

A-Z of the Holy Name

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What is 'nâm' (Name)?

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has written in Sri Bhakti-Sandarbha –

“*Nâm*’ is a sound used to identify certain object.”

Shabda-Kalpa-Droom (a Sanskrit dictionary) says –

“Sound is of two types –

- That which cannot be pronounced (just as a thunder or rustling of leaves)
- That which can be pronounced”

Of course, a name is something we can pronounce. Whenever we want to talk about an object we say its name. For example a thirsty person says “Please give me water”. Immediately we think of a liquid substance that quenches thirst. In this manner every person, object, concept or idea has a name that distinguishes it from others.

“*Nâmi*” is the object (e.g. the object ‘water’) to which the name belongs. ‘*Nâm*’ is simply the word (e.g. ‘water’ in English), while ‘*nâmi*’ is the object itself. The only function the *nâm* serves is to denote the object – it has no quality of the object whatsoever. Had it not been so, we would have quenched our thirst simply by uttering “water” – there would have been no need to actually drink water. If *nâm* and *nâmi* would have been non-different, *nâm* would have had all the power of *nâmi*.

Shabda-Shakti-Prakâshikâ¹ says – Names are of two types –

- Man-made
- Eternal

We give names to various worldly destructible objects; they are just words and do not have any characteristic of the said objects. Such names are ‘man-made’. However in the divine world there are names that have existed since eternity and will remain forever. So we call them ‘eternal’.

Amongst these names, the names of God almighty are non-different from Him. They contain all His qualities. The saints and scriptures clearly state that Sri *Bhagavân* and His names are non-different – we must always remember this fact.

¹ A Sanskrit book that deals with the scientific study of words.

The Holy Name and God are non-different



There is absolutely no difference between God and His names. The Holy Name is God Himself – all the shrutis, smritis and the knowers of truth state this. If we are able to accept this truth then we shall realize very easily in our lives that the Holy Name is not an ordinary word that simply denotes “God”.

Sri Padma Purân says –

“The Holy Name is non-different from Sri Krishna and therefore it is a wish-fulfilling gem,

conscious, full of *ras*, absolute, pure, eternal and independent like Him.”

The Holy Name is a wish-fulfilling gem – this means that it is capable of granting all our desires just like Sri *Bhagavân*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has explained this verse as –

“The Holy Name is a wish-fulfilling gem since it can grant all our wishes. Not only this, but like Sri Krishna it is also conscious. It is factually Sri Krishna Himself!” – (Bhagavad Sandarbha, 48)

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

“Sri Krishna’s body and His self are non-different from each other and so are His Holy Names from Him. It is only the living being whose name, body and self differ from one another.” – (C.C.Madhya.17.132)

“Just as Sri *Bhagavân*’s body is not different from his self, His names too are non-different from Him.” – (Kurma Purân)

Our true self is transcendental while our body is material and destructible. Our names too are mundane and refer to this material body. Hence they are different from each other. This is our characteristic, not that of God. Sri *Bhagavân* and His Holy Name are only different expressions of one thing. Therefore we should understand that the Holy Name has same power as Sri *Bhagavân*.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has written –

“The Holy Name is an expression of the Almighty just as Sri Râmchandra, Nrisimha, Matsya, Kurma and other manifestations.”

– (Sri Bhagavad-Sandarbha, 48)

“Sri Krishna descends in the form of the Holy Name in *Kaliyug* and delivers all universe.” – (C.C.Âdi.17.22)

Srimad-Bhâgavatam says – “Sri *Bhagavân* has innumerable incarnations.”

– (S.B.1.3.26)

However His Holy Name is more compassionate and has more power to redeem the fallen souls than any incarnation. Sripâd Shukamuni has said in Srimad-Bhâgavatam –

“Even if a dying, miserable, fallen and sinful person takes the Holy Name, that too simply under compulsion, he is delivered from the cycle of birth and death. He attains a high state. It is sad that the people of *Kaliyug* do not worship such great Sri Hari with *Harinâm Sankirtan!*” – (S.B.12.3.44)

It is because the Holy Name is non-different from Sri *Bhagavân* Himself that if we take the Holy Name in any manner – whether during *kirtan* or hearing – even by slight reflection of the Holy Name – if we have committed the foulest of sins – the Holy Name can redeem us and we can attain Sri *Bhagavân*. This fact is very clear from the deliverance of Ajâmil in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. The emissaries of Sri Vishnu told the messengers of Yamrâj (the Lord of death) –

“A thief, alcoholic, one who is disloyal to a friend, one who has murdered a brahmin, one who has seduced the wife of his Guru, one who has killed a woman, his king, parent or a cow, and all other sinners have only one solution – the Holy Name of Sri Nârâyan. Only the Holy Name can redeem him, since as soon as he takes the Holy Name he draws Sri *Bhagavân’s* attention to him. Sri *Bhagavân* thinks, “This person belongs to me, it is my duty to protect him at all costs.”

Ajâmil was a most fallen sinner. On his death-bed, when he saw the messenger the Lord of death, he had called out his son ‘Nârâyan’ out of fear – he had definitely not called *Bhagavân* Sri Nârâyan. We can not call this as ‘pure name’ – it is simply ‘*nâmâbhâs*’ (shadow of the Holy Name). However he was saved and ultimately attained to Sri *Bhagavân’s* abode. Not only is this true repentance, it is the best mode of repenting; for it destroys the ignorance – the very root of sin. Moreover he gains Sri *Bhagavân’s* attention. The Lord feels – “He is my devotee – I should take care for him always”. Thus we see that there is nothing more powerful than the Holy Name that can save a sinner. The Holy Name is also more compassionate than Sri *Bhagavân* Himself. Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has written in Sri Krishna-Nâm-Ashtakam –

‘Dear Holy Name, You have manifested Yourself in two forms – ‘word’ (the Holy Names such as ‘Sri Krishna’, ‘Govinda’ etc.) and ‘all-conscious, all-blissful Sri Krishna Deity’. Of the two I know Your Holy Names to be more compassionate, since You redeem those who have committed an offence at the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. You save him from all offenses and immerse him in the ocean of joy, that is, he becomes engrossed in relishing the happiness of *prem*.’

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

“The Holy Name, the Deity and Sri Krishna Himself are one. There is no difference in them – all are conscious and blissful.” – (C.C.Madhya.17.131)

This signifies that Sri *Bhagavân’s* name and Deity are always non-different from Himself. Here ‘Deity’ refers to His image that we worship as well as to His body.

After reading the above *poyâr*² if anybody thinks that Sri *Bhagavân’s* name, Deity and Himself are actually different, but because they are all transcendental they are said to ‘one’ – then he is wrong. Sri *Bhagavân’s* abode and associates are

² ‘*poyâr*’ is a verse from Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita

also the expressions of His majestic internal potency; then why does Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrta say that 'these three are one'? Therefore we should understand that they are indeed one.

Sri Hari-bhakti-Vilâs clearly proves that His Deity is non-different from Himself –
"swayam vyaktâh sthâpanâshcha murtayo dwividhâ matâh Swayam vyaktâ
Swayam krishnah sthâpanâstu pratishthayâ."

Meaning - "Sri *Bhagavân*'s Deities are of two types –

- Self-manifested
- Installed

We should know that the self-manifested Deities are Sri Krishna himself and the installed deities are 'That same Sri Krishna' from the time since they have been installed.

Sri Govindadev, Sri Gopinâth and Sri MadanMohan are self-manifested and they are *Swayam Bhagavân*. However such eternal Deities are very rare and we need other Deities for *archanam* – so it is necessary to install Deities. When we install Deities according to the scriptural injunctions They are actually Sri *Bhagavân* from the time since their installment. Sri Krishna has told Sri Uddhav with His holy lips –



"The moving and non-moving – both types of images are temples."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has explained this verse from Sri Hari-Bhakti-Vilâs as follows –

"Here '*pratishthâ*' means '*pratimâ*' (image) and '*jiva*' means '*Paramâtmâ* – the life of a living entity'. This means – 'it is my temple' or a place that is non-different from me. The Deity is in no way different from the parts of my body. '*Jiva-Mandir*' can also mean '*Sri Bhagavân* – the original source of all living beings'. Those who worship Sri *Bhagavân* actually see Him in the Deity. If we harbor even the slightest notion that He is different from Sri *Bhagavân* it will be detrimental for our *bhakti*; therefore we should always perform Deity-sevâ considering Him to be non-different from Sri Krishna."

Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has written about the Deities of Sri Govindadev and Sri MadanMohan –

"Sri MadanGopâl, Who is the supreme most person of Vrindâvan, is really and truly the Son of Nanda Mahârâj – He is verily the One Who sports in the *râs*-dance with Sri Râdhâ and Lalitâ. He is the same One Who has manifested Himself as the captivator of the Love-God and steals all the hearts with His

enchanting sweetness while Srimati Râdhârâni and Lalitâ serve Him on both sides.” – (C.C.Âdi.5.218-223)

“All the trees of Vrindâvan are *kalpa-vrikshas*³ and the *Yogpeeth* is situated therein. A gem-studded altar with a gem-studded throne is placed at the centre of this *Yogpeeth*. Sri Govinda, Who is none other than the Son of Nanda Mahârâj, is seated atop this gem-throne. He is expressing His sweetness and mesmerizing the universe. Srimati Râdhârâni is seated at His left with all Her *sakhis* and the sweet Lord performs so many divine pastimes such as the *râs*-dance with them in charming manner. His devotees sit in the lotus-pose and meditate on Him. They worship Him with the eighteen syllable *mantra*. All His devotees in the fourteen worlds meditate on Him and the residents of Vaikuntha sing His praises. His sweetness drags Laxmidēvi from the bosom of Lord Nârâyan – He is so attractive and Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has described Him wonderfully. There is no doubt that this Govindadev is none other than the Son of Nanda Mahârâj Himself. If a fool considers Him to be an ‘image’ he commits a foul *aparâdh* and He shall never be redeemed – he shall fall in the hellish planets – what more can I say?” – (C.C.Âdi.225-226)

We all know the story of Sri SâkshiGopâl Who walked all the way from the Vrindâvan to the far away Vidyânagar, simply to shower His bounties on them when the King of Utkal (Orissa) conquered Vidyânagar, by the command of Lord SâkshiGopâl, he took Him to Cuttack and installed His *sevâ* there. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita states –

“The queen (of Orissa) came to take *darshan* of Sri SâkshiGopâl and offered Him many ornaments with devotion. She was wearing a very precious pearl on her nose-pin. She wished to give it to the Lord. “I wish His nostril was pierced – then this maidservant would have surely offered Him this pearl” – she sighed. Then she paid obeisance and returned to her palace. When the night was about to end Gopâlji appeared in a dream and said – “When I was a child my mother had pierced my nose and had lovingly placed a pearl on it. That piercing exists on my nose even today – put that pearl for me and fulfill your wish.” The queen woke up and narrated her dream to the king. She came to the temple carrying the pearl and accompanied by the king. She saw the piercing on the nose and put the pearl for him. Then she became so ecstatic that threw an extremely grand feast in honor of this sweet occasion.” – (C.C.Madhya.5.125-132)

These evidences drive home the message that there is no difference between Sri *Bhagavân* and His Deity – same is the case with Sri *Bhagavân* and his Holy Name. The one who thinks otherwise will surely suffer in hell.

“Who considers Sri Vishnu’s Deity and Shâlagrâm to be stone, the Spiritual Master a human being, considers the caste of a Vaishnav, the foot-wash of Vishnu and Vaishnavs as water, Sri Vishnu’s Holy Name that can destroy all sins as ordinary sound and Sri Vishnu, the Lord God equal to other Gods – he is a resident of hell”. – (Padyâvali)

³ Wish-fulfilling trees

This verse signifies that although the Holy Name appears like all other sound vibrations and exists as words He is the Supreme Being Sri *Bhagavân* the embodiment of intense eternal conscious bliss.

Glory of chanting the Holy Name

All scriptures such as the Vedas and the saints have openly extolled the glory of chanting the Holy Name. The Rig Ved has stated –

"om âhasya jânanto nâma chidviviktan mahaste vishno sumatim bhajâmahe om tatsadityâdi." – (1.156.3)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has explained this verse as follows –

"O Vishno! Your name is conscious and hence self-manifested. If we do not realize the correct way to pronounce it or entirely comprehend its glory - if we know only little bit of its magnificence and continue to chant we shall gain knowledge about You"

Sri Krishna has told Sri Arjun in Âdi purân –

"Dear Arjun, who sing my name and dance before me – I am telling the truth – they buy me (I become their slave). Who sing my name and cry before me I become their slave since I am Janârdan⁴. I do not belong to anyone else."

Sri Krishna has told in the Mahâbhârat –

"Krishnâ (Draupadi) has called out to me crying "Govinda!" although I am so far from her – this cry rendered from her heart has put me in a debt that is increasing every moment – this debt is refusing to leave my mind (I cannot forget this debt)."

Sri Bali Mahârâj told Shukrâchârya in Brihan-Nâradiya Purân –

"When the two syllables "'Ha' and 'ri'" are present on the tip of one's tongue he attains the realm of Sri Vishnu and he never returns to this world."

Lord Shiva told Sri Nârad in Linga Purân –

"*Harinâm* destroys the evils of *Kaliyug*; if someone chants this name while going, sitting, standing, sleeping, eating, and breathing, just to complete a sentence or without any reason or reverence – he attains liberation; and who chants *Harinâm* with devotion goes to His abode and gains the Supreme Being."

Srimad-Bhâgavatam recommends chanting of the Holy Name as the supreme means and the topmost achievable goal –

"etan-nirvidyamânânâmichchatâmakutobhayam,

⁴ The One Who wipes the tears of His dear ones

yoginâm nripa nirnitam harer-nâmânukirtanam."
- (S.B.2.1.11)

Shridhar Swâmi has explained this verse as follows –

"No means is greater than chanting the Holy Name for the *sâdhak* or for a *siddha* (one who has realized his spiritual goal). Therefore Srimad-Bhâgavatam is saying – 'O King, who wants to fulfill material desires must necessarily chant the Holy Name to accomplish their goal; the ones striving for liberation too have only one option – that is, to chant the Holy Name; when the *yogis* (the *gyânis*) practice their path nicely it makes them take to the path of chanting the Holy Name. There is no need to cite any evidence for this – that is why Srimad-Bhâgavatam uses the word '*nirnitam*', meaning, it is an axiom –have no doubt about it."

We can achieve all our desires by resorting to Sri *Harinâm Sankirtan* alone and although we may not perfect other parts of *bhajan*, simply by chanting the Holy Name we attain perfection.

We can chant the Holy Name in any place or at any time. Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has written –

"Chanting the Holy Name has the same power in all the ages, however in *Kaliyug* Sri *Bhagavân* Himself exhorts the living being to chant, hence it has more glory in *Kaliyug*. In an ordinary *Kaliyug*, Sri *Bhagavân* appears as a *Yugâvatâr* and spreads the Holy Name, but this is a very special *Kaliyug* since *Swayam Bhagavân* Sriman-Mahâprabhu has descended along with His associates. He Himself chants the Holy Name and makes the living beings do so. Therefore *Harinâm kirtan* is more wonderful now. Even though we have to perform other parts of *bhajan*, we should do them along with chanting. When Karbhâjan Rishi described the *yuga-dharma* of *Kaliyug* he told King Nimi –

"In *Kaliyug* the ones who are very intelligent worship Sri Hari with plenty of *Sankirtan-yagna* (by chanting lots of *Harinâm*)" – (S.B.11.5.32)

"Sri Krishna-Chaitanya Mahâprabhu has revealed the *Harinâm Sankirtan*. Whoever worships Him by chanting the Holy Name is indeed blessed. He alone has good intelligence while the rest of the people are foolish. Chanting the Holy Name is the essence of all *yagnas*."
– (C.C.Âdi.3.77-78)

The scriptures highly extol Sri *Harinâm kirtan* and state its colossal power – let us hear some of it. The most sinful person can destroy his sins by taking refuge of the Holy Name –

"Just as the roar of a lion drives out the wild animals man can annihilate all his sins by chanting the Holy Name." – (Garud Purân)

What to speak of destroying sins; the Holy Name can redeem one even from the hell –

"Wherever the residents of hell chanted the Holy Name they gained devotion for Sri *Bhagavân* and attained divine abodes." – (Nrisimha Purân)

The Holy Name destroys mental as well as physical ailments –

“As soon as we remember His Name and glorify Him all mental and physical ailments are destroyed - I pay obeisance unto That Sri Anantadev (Sri *Bhagavân*).” – (Skanda Purân)

“When we chant the Holy Name constantly all our illnesses, troubles, disturbance are destroyed and we are fill with peace.” – (Brihad Vishnu Purân)

“Even the most fallen sinner gains a pure heart and becomes a devotee if he chants the Holy Name continuously.” – (Brahmânda Purân)

“Who chants the names Hare, Keshav, Govinda and Vâsudev – *Kaliyug* has no mastery (effect) on them.” – (Brihan-Nâradiya Purân)

“My dear child, you need not recite the Rig, Sam and Yajur Vedas; simply chant the name of Govinda continuously since His Name alone is worthy of praise.” – (Skanda Purân)

