire of this earth are quite unfit to give light to the other spiritual horizon. This spiritual light which is far beyond worldly lights brightens that Region. A perverted reflection of that light do we think as supplying us with light; but in fact, it does not. While describing *Brahmapur* (the region of *Brahman*), the *Chhandogya Upanishad* gives us a comprehensive knowledge of it. The spiritual kingdom as displayed by the spiritual light is an ideal to this base earth. There is not the least tinge of baseness; while on the contrary only an all-pervading daintiness is its sweet affair. The fourteen mundane worlds only a perverted reflection of that Sphere; the gross sun is a reflection of that light and its subtle reflection is seen in the mundane rays of dry wisdom arising from mind, conscience and consciousness. Our gross senses believe the gross sun to be a flash of lustre, and we are proud of the earthly knowledge which is gained by dint of the eight processes of Yoga that are actions of the subtle intellect, conscience and ego. All these are seemingly natural workings of engrossed *jivas*. Listening to the advice of *Narada* while *Dwaipayana Rishi* was fully absorbed in the single and natural deep meditation of the soul, he fully and clearly saw the name, form, attributes and pastimes of the Supreme Person and also could know *Maya*, the shadow of *Parashakti*, to be shelterless to the Absolute Truth – could understand *anartha* of *Jivas*, the atomic *chittatvas*, who are engrossed, fascinated and enslaved by *Maya*. And further coming to realise that such *Jivas* can come to perceive their own personal forms if absorbed in a profoundly meditative *Bhakti-yoga*, he compiled the *Shrimat Bhagavata*, which describes the Spiritual pastimes of *Bhagavan*. The forgetfulness of his own eternal form and the Form of Krishna is the foremost *anartha* of a *Jiva*, whence arises his aversion to Krishna and as a result of which he is revolved by the wheel of *Maya* on the path of *Karma*. Thus the world is full of weal and woes. When *Jivas* take shelter under *Bhakti*, after discarding the basely-turned endeavours of the mundane wise reasoning, of the eight processes of Yoga, of the *Karma-margis* (followers of *Karma* or fruitive acts) and of the arguments of the *Sankhya* school of *Jnana-margis* (seekers of dry wisdom) which vainly try to refute things that are not God or His concerns, then alone the pure rays of spiritual intuition are enkindled in them by being naturally absorbed in Divine contemplation; the worldly pleasures then prick them like pinching thorns, and *Krishna-Prem* is awakened in the heart. By these means only, they can be blessed by the grace of Krishna – the Spiritual Sun. No second help is there but this Divine grace to wash off all scrapes of the mind and to progress forward towards the ever-sheeny land of Krishna.

A sincere faith in pure devotion is the root cause of this non-laboured restraint on the senses together with the mind, and confine the soul in a deep contemplation on Godhead. When the happy moment came, *Dwaipayana-Rishi* became doubtful about the rules and methods of *Karma-Kanda* and vain *Jnana-*

Kanda, and in reply to the question of his spiritual master, Sri Narada Goswami, he said,

“O Lord! no doubt I have realised all truth, advised by Thee, still my soul, I know not why it finds no contentment! O Thou Son of Brahma, be kind to tell me the unimaginable and indescribable secret that lurks behind it. I beg this of Thee being greatly troubled at heart.”

Then Narada Goswami replied,

“ O Vyas! you have not striven to give a vivid picture of the pure Spiritual Pastimes of Bhagavan, as you have given a full description in other pursuit, Vedanta-Sutras and Mahabharata of the four main objects of human pursuit, viz. virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation. Thus you enjoy no contentment due to this your shortcoming. Thus you have committed a great and heavy omission by giving too high an eulogy castes and stages to be the soul’s religion of the Jivas. If any one, leaving aside such a conventional religion of the self, engages himself in the service of Hari, and if he slips before reaching the goal, can it for this reason be a calamity to him? If, on contrary, he strictly sticks to that conventional religion being utterly unmindful of Hari-Bhajan, what better exalted goal does it afford?”

It is clear from the above that no second help is there but *Hari-Bhajan*. *Jiva* can attain his highest goal if he embraces *Nama* as a means to *Hari*.

