

A Benevolent & Generous Publication

NAM BHAJAN

(A Translation from 6/4 chapter of
"Shri-Chaitanya-Sikshamrita")
of

SHRILA THAKUR BHAKTIVINODE

By

Paramahansa Swami 108 Sree
SHRIMAD BHAKTI SIDDHANTA SARASWATI GOSWAMI

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the beloved disciple of His Divine Grace
Om Vishnupada 108 Shri
SHRIMAD BHAKTI SIDDHANTA SARASWATI GOSWAMI

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PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION IN THE FIRST EDITION
(The 13th October, 1926)

"A long period of Four Hundred years is past since Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Fountain head of Prem, last paid His Divine Visit to the blessed country of India. From the earliest days of yore, India is proud of her high fortunes, in as much as, the Incarnations of Godhead have mostly honoured this land of the East. But it is a regrettable fact that by this so short a time, a deep veil of forgetfulness of His preachings had covered the horizon of Vaishnavism and the people were steeped into the darkness of ignorance even about the name of Shri Chaitanya Deva. Who is Krishna Himself. Not only so, the time went still further when the highest philosophy of Vaishnavism was taken up by a number of characterless illiterate fellows who poured it into their mental mint and gave it a crooked shape It was undoubtedly a sad desideratum that Vaishnavism with all its special learning and highest philosophy should never again be hoisted before the eyes of the world .

The auspicious moment was soon come, when the brightest luminary, THAKUR BHAKTIVINODE, first appeared on the Spiritual Firmament of India. On the 2nd of September, 1838 A.D. Thakur Bhaktivinode with a silver spoon in his mouth descended down to the village of Ula, in the district of Nadia, with an object to unfetter the ironclad ties of Maya which had engrossed the fallen jivas who surrendered their life to the licking of her colossal feet. Passing his early years through thousands of difficulties and tribulations, experiencing the opulence and penury, weal and woe and all sorts of vicissitudes of life, the Mighty Giant ere long stood an important figure in the notice of the British Government. Holding a responsible situation under the Government, Thakur proved himself a "friend of the poor"-a social benefactor; in the capacity of a Magistrate, he shone as a bright political thinker ; in the eyes of the world he was a strict moralist ; the elites of the country recognised him to be a great litterateur only, where as the masters of languages honoured him as a linguist ! Alas, such is the ran of this base earth !-Men more than often gaze at things with their own coloured spectacles and they accept or reject them accordingly !

But the few blessed ones only saw that, the whole life of Thakur Bhaktivinode was a fast running runnel of pure devotion-his was the life of the greatest Acharyya the world ever witnessed-his was the life full to the brim with the milk of human kindness -and his was the life to take all fallen souls to the cool feet of Godhead and bind them eternally with the silken tie of His eternal service. From the first moment when he observed the light of this wavering world, Thakur Bhaktivinode was determined to dispel the darkness from the sky of degraded so-called Vaishnavism; he girded up his loins to make his effort a success. For this purpose, Thakur, by his sheer love for Shri Krishna, expounded the deep philosophy which remained concealed in

the pages of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Bhagavat and Sandarvas etc., and gave it to the world by his action towards Divine service and also by his words in simple language to be easily understood by the readers in general. It is his writings and his divine unparalleled character that allow us a peep into the pure and sublime philosophy of Krishna, on which stand the precepts of Shri-Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Within his short stay in this world, Thakur Bhaktivinode mixed with every class of men and went from town to town, from village to village and from door to door with the tidings of the Spiritual Atmosphere in order to give them over to the world at the cost of nothing else but Sraddha only. But he knew at the same time that the utility of his best priceless fruits would not be recognised by the common folk; hence, his preachings were mostly confined to the educated society, because, the views of the ignorant are carried by the opinion of the erudite. Thus passing his prime of life in the bustle of the base earth, he, after cutting up every connection with all that we call our 'own' in this world, proved himself so spiritually mighty as to trample down the material pride of high lineage, immense opulence, uncommon erudition and cravings of youth like anything and melted the milky heart of the good. Thakur accepted a retired life in the nook of Shri Swananda Sukhada Kunja in Godroom (one of the islands of Navadwip), and passed his days in NAM-BHAJAN.

Our present purpose is not to give a glimpse into the life of Thakur Bhaktivinode-the art is too long while the space is too short. To have a clear-cut knowledge about Thakur's life, readers may pursue the Introduction of our translation of SHRI-CHAITANYA SIKSHAMRITA.