“We can get the result of serving hundreds of holy places by chanting Sri Vishnu’s name.” – (Vâman Purân)

“It is extremely pious to donate one crore cows during the solar eclipse, to reside for one *kalpa* in the water of Gangâ at Prayâg, to perform one million *yagnas* and give gold equal to Moun Meru in alms – however they are not equal to a hundredth fraction of chanting Lord Govinda’s name.” – (Skanda Purân)

“If we chant Sri Vishnu’s name we get rid of the cycle of birth and death, our enemies such as lust and anger are destroyed and we gain spiritual knowledge.” – (Skanda Purân)

“There are various powers (*shaktis*) in alms-giving, fasting, austerities and holy places. Some *shaktis* can destroy all the sins of the *devatâs* and grant well being. Râjsuya, Ashwamedh *yagna* and spiritual knowledge too have power. *Bhagavân* Sri Hari has dragged all those *shaktis* from there and placed them in His Name.” – (Skanda Purân)

“The ones who chant ‘Nârâyan’, ‘Jagannâth’, ‘Vâsudev’, ‘Janârdan’ etc are praised everywhere.” – (Brihan-Nâradiya)

“The ones who have no other respite, are steeped in sense gratification, are inimical by nature, without spiritual knowledge and material detachment and without any control over sexual desire and devoid of any righteous conduct – they can easily attain a state only by chanting the Holy Name – such that even the sum total of all-righteous people⁵cannot reach.” – (Padma Purân)

“The ones who always chant the names such as ‘Nârâyan’, ‘Achyuta’, ‘Ananta’, ‘Vâsudev’ etc. are united with me.” – (Varâha Purân)

⁵ People who always conduct themselves righteously

"The one who always engages in sins, even he can attain the supreme abode of Sri Vishnu by chanting the Holy Name." – (Nandi Purân)

"Dear brahmins, the ones who constantly chant Your Holy Name in spite of being hungry and thirsty – Sri Hari is extremely pleased with them." – (Brihan-Nâradiya Purân)

"Chanting the Holy Name of Sri Dâmodar is the only good thing in life – it is also treasure we can gain and the sole benefit of living." – (Skanda Purân and Padma Purân)

"The connoisseurs of *bhakti ras* consider the chanting of the Holy Name as the outcome of *bhakti*, since the Holy Name is the only sure way to arouse precious divine love – it never fails." – (Srla Sanâtan Goswâmi in Brihad-Bhâgavatam.2.3.165)

Srla Sanâtan Goswâmpâd has explained this statement as follows –

"Aho! How much can I extol Sri *Harinâm-sankirtan* that is the greatest of all means? The connoisseurs of *bhakti* have ascertained chanting of the Holy Name as the highest achievable goal. You may ask – *prem* is the outcome of devotional practice and chanting is the means to achieve it, why are you calling it the 'result of *bhakti*'? My answer is – You are right. However chanting the Holy Name leads certainly to *prem* (whosoever chants the Holy Name will surely get *prem*), hence we are calling it the result of *bhakti*. In fact there is no exception to this rule."

Therefore the saints call *Harinâm-sankirtan* as the product of *bhakti*. When we chant the Holy Name we naturally gain the priceless divine love –the result of devotional practice. Hence chanting is the goal.

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has stated with His holy lips –

"Chanting the Holy Name destroys all our sins and redeems us from material attachment. It purifies the innermost heart and is the source of all devotional practices. It arouses Sri Krishna-*prem*, and makes us relish its nectar. It gives us Sri Krishna and immerses us in the nectarine ocean of *sevâ*."

– (C.C.Antya.20.10-11)

The special characteristic of chanting Sri Krishna's name

We have already learnt that Sri *Bhagavân's* name is eternal, conscious and blissful just like Sri *Bhagavân*. From this point of view all His names are equal. Yet if we analyze the glory of the Holy Name we can understand the glory of Sri Krishna-*nâm*. Since the Holy Name is non-different from Sri *Bhagavân*, the glory of the names is in proportion to the greatness of the divine manifestations. Therefore since Sri Krishna is *Swayam Bhagavân*, His name too is special – naturally. Chanting Sri Vishnu's name is more glorious than taking the names of *devatâs*, while a single name of Lord Râmchandra is equal to a thousand names of Sri Vishnu. Sriman-Mahâdev told the same to the Mother Goddess –

"*râmo râmeti râmeti rame râme manorame,*

sahasra-nâmbhistulyam râmanâma varânane."

Sri Râmchandra is superior to Matsya, Kurma and other incarnations – this we learn from the scriptures. Therefore Padma Purân says that the name 'Râm' is more glorious than the names of other incarnations. Shata-nâm Stotra also corroborates this fact –

"A single name of Sri Vishnu can yield more result than reciting all the Vedas. Yet one thousand names of Sri Vishnu is equal to a single name of Lord Râm."

Brahmânda Purân says –

"We get the same result by uttering Sri Krishna's name once as chanting three times the one thousand names of Lord Vishnu."

This shows that if we chant Sri Krishna's name once it is equal to saying the name of Lord Râm thrice. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"The name of Sri Râmchandra grants liberation – hence it is 'târak' (the liberator), however the name of Sri Krishna gives *prem*, therefore it is 'pârak' (the One Who gives love)." – (C.C.antya.3.244)

Thus from the scriptures and preceptors tell us that the name of Sri Krishna is the most glorious of all divine names. Sri Krishna himself has declared –

"nâmnâm mukhyatamam nâma krishnâkhyam me parantapa"

Meaning - "Dear Arjun, 'Krishna' is the greatest of all my names."

Also from the point of view relish, Sri Krishna's name is incomparable. We see in Prabhâs-Khanda –

"O Shounak, Sri Krishna's name is sweeter than sweet, is the goodness amongst all that is good, the most delicious fruit of the Vedas that are like a wish-fulfilling creeper and it is transcendental – if anyone says this name even once – be it out of respect or disrespect – it redeems that man."

Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has written a very sweet verse in his drama Vidagdha-Mâdhav –

"They dance on my tongue and arouse the desire to possess innumerable tongues! They slightly brush against my ears and make me crave for millions of ears! They lodge in my heart and stupefy all my senses! Ohh! I do not know what immense nectar these two syllables – 'Kri' and 'shna' possess!!"

*Pada-kartâ*⁶ Srila Jadunandan Thâkur has rendered an extraordinarily superb translation of this verse –

"As soon as I utter Krishna-*nâm*, my tongue dances incessantly and immensely increases my longing; the Holy Name is so sweet that I cannot control my heart and

⁶ A Vaishnava rhymester

I desire innumerable tongues! Oh! How can I express the sweetness of the Holy Name?

Who has made these two syllables "Kri' and 'shna' and with which nectar? They are so sweet that they enhance so much bliss in the ears which start sprouting and I crave for millions of ears so that I may relish the Holy Name to my heart's content!

When I see the two syllables 'Kri' and 'shna' my scorched eyes are soothed and they long to see Krishna in person. Oh! Only if I could have countless eyes then I could behold Krishna's beauty for His Name is non-different from His body.

When the Holy Name enters the heart, I want to spread wings, all my senses dance in delight – the Holy Name maddens me with *prem!*

When the Holy Name enters an ear, it forsakes all other activities and the Holy Name arouses all the *bhâvs*. Sri Krishna-*nâm* is the repository of all sweetness and is the casket of entire *ras* – thus says Jadunandan dâs."

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has said –

*"ânandâmbudhi-varadhanam pratipadam purnâmritâswâdanam,
sarvâtmâ-snaoanam param vijayate srikrishna-sankirtanam."*

Meaning - "It enhances the ocean of bliss, each moment gives the relish of complete nectar, supremely delights all senses, mind, intellect and even the soul – That Sri Krishna-*nâm-sankirtan* is reigning supreme." – (Shikshâshtakam)

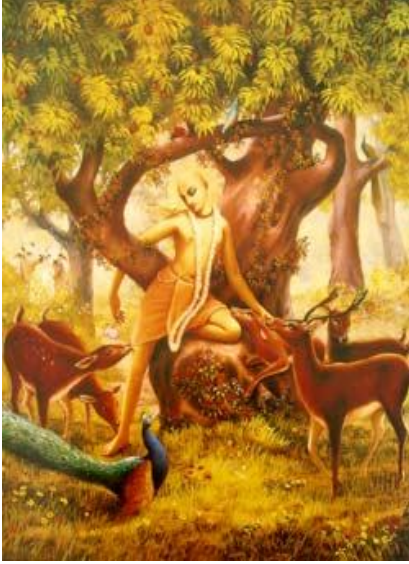
Srila Sanâtan Goswâmpâd has written –

"When the nectarine *ras* of Sri Krishna-*nâm* arises in a single organ – that is – the tongue – it over floods all other senses in its own sweet *ras*."