Vyasadeva then following up this *Bhakti-yoga* absorbed himself in an easy meditation of Godhead. “Easy” is used here to show that devotion to Krishna is most innate in *jivatma*. As it is an inherent and eternal religion of *Jivas*, it is called the “easy” universal religion of every *jiva*. Its workings develop in the following manner:-

When *Jivas* come to realise that the path of *Karma* does not give them eternal good, whether it be the eighteen inferior *Karma-yagna* or the eight subtle processes of *Yagna* neither can ever lead them to the highest goal – the servitude to Krishna – which is their souls’ religion, or again when they are fully convinced that there is not the least chance to attain perpetual felicity by mundane wisdom or limited knowledge that aims at the Spiritual Kingdom – both gained by endeavour of the subtle frame of mind, ego, etc. – finding no shore to catch, they thus, by the grace of *Sadhu* and *Guru* or Spiritual preceptor, cry out to Krishna from the deepest recesses of their heart,

“O Thou Krishna! O Ye Restorer of the fallen! Thine eternal servant though I am, I am cast into the deep abyss of the world and am badly dashed from shore to shore by its frowning waves of troubles and tribulations. Take me up, O my Lord! to the shade of the cool dust of Thy Lotus Feet! O, have mercy on

this wretched self!!”

Then the All-merciful Lord lovingly taketh all *Jivas* up to His Feet.

When with sincere thrills of joy and tears trickling down the cheeks they constantly chant, hear and remember the Name of Krishna they gradually reach the stage of *Bhava*, Appearing in the heart, Krishna, erases their sports out and out from their mind, and thus cleansing their heart graciously blesseth them with His own *Prem*. Extreme humbleness and utter devotion are necessary to call Krishna to the heart. Then, when earthly knowledge, reasoning and strivings are completely burnt to ashes, the soul's eyes can perceive *Bhagavan* and His associated counterparts. If by discarding the company of *Asat* or dishonest fellows (*Asat* literally means “non-existence” hence those who are unusually attached to the fair-sex and those who are non-devotees of Krishna both are called *Asat*, for things other than Krishna are transitory), one embraces the company of the good or *Sat* (opposite of *Asat*), he ere long gains a firm reliance and then through the stages of *Nistha* etc. reaches the ladder of *Bhava*. Those whose hearts are crooked will beyond any doubt, run downstairs to Hell.

The fortunate ones who earnestly long to ascend the terrace of *Prem*, do sincerely and incessantly chant the Name of Krishna in the company of *Sadhus*. They do not have any appetite for any other feature of devotion. When in a short time by the grace of *Nama* the heart becomes closely attentive, the fruits of religious forbearance, control over sensual appetites, religious observances, withholding the breath by way of religious austerity, abstract religious contemplation, steady abstraction of the mind and indifference to external impressions are very easily gained without paying the least heed to all these. *Nama* alone is a complete suspension of the fleeting mental operations. The more the heart is pellucid, the more diverse pastimes of the Spiritual Kingdom play in it. The flow of the milk of this felicity is so very fast running that no other means can give even the smallest drop of it. *Jivas* have no other wished-for-wealth than the grace of Krishna.

Nama is Spiritual. Wisdom, vows, meditation, abnegation, mental quietness, virtue, contrivance – none of these can ever equal *Nama*. Know it for certain that *Nama* is the highest salvation, *Nama* is the highest end, *Nama* is the noblest final beatitude, *Nama* is eternally existing, *Nama* alone is the supremest devotion, *Nama* is the highest intellect, *Nama* is toe best *Priti* and *Nama* alone is the brightest remembrance. *Nama* is the seed and *Nama* is the fruit to *Jivas* – *Nama* is their Lord and *Nama* alone is the supremest object of their worship. *Nama* is their best Preceptor.

The *Vedas* have described the spirituality of the *Nama* of Krishna to be the highest truth.