Thakur Bhaktivinode has left us his heaps of treasures in a number of invaluable books-to name them is, so to say, legion-at least this book-let is unable to supply them so much space. Of these books, SHRI-CHAITANYA SIKSHAMRITA is one, and this brochure is only a chapter of that big volume. As Thakur's SIKSHAMRITA, in which a flow of the honey of Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings as compared with the precepts of other religions runs all through, one of the disciples of Paramahansa Paribrajacharya Shri Shrimat Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur, the present organiser-in-chief of the Viswa-Vaishnava-Raj-Sabha, has ventured to translate it in English, so that the English-knowing public may be enriched by the treasures of Thakur Bhaktivinode.

For the technicalities of the Shastras that have not been explained in this booklet for want of space, the readers may kindly consult SHRI-CHAITANYA-SIKSHAMRITA."

FOREWORD

This brochure of "Nam-Bhajan" is only a translation of the chapter [Ch.6/4] of the big volume of Shri Chaitanya Sikshamrita" of Shрила Bhaktivinode Thakur, the pioneer of the pure devotion of the modern age. In this booklet he has described the life and teachings of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Krishna Himself. He has expounded the philosophy of universal Divine Love which remained concealed in the religious scriptures. As a great Acharyya, Thakur was determined to dispel the

darkness of ignorance of so-called Vaishnavism and accepted a retired life in Godrumdwipa and passed his days in Nam-Bhajan.

In this booklet Thakur Bhaktivinode proves that Krishna Himself and Krishna-Nam is identical. The Absolute Name of Krishna is purely Spiritual. He also explains the process and procedure in chanting the Holy Name and the Eternal Love between Krishna and Jiva; the Lila of Krishna and the Absolute Truth are beyond human conception; the company of Sadhus; Bhakti the very nature of the soul; Exclusive surrender to Nam; Nam-the object of pursuit; Nam is beyond time and space; Nam-the Incarnation of Krishna; Lamenting prayer to Nam; Nam and Namabhas; Sadhak and Siddha; Exclusive surrender to Nam and the different stages of Prem-Bhakti etc.

In the Satya Yuga (Golden Age), people were born so highly advanced and cultured that they did not require any sort of rectification for spiritual life. They could meditate without any disturbance and realise the Lord easily. Degradation of human beings had taken place just as the beginning of Treta Yuga (Silver Age), when Vedic sacrifices and socio-religious regulations were necessary to be introduced. When Dwapar Yuga (Copper Age) entered, people lost the capacity to perform sacrifices with purity and sanctity. So the worship of the Holy Deity of the Supreme Lord was introduced for the period.

But in the Kali Yuga (Iron Age), all spiritual virtues of human beings have disappeared from them and all inabilities, defects etc. have entered in their mind. In such a critical state when meditation etc. could not be practised by the people with proper purity, the chanting of the Divine Names of the Lord Shri Krishna has been declared as the supreme means or the special dispensation for this Age

The chanting of the Holy Name i.e., this Nam-Kirtan is ever superior to all other methods for the realisation of God. For the upliftment of the people, there is no other alternative except the Divine Names of the Lord. For this reason Shri Sukadev has declared, "O Parikshit ! though Kali Yuga is the ocean of faults and vices, there is a great good quality lies in it. In this age by chanting the Divine Names of Lord Shri Krishna only, one becomes completely free from Maya and also attains the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord." This is the greatest efficacy of Shri Nam-Samkirtan, that without performing any other religious rites, by merely chanting the Holy Names with sincerity, one can get completely free from mundane fetters and obtain the direct service of the Holy Feet of Shri Krishna.

The Supreme Lord Shri Krishna Chaitanya for showing the efficacy and supremacy of the Divine Names, by setting an example in His Own Divine career, descended as a Spiritual Teacher and proclaimed Nam-Samkirtan. to be the special dispensation of Kali Yuga. Shri Krishna assumes the Form of Lord Gouranga as the best servitor of Himself. He Premulgated that Divine Love can be had only by chanting the Holy Name of Shri Krishna which is identical with His Supreme Personality.

He taught us there is no other way of deliverance except the loud chant of the Lord's Holy names in the company of pure devotees. The Lord Himself did not write any book except eight stanzas in Sanskrit known as "Shri Sikshastakam" in which He has taught the essence of all revealed scriptures.