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has advised all humankind in *Kaliyug* to chant the *Mahâmantra* composed of 32 syllables, for it is the only way to get deliverance. Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat says –

*"âpone sobâre prabhu kore upadeshe,
krishna-nâm mahâmantra shunoho harishe.
'hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare,
hare râma hare râma râma râma hare hare.'
prabhu kohe kohilâm ei mahâmantra,
ihâ jopo giyâ shobe koriâ nirbandha.
ihâ hoite sarba-siddhi hoibe shobâr,
sarbakkhan bolo ithe bidhi nâhi âr."*

Meaning - "The Lord Himself advised everyone – Listen joyously Sri Krishna-*nâm* – the *Mahâmantra*. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Râma Hare Râma Râma Râma Hare Hare. The Lord said – I have told you this *Mahâmantra*; now go home and chant it with determination. By chanting this *mantra* you will accomplish everything, keep on chanting it all the time – there is no other rule."



In this *po-yâr*, '*ihâ jopo giyâ shobe koriâ nirbandha*⁷' indicates that the Lord instructed us to chant the *Mahamantra* by keeping a count (certain number of rounds). On the other hand '*sarbakshan bolo ithe bidhi nâhi âr*⁸' means He told us to chant it loudly without keeping count.

Sriman-Mahâprabhu instruction shows that we can chant the *Mahâmantra* of 32 syllables silently (as *jap*) and also pronounce it loudly as in '*kirtan*'. Some say - "You cannot chant a *mantra* loudly. It is outside the scriptural law. Since the '*hare-krishneti-nâm* is *Mahâmantra*, we should only do *jap* by keeping count; we cannot sing it loudly." In this context we would like to state that - only when it contains a '*beej*' (seed-word) and words such as '*swâhâ*' and when it contains the Chaturthi-Vibhakti (the 4th case or the dative case) we can call it a

'*mantra*'. The Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* is an address (calling out to someone) and does not contain any of these. Hence any intelligent person should not doubt that we can chant it as '*jap*' and also say it loudly. Especially when we get proof for such activity in the scriptures, Mahâjan-statements and more so from the instruction and conduct of Sriman-Mahâprabhu Who is none other than *Swayam Bhagavân* (God Himself).

We are mentioning here in brief. Sri Padma Purân states -

***"harer-nâma-mahâmantrair-nashyet papa-pishâchakam,
harer-agre-swanair-uchchair-nrityam stan-nâm-krin-narah,
punâti bhuvanam vipra ! gangâdi salilam yathâ,
hare pradakshinam kurvann-uchchais-tan-nâma-krin-narah,
karatâlâdi sandhânâ suswaram kala-shabdîtam."***

Meaning - "If anyone dances in front of Sri Hari, chanting the *Harinâm Mahâmantra* loudly, his sins that are like ghosts are destroyed. Just as the holy waters such as the Gangâ purify the world, similarly those who loudly sing the *Mahâmantra* in a sweet voice with the accompaniment of cymbals - and circumambulate Sri Hari - they purify the world."

Those who say that although we may chant the *Mahâmantra* loudly, it is compulsory to keep a count and that there is no evidence of chanting the *Mahâmantra* without keeping a count - they should read this verse from Sri Padma Purân. Then they will easily understand that when we do *kirtan* while dancing along with playing the *kartâls* (cymbals), we cannot possibly keep count; so the countless chanting of the *Mahâmantra* is also corroborated.

Srila Kabi Karnapur has described Sriman-Mahâprabhu's renunciation-ceremony in his great drama Sri Chaitanya-Charit Mahâkâvya in the following manner.

"tatah sri gourângah samavadadateeva-pramudito,

⁷ now go home and chant it with determination

⁸ keep on chanting it all the time - there is no other rule

*hare krishnetiuchchyairvada muhuriti shrimayatanuh,
tato'soutat prochya prativalitaromâncha-lalito
rudanstattat karmârabhata bahu-dukhkhair-vidalifah."*

Meaning - "When Lord Gourânga was taking *sanyâs*, the barber was extremely sad; he held on to the shaving blade and simply could not bring himself to shave off the Lord's long and thick curls. Then Lord Gourânga told him to repeat the Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* loudly. The barber obeyed Him. He loudly cried out the Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* and weeping all the while, he shaved the Lord's head. While doing so, he displayed gooseflesh – the sign of ecstasy."

Certainly this is chanting *Mahâmantra* without keeping count, since how could the barber keep count while shaving? The question does not arise at all. Not only have Sriman-Mahâprabhu instructed us to chant the *Mahâmantra* without keeping count, He has done it Himself. Srila Lochan dâs Thâkur has stated in his text Sri Chaitanya-Mangal –

"hare krishna nâm seho bole nirantar".

Here '*bole*' means 'tells' and '*nirantar*' means 'constantly'. It clearly indicates that the Lord chanted the *Mahâmantra* loudly and constantly, which naturally shows 'without keeping count'. Sri Vrindâvan dâs Thâkur, who is the incarnation of Vyasdev too says –

*"prasanna sri-mukhe 'hare krishna krishna' boli,
bijoy hoilâ gourchandra kutuhali.
'hare krishna hare krishna' boli prem-sukhe,
pratyaksha hoilâ âshi adwaita sammukhe."*

Meaning - "Lord Gourachandra strode in eagerly with a beaming face, chanting 'Hare Krishna Krishna'. He said 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna' in blissful love and appeared before Lord Advaita."

Sriman-Mahâprabhu instructed countless chanting of *Mahâmantra* and did it Himself too; however He also instructed us to chant the *Mahâmantra* by keeping count as well.

Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has stated –

"hare krishnetyuchchaih sphuritarasano nâma-gananâkrita-granthi-shrenih subhagati-sutrojjwalakarah".

Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi has written –

"nijatve goudiyân jagati parigrihya prabhurimân hare krishnety-evam keeping count. Thus we have proved beyond doubt that we can chant the Mahâmantra ganânâvidhinâ kirtayata bhoh"

Both these statements prove that Sriman-Mahâprabhu chanted the *Mahâmantra* mentally as well as loudly, and by keeping count and not keeping count.

Srila Sârvabhousha Bhattachârya Mahâshay has written in Sri Chaitanya-Shatak –

"vishanna-chittân kalipâpa-bheetan"

*samvikshya gouro harinâma-mantram
swayam dadou bhakta-janân samâdishat
kurushva sankirtanam nritya-vâdyaih."*

Meaning - "When Sri Chaitanya Mahâprabhu saw the people getting afraid of the sinful *Kaliyug* and depressed, He gave them the *Harinâm-mantra* and had issued a blanket order to chant in congregation this *Mahâmantra* with dancing and music."

'*samâdishat*' indicates that Srîman-Mahâprabhu had ascended with the firm determination to immerse humankind in the *ras* of eternal love and that was possible only through loud congregational chanting of the *Mahâmantra*. 'Jap' redeems a single soul, whereas loud *kirtan* delivers the animate and the inanimate objects, since they too hear it. Srîmat Jiva Goswâmpâd has written -

"nâma-kirtananchadam-uchchaireva prashastam."

Meaning - "The loud chanting of the Holy Name is more popular."

Along with the above statement Srîmat Jiva Goswâmpâd has also cited the reason for this -

"Those who chant the Holy Name loudly deliver not only themselves, but others also. They cause welfare to every living being. Prahâd Mahâshay has thus glorified Lord Nrisimha in Sri Nrisimha Purân in the following manner - 'O my Lord, the great devotees who loudly chant You the Holy Name with extreme joy - they are the selfless friends of all living beings'." - (B.S.269)

Nâmâchârya Srîla Haridâs Thâkur has vociferously praised loud chanting of the *Mahâmantra* with his holy lips -

*"jopile se krishna-nâm âponi se tore,
uchcha sankirtane para-upakâr kore.
ataeb uchcha kori kirtan korile,
shatagun phal hoy sarba-shâstra bole.
jihbâ pâiâo nara bine sarba prâni,
na pare bolite krishna nâm heno dhwani.
byartho janma ihârâ nistâr jâhâ hoite,
bolo dekhi kon dosh se karma korite.
keho âponâre mâtira koroye poshan,
keho bâ poshan kore sahasreko jon.
duite ke boro, bhâbi bujhoho âpone,
ei abhiprây gun uchcha sankirtane."*

Meaning - "When we chant Sri Krishna-*nâm* silently we only deliver ourselves, however when we chant loudly, we are helping others too. Therefore all the scriptures hail loud *sankirtan* and say that it is hundred times more fruitful than silent chanting (*jap*). All living beings, with the exception of man, cannot utter Sri Krishna-*nâm*, even though they may have tongues. In that case, their birth is useless, since the only way to deliver ourselves is to chant Sri Krishna-*nâm*. Tell me then, what is the problem if we do this? Someone feeds only himself, while another person feeds one thousand - decide and tell me who is greater of the two? That is why loud *sankirtan* is more praiseworthy than silent *jap*."