“O Lord! reasonable judged we have Thy Name to be higher than the highest and so do we chant Thy Nama. Nama-Bhajan is not bound by any rule – Nama is beyond all virtuous acts – He is Spiritual – He is virility and lustre in a person. All the Vedas have been manifested from this Nama. Nama is bliss, Nama is Ananda. We can excellently be devoted to Him. Nama is worship and Nama is to be worshipped; Thy Feet are to be

held in veneration. Repeatedly we fall prostrate at those Thy lotus-feet and anoint the body with the pollen thereof. In order to lead the soul to its highest stage, devotees mutually discuss on Nama and sing His glories. They believe Thy Name to be Chaitanya in person, and always sing and hear Kirtan which is identical with Thy Nama (name) – they are purified by it. Nama alone is sat or ever-existing. The essence of the Vedas is Nama, the Absolute Truth, Whose Form is Sat-Chit-Ananda (Sat – ever-existing, Chit – all-knowing, and Ananda – all-bliss). O Vishnu! it is only by the grace of Thy name that we are capable of offering hymns to Thee. So we should adore and pray to Thy Nama alone.”

In His own “Eight glorious Precepts” Shriman Mahaprabhu has spoken of the glories of *Nama*; He has also given a glimpse of the gradual steps of *Nama-Bhajan* in those Eight precepts. His “Consider thyself humbler than the grass” *shloka* hints at how to adore *Nama* after avoiding the ten profanations; His “Man or money I want not” *shloka* speaks of the selflessness of *Nama-Bhajan* in a devotional spirit – devotion unactuated by any lustful motive; “O Thou Son of Nanda” *shloka* tells us how to make a plaintive report to the Lord; the last two *shlokas* describe the processes of *Vraja-Bhajan* where one loves Krishna to serve Him either in *Sambhoga* (union) or in *Vipralambha Rasa* (deeper union in separation) or in both after being completely and spontaneously attached to *Srimati (Radha)*. The *Shastras* have eulogised so highly and so often the glories of *Nama* that their name is legion – to describe them is to write a big volume like the “*Sri Hari Bhakti Vilas*”. So we have hardly any more space in this small volume to describe them at length. Thus here putting a stop to the glories of *Nama*, we attempt a very short survey of the processes of *Nama-Bhajan*.

Devotees who are desirous of ascending the terrace of *Prem*, should remember a few points even before entering the field of *Nama-Bhajan*. Firstly, they should know it for certain that the form of Krishna, the form of Krishna’s Name, the form of the service to Krishna and the form of Krishna’s servants are eternally free – are eternally spiritual! Krishna, His abode and His paraphernalia are all spiritual and beyond the grasp of *Maya*, the illusory energy. No mundane consideration exists in *Seva* or service. The seat, room, garden, forest, the *Yamuna* and every other thing of Krishna are spiritual and hence untouchable by matter. They are further aware of the fact that this their belief is not a blind worldly faith – it is absolutely true and eternal. The exact forms of all these do not in truth manifest on this earth. Such ideas may perpetually reign in the pure heart of pure devotees. Here, the fruit of all these spiritual practices is self-realisation. Those who have realised the form of Krishna as well as of their own self, do ere long attain *Vastu Siddhi* (enter the eternal pastimes of Krishna in the Spiritual Kingdom and gain personal service of Krishna). Here in this world, devotees can only get a glimpse of those immaterial things. The first stage to it is freedom from the bondage of *Maya* – the climax is *Prem*.

The realisation of truths that are beyond the grasp of matter is called *Swarup-siddhi*. This is true knowledge of the relationship between Krishna and *Jivas*, and when this is acquired, the endeavour for *Prem* as a means and *Prem* as an object of

pursuit are gained. The spiritual region of Krishna, His spiritual Name, His divine attributes, and spiritual pastimes – the necessary object of pursuit – come under *Prem*. This is delineated in the *Prasno-Upanishad*.