The Lord also teaches us the process how to perform the chanting of the Divine Names without committing any offence against the Name. He says that the chanter must possess the four universal good qualifications, -he should be humbler than a blade of grass etc.

In the eighth Sloka, we find that the chanter gets completely drowned in the ocean of ecstatic bliss of Divine Love with his body, mind and soul. It is the highest goal of spiritual existence-the acme of Divine Love towards the Divine Couple Shri Shri Radha-Krishna.

My sincere thanks are due to Spd.Ambarish Brahmachary and Spd. Trivikram Maharaj and Sri Kali Ch. Panda for Publishing the Book within a short time . May Lord Krishna bless them.

The disappearance day of Srila Prabhupad 29-12-1996

Invoking the blessings of Srila Saraswati Goswami
Tridandi Bhikhyu Bhakti Vaibhava Puri

NAM-BHAJAN

A survey on NAM-BHAJAN according to the different stages of Prem.

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 tatwa 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.

Acceptance of the favourable and denial of the antagonistic to Prem-Bhakti

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 the Geeta have very highly eulogized such refugees. If a devotee does not take absolute shelter under the cool shade of the gracious Feet of Krishna, what to 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 or none 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.

Exclusive Surrender to NAM; Krishna and Krishna-NAM identified

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

How to progress in Bhajan ?

Try they must to realise their own Chit swarup who desire to realise the Form of Krishna and the Form of NAM. 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.

Krishna and Jivas

Many a time we have told before (in Chaitanya Sikshamrita) 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-NAM 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 will 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.

Krishna-the sun; Jivas-the rays

The Saviour of the Iron Age Shri-KrishnaChaitanya 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 Lord of Lords-Jivas are His eternal servants.

Krishna purely spiritual

There is no denying the fact that the Residential Home of Krishna is in Parabyom 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 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.

Eternal love between Krishna and Jiva

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 eternal felicity between Krishna and Jive is Prem.

Absolute Truth beyond human Reasonings

What exact connection does there exist between this manifested and visible mundane world and the spiritual Sphere ? In going to search after spiritual truths, more than often we are deluded; after deep contemplation and discrimination we conclude Spirit to be something opposite of matter; pressing our wordly 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 Chitswarup of Brahman; in such a stage, Brahman is in 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 Chitswarup 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 .

The Lila Of Krishna

It is clear from the above that you never can know the spiritual sportive pastimes of Para-Brahman if you be dazzled by mere Chit-swarup of Brahman which is only a semblance of the eternal light of Chit . Brother ! look forward !! Enter into 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,

lightning 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.

This world a perverted reflection of the spiritual Atmosphere

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 are 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 the 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 Chit-tatwas, 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 reasonings 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 eversheeny land of Krishna.

Vyasa and Narada

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 Jnan-kanda and in reply to the question of his spiritual preceptor, Shri Narada Goswami, he said, "O Lord ! no doubt I have realised all truths, 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 Puranas, 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 short-coming. Thus you have committed a great and heavy omission by giving too high an eulogy of castes and stages to be the soul's religion of 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 the 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 NAM as a means to serve Hari.

Bhakti the very nature of soul

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:-

The remembrance of Krishna

When Jivas come to realise that the path of Karma does not give them eternal good, whether it be the eighteen inferior Karma-Yajna or the eight subtle processes of Yoga 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 Sadhus 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.

The Company of Sadhus

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 spots 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, reasonings 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 nondevotees 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.

Two minds-spiritual and material

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 NAM the heart becomes closely attentive, the fruits of religious forbearance, control over sensual appetites, religious observances, with holding 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. NAM 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.