- (Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat)

Sriman-Mahâprabhu drowned the universe in *prem-ras* merely by the loud chanting of the Hare Krishna-*Mahâmantra*. His confidential associate Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has written –

*"sri-chaitanya-mukhodgirnâ hare-krishneti-varnakâh,
majjayanto jagat premni vijayantâm tad-âhvayâh."*

Meaning - "The countless chanting of Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* that has 32 syllables and has sprung from Sri Chaitanya Mahâprabhu's holy lips are submerging the entire universe in the ocean of *prem* – all victory to such *Mahâmantra!*" – (Lagu-Bhâgavatâmrítam)

Sripâd Baladev Vidyâhbushan has explained '*tad-âhvayâh*' (in the verse) as '*krishna-namâni*' – meaning – all the sixteen names belong to Sri Krishna. This name alone can deliver any man and is so powerful that it can immerse anybody in *prem-ras*.

How To chant Sri Hari-nâm

Chanting the Holy Name is the infallible way to gain *prem*. How to chant the Holy Name? Sriman-Mahâprabhu has Himself instructed us about this with His holy lips –

"How should we chant the Holy Name so that we gain *prem*? O Swarup and Râma Roy, Listen to the process! We should be lower than a blade of grass and as tolerant as a tree, we should not expect any respect from others, yet respect everybody – in this manner we should constantly chant the Holy Name."

– (C.C.Antya.20.16)

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has explained further –

"We should be superior in all respects, yet consider ourselves more useless than a blade of grass. We should be tolerant like a tree in two ways – a tree never protests even when it is cut, it dies of thirst, yet does not beg for water. In spite of this, it gives its wealth to whosoever asks for it. It bears the heat and rain, yet offers shelter to others. Similarly a Vaishnav should be superior and yet devoid of false ego. We should respect all living beings knowing that Sri Krishna is present in them. When we chant the Holy Name in this manner, we gain love for the lotus feet of Sri Krishna." – (C.C.Antya.20.17-21)

Offenses
alone can stop
the Holy
Name

The Holy Name is so extremely powerful that nothing can deter it – it is impossible for us to possess any *anartha* that can prevent the Holy Name from leading us to *prem* – well, except one barrier – and that is '*aparâdh*'. When Sriman-Mahâprabhu spoke the above verse to Swarup-Dâmodar and Râmânanda Roy, He axed the very root of *nâm-aparâdh*⁹. He instructed us to chant the Holy Name with humbleness.

Humility is the soul of devotional practice.

⁹ Offenses against the Holy Name

What is humility?

'Humility' is a *bhâv* that makes us; although we may possess all good qualities, feel that we are amazingly worthless and fallen. When we possess such humility it will save us from committing Vaishnav-offense and then Sri Nâm-Prabhu will be pleased with us. However we should not think that – "first I will acquire this great quality 'humbleness' and then I will start chanting" As we continue to chant the Holy Name the humility as described by Srîman-Mahâprabhu will arise in our heart on its own and make us chant inoffensively. Of course, if we wish to attain *prem*, we should pay great attention to all the offenses, and chant with utmost humility – this is the instruction of the great souls as well as of the scriptures.

Ten offenses

Let us discuss the ten offenses briefly.

The First Offense



Sri Padma Purân says – "When we blaspheme the devotees we supremely offend the Holy Name. The devotees who steadfastly chant the Holy Name are preaching the glory of Sri Nâm-Prabhu to the world; how can the Holy Name tolerate the blasphemy of such devotees?"

Amongst all the offenses this one is the strongest, hence we call it *Mahad-aparâdh* or 'great offense'. Mostly it is this offense that obstructs us, although we firmly chant the Holy Name and practice devotion. It is the chief offense to the Holy Name; therefore the preceptors have posted it on top of the list.

What does 'nindâ' or 'blasphemy' mean?

Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

"nindanam dosha kirtanam"

Meaning – " 'Nindâ' or 'blasphemy' means 'to glorify¹⁰ someone's fault'."

When our speech shows disrespect, intolerance, envy or violence towards a devotee – it is 'nindâ'. Just censuring a devotee is 'great offense' – then we can easily guess what huge offense we will commit if we treat him with envy and violence.

Often we think that if a devotee does something foul, then why should it be wrong to criticize? For are we not speaking out fact? To tell you the truth, even thinking like this amounts to an offense. The scriptures have stated that "nindâ means 'to discuss a fault' " – the question whether it is true or false does not arise. The scriptures say – "*suchakasyâpi tad-bhavit*" – this means "do not discuss a devotee's fault".

Who is a sâdhu?

Here it is natural for us to raise this question. Who is a *sâdhu*? The answer is – "*Sâdhu*' refers to those who

¹⁰ Here it means to speak aloud

have taken the shelter of 'Bhâgavat-dharma'. A devotee has forsaken even the desire for liberation; he has accepted the path of devotional practice solely to gain the service of Sri Krishna's lotus feet – so he is 'sâdhu'."

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has written in Mâdhurya-Kâdambini – "We should not think that only those who are kind, peaceful, tolerant and are endowed with all good qualities are devotees or 'sâdhus' in the real sense - if we blaspheme them, we commit an offense; however, there is no problem if we criticize those who do not have such sterling qualities."

Actually, even if "*sarvâchâra-vivarjitâh shathadhiyo vrâtyâ jagad-vanchakâh*" – the ones who are devoid of all etiquettes, are big frauds and are cheating the entire world – if they worship Sri *Bhagavân* – we should count them as 'sâdhus'. This is because we should never blaspheme a devotee who adores Sri *Bhagavân* exclusively, even though he may be evil. We have to accept him as a 'sâdhu'. Sri Krishna has Himself instructed Arjun –

"O Arjun, If one is extremely evil – that is – harms others, steals others' property and wife – yet worships me exclusively (does not worship anyone other than me, does not practice any other path such as *gyân* or *karma*, resorting only to *bhakti*, does not wish to attain anyone other than me) – accept him as a 'sâdhu'. After all, he has taken to the best path (meaning – he has decided, whether I go to hell or get a lower form of life – I will worship none other than Sri Krishna), so he is a 'sâdhu'." – (B.G.9.30)

If we blaspheme such a devotee we are bound to commit offence. Then we need not stress how much *aparâdh* we will commit if we criticize a good devotee. When we see a bad devotee, we may criticize him, so the Lord has called him a 'sâdhu' so that we remember not to blaspheme him. Whether we speak or hear bad about a devotee – both are offenses. Therefore if someone blasphemes a devotee, we should close our ears, remember Sri *Bhagavân* and leave that place. Sriman-Mahâprabhu has illuminated this subject more in detail.

The Lord said – "If I hear even once Sri Krishna-*nâm* from someone's lips, he is worthy of worship and the best of all." – (C.C.Madhya.15.106)

"Hence, one who says Sri Krishna-*nâm* once – I consider him a Vaishnav and revere him." – (C.C.Madhya.15.111)

There is none who has not uttered Sri Krishna-*nâm* even once, so we should forsake all criticisms. Then it will be easy for us to save ourselves from this 'great offense'.

The Lord said – "No purpose is served by criticizing; sin is all that we gain. As a result, the one who does not criticize is the most blessed of all."

"The one who does not criticize and constantly chants Sri Krishna-*nâm*, he alone is invincible, his consciousness has awakened and he shall conquer Sri Krishna easily." – (Sri Chaitanya Bhâgabat)

The Second Offense

*"shivasya shri-vishnorya iha guna-nâmâdi sakalam,
dhiyâ bhinnam pashyet sa khalu harinâmâhitakarah"*

Meaning - "If we consider the qualities, name etc of Sri Vishnu and Sri Shiva as different from each other, it is not good for our *Harinâm* (= offense)."

This indicates that we should not think that Sri Vishnu is a power and Sri Shiva is another power. Same goes for their names and qualities also. If we do make this distinction, we are endorsing polytheism – this displeases the Holy Name. Sri Vishnu is 'the One without a second'. He is the Supreme Controller. Brahmâ, Shiva etc, are all His manifestations – no one has any independent power. To prove this Sri Brahma-Samhitâ has stated –

"Milk transforms into curds; curds is non-different from milk. In the same manner He descends as Shambhu to destroy the world – I adore That Primeval Lord Sri Govinda."