Nama has been accepted on all hands to be an Incarnation of Krishna on this earth. A word though He looks to be, still by His unimaginable powers He is Spiritual and is a special Incarnation of Krishna. As Krishna and His Name are identical, Krishna has descended to the earth as *Nama*; so Krishna *Nama* is the first introduction to Krishna. With determination to reach Krishna, *Jivas* must first accept the Name of Krishna. In going to determine the significance and origin of *Hari-Nama*, *Sri Gopalguru Goswami*, the dearest disciple of *Sri Swarup Damodar Goswami*, writes:

“Blessed are they no doubt who utter

*Hare-Krishna Hare-Krishna Krishna-Krishna Hare-Hare
Hare-Rama Hare-Rama Rama-Rama Hare-Hare*

*even indifferently (from Agni-puran); those who chant are free
from every spot of sin (from the Brahmanda-puran); Sri
Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu simple collected them
together. These Hare-Krishna uttering, coming out from the
lips of Sri Chaitanya, inundated the whole world with the
flood of Prem; Glory be to this Nama by His will!”*

Hence, *Sriman Mahaprabhu*, as mentioned in the *Chaitanya-Charitamrita* and the *Chaitanya-Bhagavata*, Himself sang and taught *jivas* to count these sixteen names of thirty-two letters on beads of *Tulasi*. *Sri Gopalguru Goswami* explains these sixteen names in the following way:

At the utterance of *Hari*, all sins are washed off from the heart of the wicked. As the flame will burn the finger even though unconsciously you thrust it into the fire, similarly even the very casually pronounced *Hari-nama* will burn every bit of sin in you. That *Hari-nama* after bringing the Absolute Truth, whose form is *Chitananda*, to light, destroys *Avidya* or illusion and its works.

All this is the work of *Hari-nama*. Or as He takes off the three-fold pangs of miseries, distresses and afflictions, hence He is called *Hari* (lit., to still away). Or *Hari* is so called because He drives out all the three-fold distresses of every animate and inanimate being, or because the mind of the fourteen worlds is charmed by hearing and singing the Spiritual Attributes of *Hari* or as He, by His exceeding beauties before the loveliness and beauty of a thousand Cupids hide their face in shame, fascinates all men and incarnations, He is called *Hari*; and in the vocative case of *Hari*, it is *Ha-re*. Or again, according to the views of the *Brahma-Samhita*, – She Who fascinates the mind of *Hari* by Her *Prem-Swarup*, attachments and love is *Hara* or in other words *Srimati Radhika*, daughter of *Vrishabhanu*, and in the vocative case of *Hara*, it is *Ha-re*.

The meaning of Krishna according to the views of *Agama* is derived from and means that this Krishna Who is *Ananda* in Form and attracts every object is *Parabrahman*. Krishna when in the case of address is also Krishna. The *Agama* says,

“O Ye Goddess! all guilt and sinful motives vanish from the heart at the very sound of Ra and the door in the form of Ma is attached to it in order to shut out those evils from re-entering the heart. This together gives us Rama.”

The *Puranas* have further said that Krishna, Who is cleverer than the cleverest, more witty than the greatest wit, Who is the Presiding Deity of all spiritual pastimes and Who is eternally engaged in spiritual dalliance with *Sri-Radha* is termed as *Rama*.

Devotees who thirst for *Prem* and are on the way to it sing and realise this *Hare-Krishna-Nama* by counting. While chanting and remembering the Name, incessantly they remember His spiritual characteristics by way of explaining to the mind the meanings of *Nama*. By this means their heart is very soon freed from every spot of scrapes and becomes pure and stainless; and with the morning-twilight of *Nama* as the heart is purified by constant remembrance, *Nama* dawns in the horizon of the pellucid heart with full shining rays.

Those who have accepted *Nama* are either self-realised devotees or are still trotting onward to self-realisation. Of these, the latter class of devotees are divided according to their early and advanced stages. Devotees, besides these, who are eternally free, no more confound the soul with the body, never identify themselves with body and mind. Devotees in their early stage begin to chant the Name by a fixed number, and as they gradually increase the counting, they come to a stage when their tongue stops not for a moment from singing *Nama*. Though choleric tongued by *Avidya*, devotees in their first stage have no taste for *Nama*, still a patient and continuous utterance of the Name proves to be the only remedy; now they feel uneasy if stopped from singing the Name, and a constant and regardful chanting produces a supreme liking for Him. Zeal and earnestness to avoid sacrileges to *Nama* are very needful in the first stage, which can be done only by an avoidance of the worldly minded men and in the company of devotees. Incessant chanting of *Nama* will, when the first flow has passed away, naturally increase a love for the Name and kindness to *Jivas*. In this *Karma*, *Jnana* and *Yoga* have nothing to do. If their workings be even then strong, they may help the devotees of *Nama* in maintaining their livelihood. If *Krishna-Nama* be sung with a firm inclination, it will ere long cleanse the heart and burn *Avidya*; and when *Avidya* vanishes, the brighter illumination of a true unbiased abnegation and a sense of relationship between Krishna and *Jivas* will appear in the heart. Numberless times has this been proved to be true among the wise.