NAM is spiritual-the object of pursuit

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

NAM is beyond time and space

The Vedas have described the spirituality of the Name of Krishna and Nam to be the highest truth. "O Lord ! reasonably judged we have Thy Name to be higher than the highest and so do we chant Thy NAM. NAM-BHAJAN is not bound by any rule- NAM is beyond all virtuous acts-He is Spiritual-He is virility and lustre in a person. All the Vedas have been manifested from this NAM. NAM is bliss, NAM is Ananda . We can excellently be devoted to Him. NAM is worship and NAM 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 NAM and sing His glories. They believe Thy Name to be Chaitanya in person, and always sing and hear Kirtan which is identical with Thy NAM (name)-they are purified by it. NAM alone is sat ever-existing. The essence of the Vedas is NAM, the Absolute Truth and Whose Form is Sat-Chidananda (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 NAM alone." In His own "Eight glorious Precepts" Shriman Mahaprabhu has spoken of the glories of NAM; He has also given a glimpse of the gradual steps of NAM-BHAJAN in those Eight precepts. His "Consider thyself humbler than the grass" shloka hints at how to adore NAM after avoiding the ten profanations; His "Man or money I want not" shloka speaks of the selflessness of NAM-BHAJAN in a devotional spirit - devotion unacted 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 Vipralamba Rasa (deeper union in separation) or in both after being completely and spontaneously attached to Shrimati(Radha). The Shastras have eulogized so highly and so often the glories of NAM that their name is legion-to describe them is to write a big volume like the Shri Hari-Bhakti-Vilas. So, we have hardly any more space in this small volume to discuss them at length. Thus here putting a stop to the glories of NAM, we attempt a very short survey of the processes of NAM-BHAJAN.

A devotee should be aware of the Form of Krishna-Nam

Devotees, who are desirous of ascending the terrace of Prem, should remember a few points even before entering the field of NAM-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 Jamuna 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 Processes of Nam-Bhajan

The realisation of truths that are beyond the grasp of matter is called Swarup-Siddhi. This is a 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 Prasnopanishad.

NAM-Incarnation of Krishna

NAM 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 NAM; so, KRISHNA-NAM 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 Nam, Shri Gopalguru Goswami, the dearest disciple of Shri 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 the Agni-puran); those who chant are free from every spot of sin (from the BrahmandaPuran); Shri-Krishna-Chaitanya-Mahaprabhu simply collected them together. These Hare Krishna utterings, coming out from the lips of Shri Chaitanya, inundated the whole world with the flood of Prem; Glory be to this NAM by His will !" Hence, Shriman Mahaprabhu, as mentioned in the Chaitanya Charitamrita and the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Himself sang and taught jivas to count these sixteen names of thirty-two letters in beads of Tulashi. Shri Gopalguru Goswami explains these sixteen names in the following way:-

The meaning of Nam

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 Nam will burn every bit of sin in you. That Hari-Nam after bringing the Absolute Truth, whose form is Chidananda, to light, destroys Avidya or illusion and its works. All this is the work of Hari-Nam . Or as He takes off the three-fold pangs of miseries, distresses and afflictions, hence He is called Hari (lit, to steal way) . 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 which 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 Shrimati Radhika, the daughter of Brisabhanu, and in the Vocative case of Hara it is Ha-re.

The meaning of 'Krishna' according to the views of Agama is derived from Krishna and means that this Krishna Who is Ananda in Form and attracts every object is Para-Brahman. Krishna when in the case of address is also Krishna. The Agama says, "O Ye Goddess ! all guilts 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 'Ra' and 'Ma' together give 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 Shri-Radha, is termed as Rama.

The Counting of NAM

Devotees, who thirst for Prem and are on the way to it, sing and realise this Hare-Krishna-Nam by counting, While chanting and remembering the Name, incessantly they remember His spiritual characteristics by way of explaining to the mind the meanings of Nam. 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 NAM as the heart is purified by constant remembrance, NAM dawns in the horizon of the pellucid heart with full shining rays.

Sadhak and Siddha

Those who have accepted NAM 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 countings, they come to a stage when their tongue stops not for a moment from singing NAM. Though cholera-tongued by Avidya, devotees in their first stage have no taste for NAM, 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 NAM are very needful in the first stage, which can be done only by an avoidance of the wordly-minded men and in the company of devotees. Incessant chanting of NAM 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 NAM in maintaining their livelihood. If KRISHNA-NAM 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 the relationship between Krishna and Jivas will appear in the heart. Numberless times has this been proved to be true among the wise .

Lamenting prayer to NAM

With a happy heart one should re-collect the meaning and form of NAM 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 .

The yoked and the free

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 loadbearers fail to progress in BHAJAN inspite of their utmost strivings, whereas the essence-seekers aiming at Prem-tatwa 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 Paramahansas. Thus when he, who so long simply did bear burdens only, learnt to love the Truth in the company of Sadhus and soon also turns to long for Prem .