Actually Sri Krishna is the Supreme Controller. Brahmâ, Shiva and the other *devatâs* have come from Him; so they are neither different from Him nor are they equal to Him. This is because He is the cause of all causes – *Swayam Bhagavân* (God Himself). As a result it is an offense to consider Srîman-Mahâdev a different controller or equal to Sri Krishna is an offense.

The devotees who adore Sri Vishnu exclusively, consider Sri Shiva as a 'Supreme Vaishnav' and revere him. Some devotees consider him as Sri Vishnu's *gunâvatâr*. The concluding part of Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

'Just as Gangâ is the greatest of all rivers, Sri Krishna is the supreme amongst *devatâs*, Shambhu (Shiva) is the foremost Vaishnav, and similarly Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the supreme most Purân.'" – (S.B.12.13.16)

The Third Offense –

If we disregard Sri Gurudev or consider him ordinary, we offend the Holy Name. This happens when we do not know the facts about Sri Gurudev. Then we take him in a worldly sense. Sri Krishna has Himself said to Sri Uddhav –

"Know Spiritual Master as non-different from me. Do not ever disregard him or consider him mundane and behave adversely towards him." – (S.B.11.17.27)

If we think of Sri Gurudev as a human being all our efforts become fruitless.

Sri Nârada said –"The Spiritual Master is Sri *Bhagavân* manifested before us. He endows us with spiritual enlightenment. If we are as foolish as to consider him a mortal, all our spiritual efforts such as study of the scriptures become as useless as the *Hasti-snân* (elephant-bath)." – (S.B.7.15.26)

This also indicates that –

"When we adore the Spiritual Master as much as we love Sri *Bhagavân*, then we get all the inner meanings of the scriptures from that great soul".

– (Shwetâshwatar Upanishad)

Therefore we should always think about the good qualities of the Spiritual Master and sing his glory. We should consider his body as divine and not see any fault in him. We must realize that when we do not perform *bhajan* as per his instructions, and do not chant the *mantras* given by him, we disregard the Spiritual Master and it offends the Holy Name.

The Fourth offense - *shruti-shâstra-nindanam* -

This refers to blaspheming the Vedas and scriptures following the Vedas. 'Blaspheming' includes disregard, irreverence or any other adverse behavior. The Vedas are transcendental and self-manifested. "*Vedayatiti vedah*" - "Veda is one who makes himself known". The Itihâsas, Purânas etc. elaborate the instructions of the Vedas. Srimad-Bhâgavatam is in accordance with the Vedas. Criticizing and disrespecting these scriptures is an offense.

The Vedas have three parts (called '*kânda*' or 'trunks'). They are *karma-kânda*, *gyân-kânda* and *upâsanâ-kânda*. Naturally a devotee will not criticize the shrutis that extol devotion; however if a devotee thinks that those parts of the Vedas that instruct about *karma* and *gyân* are nonsense and because they do not directly deal with devotion, we can disrespect them - then he is committing an offense. We should realize that the Vedas are most compassionate. Not everybody is qualified for *bhakti*. There are people who are promiscuous and deeply attached to material enjoyments. The Vedas are resolved to enlighten even such fallen ones. The merciful Vedas instruct them in such a way that when these people follow the Vedic injunctions, someday they too will enter the temple of Bhakti *devi*. This is the root intention of those portions of the Vedas that preach *karma* and *gyân*. Thus when we know the truth about the scriptures, we will not commit the offense of criticizing them.

The Fifth Offense - *tatha-artha-vâdo* -

We see that the scriptures highly extol Sri *Harinâm*. The glory of the Holy Name is incomparable. When we think that these are mere eulogies, and are not true, we commit offense.

To tell you the truth, the magnificence of the Holy Name is like a fathomless ocean. It has no limits. How much of its glory have the scripture and preceptors been able to express?

They must have revealed only a drop of this ocean. Yet, if we think that it is merely 'glory' and not true - can we guess how much offense we are committing?

Why do the Vedas
sing false glory?

Here we may question -we find that the Vedas extol even *devatâ-pujâ*, sacrifices etc. and state that the joy in the heavenly planets never comes to an end, it is limitless and we should make it our supreme goal. Are they not exaggeration? When

we, the devotees, boldly proclaim that these statements are not true, yet do not commit offense while saying so, then why do we offend the Holy Name when we think its glory too as false? The answer is that - the Vedas want to draw unfeeling lusty people who are highly attached to material comforts than to a spiritual life. So they eulogize heavenly-joy. By these statements the Vedas want to tempt these people and improve the quality of their lives. On the other hand, Sri *Bhagavân* is

absolute, the One and only the Supreme Object. His Holy Name, *bhakti* and *prem* are so inconceivably great that even the Vedas fail to grasp them. They are beyond the Vedas. Hence there is no question of singing false glory.

"Sri Krishna is Truth and Sri Krishna-*bhakti* is love personified. Sri Krishna, His *bhakti* and the chanting of His Holy name are all blissful." – (C.C.Âdi.1.9.6)

The Sixth Offense - *harinâmnî kalpanam* –

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has explained this as –

"The Holy Name has incomparable glory. To prove that it is not so great, one may put forth some imaginary meaning of the Holy Name. It is an offense."

The Holy Name is exceedingly great and has colossal impact. Intelligent people will not find it difficult to believe. In this world we can perceive the power of certain, gems, *mantras* etc. How these objects have such power – it is beyond our comprehension. But we cannot ignore their influence either. When the power of these material objects is beyond our intellect, how can we conceive the greatness of the Holy Name that is transcendental divine exceedingly inconceivable and extraordinarily powerful? The scriptures have forbidden us to analyze transcendental objects –

*achintyâh khalu ye bhâvâ na tânstarkena yojayet,
prakritibhyah param yachcha tadachintasya lakshanam.*

Meaning - "We are forbidden to speculate over inconceivable *bhâvs* or objects. 'Inconceivable' refers to whatever is beyond the material nature."

After all, we belong to this world. We come in contact only with objects that are transformation of Nature. Therefore while analyzing or debating, we use our material experience. As our intellect becomes transcendental, we will be able to absorb the knowledge of divine objects. Hence whatever the scriptures and the preceptors who have transcendental intellect have told us about the inconceivable, we should accept with respect and faith. We are forbidden to use material intellect in this regard. Those with material unclear intelligence try to use logic and analysis to diminish the inconceivable glory and power of the Holy Name; they verily commit a crime against Sri Nâm-Prabhu.

The Seventh Offense -

nâmnô balâd yasya hi papa-buddhirna vidyate yamairhi shuddhih

Meaning - "If one thinks he can commit an offense on strength of the Holy Name – even if he performs innumerable penances and undergoes untold suffering in hell – he will not get rid of this offense"

Explanation – We know that our sins are destroyed when we chant the Holy Name; now if out this knowledge to think – "Oh, I can continue to sin merely because after all, I am chanting and the Holy Name will destroy my sins" – then we are offending Sri Nâm-Prabhu.

It is true that to destroy mountainous sins is but a child's play for Sri *Harinâm*; yet we are supposed to take His shelter to achieve the topmost goal – eternal love or to make Sri Krishna happy by obtaining His *sevâ*. Now if we resort to the Holy Name to commit hateful sins displays audacity. Moreover this indicates that we are belittling the Holy Name, hence we collect offenses that are millions of times more dangerous than sins. As a result, even if we perform penances and suffer terrible punishments in the hell our *chitta* is not cleansed.

Here we should note the point that, when we take the shelter of the Holy Name with a pure intention, forget committing sins, we will not be interested even in pious activities. Therefore the one who has sought refuge of the lotus feet of Sri *Harinâm* will never dream of committing sin. When we have some *aparâdh*, then our chanting is called '*nâmâbhâs*' (shadow of the Holy Name) and not '*pure nâm*'. Even *nâmâbhâs* annihilates past sins and wipes out the tendency to sin. Even then, some sinful reactions do remain. In this state, if a *sâdhak* thinks that he can continue to sin on the strength of the Holy Name he commits a horrible *nâm aparâdh*.

The Eighth Offense -

"dharma-vrata-tyâga-hutâdi sarva-shubha-kriyâ-sâmyam-api-pramâdah"

Meaning - "It is an offense to equate the result of the Holy Name with the outcomes of righteous conduct, fasting, sacrifices, and other religious activities.'

This belittle the glory of the Holy Name, hence an offense. All the pious activities listed in the scriptures are material in nature, whereas the divine name is transcendental and indestructible. The pious activities are merely the means to attain heavenly comforts. They cannot be the goal. On the other hand, the Holy Name reaches us to the goal (eternal love) and is also the goal itself. Thus how can we consider *Râgânugâ* any good act equal to *Harinâm*? In fact, the good acts grant us some miniscule fruits – if we pray to the Holy Name for the same results – we commit an offense, since this means we are equating the Holy Name with those pious activities.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has said –

"Sri *Harinâm* is independent and all-powerful. If we engage Him to bestow those small products that *karmas* can give us, we are insulting Him. It is an offense."