With a happy heart one should recollect the meaning and form of *Nama* and should pray to Krishna with a heart-rending lamentation and this will draw the grace of Krishna which will lead him onward in the path of *Bhajan*; or else, births will pass in vain like *Karmis* and frustrated *Jnanis*.

Those who are bent on *Bhajan* may be divided into two distinct classes. Some bear only the burden, others appreciate the real worth of things. Those who long for enjoyment or for self-destroying salvation and are attached to worldly affairs are only yoked to the heavy load of virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation – they are unaware of the fact that *Prem* is the best sap. So such load-bearers fail to progress in *Bhajan* in spite of their utmost strivings, whereas the essence-seekers

aiming at *Prem-lata* very soon reach the longed-for ultimate. They are called *Prema-rurukshu* (those who earnestly strive for ascending up to the region of *Prem*); they alone can in a very short time ascend up to the sphere of *Prem* or easily become *Paramahamsas*. Thus when he, who so long simple did bear burdens only, learnt to love the Truth in the company of *Sadhu* and soon also turns to long for *Prem*.

Good acts done in previous births, that look forward to devotion, invigorate reverence and a strong desire for the service of Godhead, which reverence and desire turn into an appetite for devotion in the company of devotees. *Bhajan* alone with true devotees awakens *Sadhan-bhakti* that looks forward in expectation of *Prem*. If one adopts the processes of *Sadhan* as directed by true and pure devotees, he will ere long almost turn mad for ascending the stage of *Prem* where it can be tasted; but again this *Prem* will remain far in the back-ground if he associates with half-true devotees and cannot exclusively devote himself to the service of Krishna. In this stage,

- 1) his strong love for the fleeting world,
- 2) his identification of the soul with the material frame of flesh and blood and the subtle body of mind,
- 3) his knowledge of things other than Krishna, and
- 4) his extreme servile attitudes towards *Maya*

do not allow him to regard and love true devotees – crafty thoughts beguile his heart. In this way the practisers of devotion have to remain long confined to the early preliminary rights of devotees in the first stage. Reliance and faith in Krishna they have no doubt, but it is so tender, fickle and so unsteady that they may at any moment be led away by contradictory arguments of conflicting schools and accordingly they may come by the company of so-called preceptors and *Sadhu*. In order to make steady this their perturbed state of mind, they are to learn by the process of deduction (the path of *Sruti*) from a true spiritual preceptor, the true process of worship. A firm faith in *Nama* will be awakened in the heart after worshipping the Deity in this way for a long time; then at last they are bent on *Nama-Bhajan* in the company of devotees.

The case is different with those few lucky ones who have an exclusively firm faith in *Krishna-Nama*; they take, by the unbounded grace of Krishna, shelter at the feet of such a spiritual guide who is an ontologist of *Nama*, i.e. who has realised and does see the *Swarup* (form) of *Nama*. Of the rights of such preceptor, Sri Mahaprabhu says that though formal initiation may not be necessary still a guide is essential in *Nama-bhajan*. The mere letters of *Nama* may be had at any place and from anybody, but the profound and unknown truth that is lurking behind those letters can only be exposed by the grace of a true preceptor who is purely devoted to Krishna; the grace of the spiritual guide alone can pass over from the early twilight of *Nama* to the pure light of it and can save them from the ten sacrileges hindering the pure service of *Nama*.