Reverence and desire for service of Godhead awakened in the company of devotees

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 along 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 at 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 a devotee in his 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 Sadhus. 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 NAM will be awakened in the heart after worshipping the Deity in this way for a long time ; then at last they are bent on Nam-Bhajan in the company of devotees .

The case is different with those few lucky ones who have an exclusively firm faith in Krishna-NAM ; they take, by the unbounded grace of Krishna, shelter at the feet of such a spiritual guide who is an ontologist of NAM, i.e. who has realised and does see the Swarup (form) of NAM. Of the rights of such a preceptor, Shri Mahaprabhu says that though formal initiation may not be necessary still a guide is essential in NAM-Bhajan The mere letters of NAM 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 NAM to the pure light of it and can save them from the ten sacrileges hindering the true service of NAM

Namabhasa

Those who are devoted to Nam have already from the beginning attained the stage of the second class of devotees, because they are aware of the Swarup (form) of NAM. They are practically no longer bound to Namabhasa (utterance of name avoiding the ten profanations). Truly speaking, they earnestly desire Prem-they are true Premarurukshu. 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 Sreemurti 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 orders 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 NAM 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 NAM as explained by Shri Gopal Guru Goswami will, by degrees, drive out every scrap from the nature of man and then NAM appears in person before the spiritual eyes of the devotee. When the swarup (form) of NAM fully appears, it is identical with the spiritual form of Krishna - the appearance of the swarup of NAM is the appearance of the swarup of Krishna. The more clearly and purely is NAM 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 strand of goodness), Raja(the strand of activity) and Tamo(the gloom of pride, haughtiness etc. of the lowest inherent principle), 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 their pure heart as soon as they are absorbed in deep and easy natural meditation. Incessantly then does NAM 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.

The five conditions of a Sadhak

1. Sravan-dasha. 2. Varan-dasha. 3. Smaran-dasha. 4. Aapan-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 NAM without committing any sacrilege to Him and of the processes and fitness of taking NAM is gained ; this facilitates the continuity of NAM.

When fit to receive, the strung-together beads of NAM-PREM can be had of Shri 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 Shri Guru for pure and unalloyed BHAJAN and receives invigorating strength and faculty from him ; this is Varan-dasha. (i.e. the choice of Shri Guru for Bhajan by the acceptance of NAM and strength from Him).

Remembrance, contemplation, concentration, constant meditation and trance (final beatitude) are the five processes of Smaran. From remembrance of the Nam, 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 pursuing the lila of Krishna and having entrance in the lila he is completely absorbed in Krishna-Rasa. This is Aapan-dasha. By these Smaran and Aapan 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 that of Krishna. These self-realised devotees are Paramahansas.

Then at the time of his departure from this world, the devotee, by the grace of Krishna, becomes an associated counterpart of ideal object of his worship in Vraja and thus attains the summumbonum of NAM-BHAJAN.

Should then all who are seekers after Prem leave the stage of a house-holder and accept Sanyas or the fourth stage ? The answer is that, be he in bustee or solitude, in palace or bower, be he in the stage of a Grihastha, or a 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 Shrivast Pandit, Shri-Pundarik Vidyanidhi, Shri Ramananda and other Personal Attendants of Krishna are worth recollection. They are all born Paramahansas. Ribhu, Janaka etc. in the days of yore are seen to be Paramahansas even though they led the lives of house-holders ; while on the contrary, finding the household-life to be detrimental and a bar to BHAJAN, Shri Ramanuj Swami, Shri Swarup Damodar Goswami, Shri Madhavendra Puri Goswami, Shri Handas Thakur, Shri Sanatan Goswami and Shri Raghunathdas Goswami, all renounced the stage of a householder and accepted Sanyas.

Krishna's loving beauty is so enamouring that even the god of lusts is charmed by Him and Krishna Himself being charmed by His own beauty and loveliness covets the pleasure enjoyed by the best of His lovers- Shri Radha, by lovingly serving such a Form as His. So anointing Himself with the lustre and complexion of Shri Radha and having been imbued with Her ardent longings of love, Krishna is ever dallying as an exemplary lover of Himself as Shri Gauranga. Shri Krishna, the essential nature of the Supreme Being-the only Real and Eternal Truth is the only Object of love and Shri 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 Shri Gauranga at Navadvip, 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 glowworms though similar in appearance are not identical . The minutest spark of fire set consciously or unconsciously, seriously or play-fully 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 his glory and beauty.