– (purport to Srimad-Bhâgavatam 6.2.10-22)

The Ninth Offense -

ashraddadhâne vimukhe'pi shrinvati yashchopadeshah shiva-nâmaparâdhâ -

Meaning - "It is an offense to instruct one to chant *Harinâm* if he is irreverent and is averse to hearing the Holy Name."

Faith and reverence are the prime requisites to enter the *Bhakti-Mandir*. Therefore only one who has *shraddhâ* is qualifies to chant the Holy Name. If we meet someone who has no respect for the Lord and disinterested to know the glory of the Holy Name we should not instruct such a person to chant. We should simply say – "*Harinâm* is above everything, it is the supreme most and if we chant the Holy Name all will benefit". It is better to speak like this than directly saying – "You should chant the *Mahâmantra*." We should give *Harinâm* only after we have tested that person's

faith. Otherwise we shall commit offense. **The above verse states that if we instruct a faithless disrespectful person to chant, we are the offenders – and not the other person (for not having respect).**

The Tenth Offense –

*"shrute'pi-nâm-mâhâtmye yah pritirahito narah,
aham mamâdi paramo nâmni so'pâparâdhakrit."*

Meaning - "In spite of hearing the glory of Sri *Harinâm*, if we continue to think of the body as 'I' and body-related objects (persons) as 'mine' – and do not love the Holy Name – we commit an offense."

This statement refers to the one whom a devotee is instructing to chant. When a devotee preaches the Holy Name to someone and if that person does not start chanting, he is committing an offense. This is because when we do not chant? When we take pride in our body that is highly destructible and consider ourselves the Lord and master of material possessions. It is then that we disregard the Holy Name and do not start chanting. In spite of hearing the vast greatness of the Holy Name when we do not chant it means that we are insulting Sri Nâm-Prabhu. A devotee too should not instruct such a person to chant.

The result of offense less
chanting

The saints and scriptures ordain that we should chant the Holy Name without committing these ten offences. The only way we can chant without offending is to obey Sriman-Mahâprabhu's command – to be more humble than a blade of grass. However if we can really put this to practice, Sri Nâm-Prabhu will certainly grace us with His bounties and we shall feel blessed. And this will happen extremely quickly.

How can we obliterate *Nâm-
aparâdh*?

Padma Purân has stated –
"We can annihilate *Nâm-aparâdh* by resorting to chanting alone. We should chant without resting for a single moment – then we can destroy *Nâm-aparâdh*."

However if we offend a great soul, then we have to beg him to forgive us; when he is pleased, our *aparâdh* is destroyed. What happens if we are unable to please him? Then we have to chant all day and night, and then it will be possible to wipe out that offense. We can burn the other offenses by repenting and chanting incessantly.

How to find out if we have
aparâdh or not?

We may ask – "I have not committed a single offense, and I am chanting with respect; then how come Sri Nâm-Prabhu is not showering His blessings on me?" The answer to this query is the same – "*aparâdh*". There is nothing to stop the grace of the Holy Name other than offense. Although knowingly we do not commit an offense – it is true. But still we cannot proclaim to be completely free of *aparâdh*. We cannot guarantee that we do not have any offense collected over the past lives; also we do commit offenses unwittingly, do we not? **However there is one solid way we can discern whether or not we have 'offenses'**. When we chant a lot many times, we should peep into our hearts. Am I feeling joyous? Have I got tears and goose flesh? If the

answer is 'No', then we should accept that offenses have made our hearts rock-hard. In spite of chanting many times, when *prem* does not appear in our hearts, it is a sure sign of *nâm-aparâdh*. Srimad-Bhâgavatam proves this point –

*“tadshmasâram hridayam vatedam yad-grihyam-ânair-harinâma-dheyaih,
na vikriyetâtha yadâ vikâro netre jalam gâtraruhesu harshah.”*

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows –

“When we chant repeatedly, yet our heart does not melt with devotion – it is expressed by tears, goose flesh and other symptoms of *bhâv* – such a heart is hard like iron. It is a sign of *nâm-aparâdh*. Also, we cannot say that if one displays tears and goose flesh, his heart has melted; for some people who have unstable emotions too express such tears and other symptoms without possessing any *bhâv*. They can do this with practice as well. The reverse is also true. Some very serious devotees do not express any sign of ecstasy although their *chitta* is full of *bhakti*. Hence this verse (from Srimad-Bhâgavatam) actually means –

‘Even though one displays tears and gooseflesh externally, if he does not have a heart that has melted with devotion, it means his heart is rock-hard. Although tears and goose flesh are the common symptoms of a change of heart, we should know that the real indications are the ‘nine symptoms’ such as forbearance, spending every moment in relation with Sri *Bhagavân* etc.’¹¹

Two Types of Chanting

Anyway, whether we are offensive or non-offensive, it is our bounden duty to serve *bhakti devi* by chanting with love and respect. If we are inoffensive, we shall attain *prem* and if we are offensive, we shall obliterate our offenses and after that, gain *prem*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has instructed us to chant with love. He has said –

“We can chant the Holy Name in two manners –

1. just chant
2. chant lovingly

If we ‘just chant’ – that is, chant simply without any emotion, and if we are inoffensive we shall attain the divine abode. However if we chant with love we can get close to Sri *Bhagavân* and gain His *sevâ*.

The *Gopis* had met the Sri Krishna in Kurukshetra. Then He had extolled their love by saying –

‘Dear Vraja-beauties, living beings become immortal because of their devotion unto me. Your love forces me to come near you’ – (S.B.10.81.31)”
- (Krama-Sandarbha purport to S.B.6.2.20)

¹¹ Please refer the section called ‘*bhâv*’ in ‘A Scientific Study of *Bhakti*’.

These divine words prove that love is the best way to drag Sri Krishna to us. Similarly if we chant lovingly the Holy Name will surely manifest Sri Krishna before us.

How to chant with love



If we exclusively love the Holy Name then we should call out the *Mahâmantra* with intense longing. With how much passion should we call out our beloved *Harinâm*? Srila Sanâtan Goswâmpâd has given a wonderful example (B.B.2.3.167) –

“With how much longing the thirsty *châtaks* call out when it does not sight any cloud during the monsoon, with how much passion the *chakravâki* laments out of separation from her lover at night – a devotee, suffering in the pangs of *viraha*, and with an agitated soul, should loudly and thirstily call out his Beloved”.

If we understand the meaning of the *Mahâmantra*, relish it and then chant the Holy Name, we shall very soon gain the blessings of Sri Nâm-prabhu and start loving Him.

What does the *Mahâmantra* mean?

Nâmâchârya Thâkur Sri Haridâs has given a most wonderful explanation of the *Mahâmantra*. The devotees of Lord Goursundar will surely relish it.

*“ekdin haridâs nirjone boshiyâ,
mahâmantra jope harshe premâbishto hoiyâ.
hâshe kânde nâche gay gorje huhunkâr,
âchârjya gosâi âsi kore namaskâr.
sankoch pâiyâ hoilo bhâlo sambaran,
achârje pranami tiho arpilo âsan.
boshiyâ âchârjya gosâi kore nibedan,
ek boro samshay mone koroho chhedan.
kalijuge abatâr srikrishna-chaitanya,
chaitanya bhajaye jei sei boro dhonno.
tumi hao chaitanyer pârshad pradhân,
sri-krishna-chaitanya chhadi keno gâo ân?
athabâ ki marma jâni premânande bhâsho?
sarba jeebe harinâm koile upadesho.
nibedoy haridâs kori karajode,
sarba-tatta-betta tumi keno puchho more?
ki ba chhol âcharoho pâmor shodhite,
nibedan kori shuno jâhâ loy chitte.
kalijuge sri-krishna-chaitanya gudho abatâr,
koti samudra gambhir nâm tâm leelâ jân̄r.*

*guru-bhâbe korây tinho âponâ jojone,
harinâm mahâmantra dilo sarbajane.
sri-krishna-chaitanya kalijug abatâr,
harinâm mahâmantra juga-dharma sâr.
mahâmantre sri-krishna-chaitanya bhinno kobhu noy,
nâm nâmi bhed nâhi sarba shâstre koy."*

Meaning - "One day Haridâs Thâkur was sitting in a secluded place, absorbed in chanting the *Mahâmantra*. He was chanting joyously with love. He was laughing, crying, singing and roaring with a deafening noise. Just then Adwaita Âchârya entered and paid obeisance. An embarrassed Thâkur Haridâs immediately controlled himself. He returned the obeisance and offered the Âchârya a seat. Adwaita Prabhu sat down and requested Haridâs Thâkur to solve his doubt. He said - 'Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the Lord God in *Kaliyug*, so naturally whosoever worships Him is blessed. You are the foremost of all the associates of the Lord. Then why do you forsake the Holy Name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya and sing some other name? And



what is your realization that makes you float in blissful *prem*? When the Holy Name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahâprabhu is the topmost, then why did you instruct all living beings to chant *Mahâmantra*?'