Those who are devoted to *Nama* have already from the beginning attained the stage of the second class of the *Swarup* (form) of *Nama*. They are practically no longer bound to *Namabhasa* (utterance of name avoiding the ten profanations). Truly speaking, they earnestly desire *Prem* – they are true *Prema-rurukshu*. It is

their religion to have *Prem* for Krishna; they make friendship with true *Vaishnavas*, they cast kind glances at and show compassion to tender and unsteady *Vaishnavas*, and they are indifferent to those who being puffed up with false vanity of their erudition are malicious and inimical to the devotees and *Srimurti* of *Bhagavan*. Failing to distinguish right from wrong, the beginners who are confined to the primary rights only, sometimes fall into deplorable condition; the middle order of *Vaishnavas* who are earnestly anxious for *Prem*, behave differently from the three classes of *Vaishnavas* and soon are blessed with *Prem* or ascend to the highest or superior order of *Vaishnavas*. These middle order of *Vaishnavas* are best to be associated with.

These *Prema-rurukshu* devotees chant and tell their beads three *lacs* of times in twenty four hours, and such felicity they find in *Nama* that a moment they cannot spare without Him; then when no time can be kept in time of sleep, etc. they become incessant in their *Bhajan*. Repeated remembrance of the meaning of *Nama* as explained by *Sri Gopal Guru Goswami* will, by degrees, drive out every scrap from the nature of man and then *Nama* appears in person before the spiritual eyes of the devotee. When the *Swarup* (form) of *Nama* fully appears, it is identical with the spiritual form of Krishna – the appearance of the *Swarup* of *Nama* is the appearance of the *Swarup* of Krishna. The more clearly and purely is *Nama* visible, the more *Bhajan* proceeds in the presence of His *Swarup*, the more do the three elements of which primordial matter is said to be composed, namely *Satwa* (the stand of goodness), *Raja* (the stand of activity) and *Tamo* (the gloom of pride, haughtiness etc. of the lowest inherent principal), disappear and there appear the spiritual attributes of Krishna in the heart of the devotee. Then again, when there is a happy union of the name, form and attributes of Krishna, and devotees in their *Bhajan* see them, the *Lila* (pastimes) of Krishna is awakened by the grace of Krishna in the pure heart as soon as they are absorbed in deep and easy natural meditation. Incessantly then does *Nama* dance on their tongue, the form of Krishna is then visible to their soul's eye, all the attributes of Krishna are then observed in their heart and the bud of *Lila* blooms in their soul while they are buried in meditation. In this stage, five conditions of the practising devotee are to be noticed:

1. *Sravan-dasha*,
2. *Varan-dasha*,
3. *Smaran-dasha*,
4. *Apan-dasha*,
5. *Prapan-dasha*.

The happy mood which the devotee feels at the time of listening to the object of pursuit and the means to hear from the lips of a true Spiritual Preceptor may be called *Sravan-dasha*. In this stage, every bit of knowledge about how to take *Nama* without committing any sacrilege to Him and of the processes and fitness for taking *Nama* is gained; this facilitates the continuity of *Nama*.

When fit to receive, the strung-together beads of *Nama Prem* can be had of *Sri Gurudeva*, i.e. the disciple with every delight and from the deepest recesses of his heart cordially welcomes the boon of surrendering himself to the feet of *Sri Guru* for pure and unalloyed *Bhajan* receives invigorating strength and faculty

from him; this is *Varan-dasha*, (i.e. the choice of *Sri Guru* for Bhajan by the acceptance of *Nama* and strength from him.)

Remembrance, contemplation, concentration, constant meditation and trance (final beatitude) are the five processes of *Smaran*. From remembrance of *Nama*, the devotee thinks of the form which gives him a steady conception of the attributes; this steady conception of the attributes gives him a firm conviction of pursuing the *lila* of Krishna and having entrance in the *lila* he is completely absorbed in *Krishna-Rasa* – this is *Apan-dasha*. By these *Smaran* and *Apan* the devotee can know and adore the eternal and daily *lila* of Krishna at eight different periods of the day; and when he is deeply absorbed in it, he realises his own self and the of Krishna. These self-realised devotees are *Paramahamsas*.

Then at the time of his departure from this world, the devotee, by the grace of Krishna becomes an associated counter-part of ideal object of his worship in *Vraja* and thus attains the summum-bonum of *Nama-Bhajan*.

Should then all who are seekers after *Prem* leave the stage of house-holder and accept *Sanyas* or the fourth stage? The answer is, that, be he in bustle or solitude, in palace or bower, be he in the stage of *Grihastha*, or *Vanaprastha*, or *Sanyas* – in whatever stage he may be, the *Prema-rurukshu* should prefer to live in that stage only which will be favourable to the attainment of *Prem* and should at once desert the stage that is a burden or antagonistic to his *Bhajan*. In this connection the lives of *Srivas Pundit*, *Sri-Pundarik Vidyaniidhi*, *Sri Ramananda* and other personal Attendants of Krishna are worth recollection. They are all born *Paramahamsas*. *Ribhu*, *Janaka*, etc. in the days of yore are seen to be *Paramahamsas* even though they led lives of house-holders; while on the contrary finding the house-hold life to be detrimental and a bar to *Bhajan*, *Sri Ramanuja Swami*, *Sri Swarup-Damodar Goswami*, *Sri Madhavendra Puri Goswami*, *Sri Haridas Thakur*, *Sri Sanatan Goswami* and *Sri Raghunathadas Goswami* all renounced the stage of a house-holder and accepted *sanyas*. Krishna's loving beauty is so enamouring that even the god of lusts is charmed by Him and Krishna being charmed by His own beauty and loveliness covets the pleasure enjoyed by the best of His lovers – *Sri Radha*, by lovingly serving such a Form as His. So anointing Himself with the lustre and complexion of *Sri Radha* and having been imbued with Her ardent longings of love, Krishna is ever dallying as an exemplary lover of Himself as *Sri Gauranga*. *Sri Krishna*, the essential nature of the Supreme Being - the only Real and Eternal Truth is the only Object of love and *Sri Gauranga* the possessor and distributor of that love. Krishna is simultaneously dallying with His dear consort in the groves of *Vrindavana* and tasting the extract of love-succus flowing from His consort as *Gauranga* at *Navadwip*, Himself singing Krishna's name and teaching others how to love Krishna and sing His name. In so doing He distinguishes pointedly the real name, identical with the Object Himself, from the apparent or false one which is taken profanely, blasphemously or in vain. He emphasises that in this *Kali yuga* worldly people indulge in

- 1) duplicity,
- 2) intoxication,
- 3) sensuality,
- 4) killing of animals,
- 5) mercenariness

and so are unable to meditate upon, or worship *Vishnu* and to perform *Vedic* sacrifices. So the chanting of Krishna's name is the only meditation the only sacrifice, the only worship in this *Kali* age – Name is the means, Name is the end. But it should be noted with the utmost care that Krishna's name is not mere combination or utterance, and appearance is not identity. The fire and the glow-worm though similar in appearance are not identical. The minutest spark of fire set consciously or unconsciously, seriously or playfully will instantaneously burn an inflammable thing, whereas a thousand glow-worms will not be able to do that even in a thousand years. Krishna's Name is identical with Krishna Himself and pregnant with all the properties and attributes of Krishna. So His name, unlike all other names, is full of energy, perfect, eternal, pure, devoid of illusion and eternally free. Aurora is sufficient to dispel the darkness of night and to drive the wild animals to their lairs and thieves and dacoits to their resorts; it enables us to distinguish the various objects of senses and ushers the advent of the glowing lamp of heaven. So does *Namabhasa* (the utterance of name avoiding the ten profanations) stop poverty from planting our pillows with thorns, destroy our worldly hankerings and dispel the illusory gloom, so that we may see the Name face to face. When the ever-burning sun peeps out of the eastern horizon its ever-effulgent rays make us see it face to face and feel its golden rays and enable us to see all objects bathing therein. The sun is seen and felt by us with its own rays and heat and not with the help of any other glowing object. The brightest candles of the universe put together cannot make the sun visible to us. When our dreamy nights are at an end, when we shake off the torpor, open our eyes, turn them to the east, we see the Name-Sun with all this glory and beauty.