Thâkur Srila Haridâs humbly folded his palms and replied - 'You are the -Knower of Truth; then why do You ask me? You are only pretending not to know anything, simply to teach the fallen souls. Anyway, I shall do as You like. It is true that Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the secret *avatâr* in the *Kaliyug* and His divine pastimes are as deep as innumerable oceans. He takes on the role of the Spiritual Master and makes us worship Him. That is why he has given everybody *Harinâm-Mahâmantra*.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the Lord God in *Kaliyug* and He has given us *Harinâm-Mahâmantra* that is the essence of this age. The *Mahâmantra* is in no way different from Sri Krishna Chaitanya, since all the scriptures declare that *nâm* is non-different from *nâmi*."

Then Thâkur Srila Haridâs illuminated every word of the *Mahâmantra* for our relish -

Hare - She Who is the daughter of Vrishabhânu and is the crest-jewel of all the beloveds of Sri Krishna, has now descended as Sri Chaitanya, hence He is 'Hare'.

Krishna - Srimad-Bhâgavatam glorifies Him as the 'Son of Nanda' - that 'Krishna' has now appeared as this Chaitanya Gosâi.

Hare – He stole everything¹² from Vraja and descended in Nadia; hence the 'hare' for Sri Krishna Chaitanya is most apt.

Krishna – He attracted the hearts of all living beings and sowed the seed of *bhakti*, hence the 'Krishna' indeed belongs to Him.

Krishna – He is 'Krishna' within and without, and His entire being is absorbed in the sound vibration of 'Krishna' – therefore we decide He is 'Krishna'.

Krishna – He assumed the garb of a *sannyâsi* and attracted the atheists – thus He is definitely 'Krishna'.

Hare – He steals the hearts and souls of the devotees with His extraordinary sweetness – this is the significance of His name 'Hare'.

Hare – He steals the hearts of His devotees so that He can steal their hearts in return – for this reason Sri Chaitanya is named 'Hare'.

Hare – Lord Krishna stole His Own sweetheart and ascended on earth – so Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Who is the essence of *Kaliyug* is 'Hare'.

Râm – The Divine Couple unite with each other and thus wander in Nabadweep in supreme pleasure, therefore Sri Chaitanya is 'Râm' in this *Kaliyug*.

Hare – Sri Chaitanya steals all the inauspicious qualities from the living beings, as a result, His name 'hare' is most propitious.

Râm – He love-sports in the hearts of His devotees, hence He has the name 'Râm'.

Râm – He is passionately aroused to relish Himself, therefore Sri Chaitanya has the name 'Râm'.

Râm – Lord Chaitanya manifested His form of Sri Râm Who is the Son of queen Kaushalya and had appeared in the *Tretâ yug* – consequently He is 'Râm'.

Hare – He stole Haridâs Thâkur's heart with His sweetness; hence He got the name 'Hare'.

Hare – He stole His own heart with His own sweet *bhâv* and became like a tortoise. As a result He became famous in the world as 'Hare'.

I have revealed the most confidential meaning of *Harinâm*, something that none of the scriptures can even dream about."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd explains the Mahâmantra

*sarva-cheto harah krishnastasya chittam haratyasou,
vaidaghi sâravistârairato râdhâ harâ matâ.1.*

¹² He emptied the Vrajavâsis' hearts and stole the most precious jewel of Vraja, that is, Sri Râdhâ-*bhâv* and Srimati Râdhârâni's splendor.

"Sri Krishna steals everyone's heart, while Srimati Râdhârâni steals His heart with Her intense *vaidagdhi* – hence She is called 'Harâ' and addressed as 'Hare'."

*karshati sweeya lâvanya-murali-kala-nihswanaih,
sri-râdhâm mohana-gunâlankritah krishna irshyate.2.*

"He drags Srimati Râdhârâni with His *lâvanya* and sweet vibrations of the flute – hence That mesmerizing One is called 'Krishna'."

*shrutyate neeyate râse harinâ harinekshanâ,
ekâkini rahahkunje hareyam tena kathyate.3.*

"We have heard that during the *Râs-leelâ*, Sri Hari steals Srimati Râdhârâni when She is alone and takes Her in a secluded *kunja* – because She is 'the stolen one' – She is 'Harâ'."

*angashyâmalimastomaih shyâmalikritakânchanah,
ramate râdhayâ sârdhamatah krishno nigadyate.4.*

"He turns the color of gold into dark green with His blue splendor; this means He makes the golden-complexioned Sri Râdhâ look dark green when He makes love to Her – so He is 'Krishna'."

*kritvâranye sarah shreshtham kântayânumatastayâ,
âkrishya sarvateerthâni tajyânât krishna irshyate.5.*

"With the permission of His beloved Srimati Râdhârâni, He attracted all the holy places in Vrindâvan and created a great lake (Shyâmkund) – so He is 'Krishna'."

*krishneti râdhayâ premnâ yamunâtatakânanam,
leelayâ lalitashchâpi dheeraih krishna udâhritah.6.*

"Sri Krishna is attracted by Srimati Râdhârâni's love and laments in the gardens on the banks of the Yamunâ in *dheer-lalita bhâv* – therefore the wise call Him 'Krishna'."

*hatavân gokule tishthannarishtam dushtapungavam,
sriharistam rasâduchchairgâyatiti harâ matâ.7.*

"Sri Hari kills the evil Arishtâsur in Vraja and She extols Him loudly as 'Hari' in a mood full of *ras* – so She is 'Harâ'."

*hasphutam râyati preetibharena haricheshtitam,
gâyatiti matâ dheererharâ rasa-vichakshanaih.8.*

"She glorifies Sri Hari's activities openly with love, so the wise connoisseurs of *ras* call Her 'Harâ'."

Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi's relish of the Mahâmantra



Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi has revealed a supremely enjoyable meaning of the Mahâmantra and Srila Shibânanda Sen's son Sri Chaitanya dâs has rendered it in the form of a poem in simple Bengali. **Since Srila Dâs Goswami is in Manjari-bhaav, he has revealed Srimati Raadharaani's rendering of the Mahaamantra !!!** We present the English translation here.

O **Hare**¹³ - You reveal Your bewitching form and steal my eyes and heart with Your sweetness,
O **Krishna** - You are the abode of joy and You are most attractive, I can see none but You.

O **Hare** - You shatter my self-control, fear of the elders and family-honor,
O **Krishna** - You drag me with the notes of Your flute and make me forget my

body and everything related to it.

O **Krishna** - You shock me by tugging at my bodice and pulling me close,

O **Krishna** - You touch my breasts under so many pretexts and are always restless because of Your *anuraag* for me.

O **Hare** - You steal me and take me to the flower-grove where You beg to make love,

O **Hare** - then the very next moment You steal my secret clothes and express Your deepest longing.

O **Hare** - You take pleasure in stealing my clothes and steal all the barriers in my heart,

O **Râm** - You look so pleasurable, and moreover You express so much *vaidaghi* and ultimately fulfill Your desire.

O **Hare** - No one is more eager or expert then You in stealing the hairline on the midriff, and all my aversion,

O **Râm** - then you reveal so many arts of love-making and make me float in *ras*.

O **Râm** - Your pleasure-sports are most pleasurable and I lose myself in Your joy,

O **Râm** - Whenever I think of You making love to me, Your handsome *ras*-form reveals in my mind's eye.

O **Hare** - There is no limit to Your stealing, how you steal my very consciousness and make me forget everything!

O **Hare** - You steal my bosom like a lion and I have none but You.

You are my soul and I do not know anyone else other than You. In Your *viraha* even one moment appears like hundreds of *kalpas*. And You, on the other hand, go far from me like one so unfeeling – tell me what do I do?

¹³ Hari = One Who steals. When we address 'Hari', the word changes into Hare.

O **Nava-Ghana-Shyâm**¹⁴- You are a repository of pure *ras*, my heart bleeds without You - how do I stay alive?
Poet Chaitanya dâs says - "Do not worry the one who has so much *anurâg* will surely get Her Beloved very soon." - (Padakalpataru)

Jai Jai Sri Radhe!!!

¹⁴ One Who resembles a fresh cloud