

শ্রীমন্নামামৃতসিঞ্চুবিন্দু

The Nectar of the Holy Name

Manindranath Guha

Introduced, translated, and annotated
by
Neal Delmonico

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Blessings

Manindranath Guha's Dikṣā Guru

Śrī Kanupriya Goswami

(From a letter written to the author dated 1-5-1970)¹³

In reviewing your book (*Śrī Mādhava-mādhurya-mañjuṣā, Treasure Chest of the Sweetness of Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa]*),¹⁴ that which has been given by the great, realized Vaiṣṇavas saints of Vṛndāvana is a source of joy. Even though the book is your first effort, the way it has achieved such high critical praise means that the path for your writing of future books will remain auspicious and open. This is indeed sufficiently hopeful. Whatever happens, together with performing *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Names, the writing of your books and the performing of your own worship (*bhajanā*) — this will make your life sweet like a shower in the sacred waters of the Triveṇī.¹⁵ Thus, your residence in the holy land¹⁶ will be fruitful. This is my hope for you.

¹³Though this letter does not refer specifically to the book translated here (the *Nectar of the Holy Name*), it constitutes in Mani Babu's eyes a blessing given to him by his guru on all his future works. This letter was written after the publication of Mani Babu's first book. I believe his guru had passed away before Manindranath's book on the Holy Name was published.

¹⁴Manindranath Babu's first book, published in 1969.

¹⁵The confluence of the three main sacred rivers in India: the Gaṅgā, the Yamunā, and the Sarasvatī. They join together at Allahabad and a bath in that confluence is considered extremely sanctifying.

¹⁶Vṛndāvana

Manindranath Guha's Śikṣā Guru

Śrī Kiśorīkiśorānanda Bābā
(Tin Kuḍi Goswami)

Hearing before that the spotless, full moon had set in India's sky of good fortune¹⁷ I was deeply pained inside. After getting your letter and understanding the details of it contents I felt some hope and some peace. Even though he has disappeared, the power of his *bhakti* for the Lord, endowed with his soothing and brilliant moonlight, has been established in you. This is indeed our good fortune. In the *bhakti* scriptures you have translated, the inward feelings of the Goswami are manifested. This sort of unprecedentedly wonderful narration is not possible for an ordinary living being. By the limitless grace your guru placed on you Śrīman Mahāprabhu sits inside you and narrates.

First one has [in your books] the truth of Śrī Gaura and Govinda's forms, qualities and sports and on top of that they are narrated through the lips of a devotee. Hearing the *Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya Nāṭaka* from your lips has filled even a worldly-minded person like me with joy.

May Śrī Śrī Rādhāvallabha bestow happiness upon you. Offering a *tulasi* leaf dipped in sandalwood to the feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhāvallabha, I pray that you will be healthy and long-lived, that while relishing the *bhakti-rasa* of the Lord you may bring about our good fortune and that of India as well.

¹⁷This is a reference to the then recent passing of Manindranath Babu's *dīkṣā* guru, Śrī Kanupriya Goswami.

Introduction

For those of us who think of ourselves as members of the community (*sampradāya*) started by Śrī Gaurahari, the time has indeed come for us to contemplate deeply on where we have arrived after having wandered step by step, under the influence of time, from the path that was started by him. If this self examination is to be carried out, we have to enter with open minds into the collection of books that the Gosvāmins left behind for us. If today we do not carry out this self-examination those whom we refer to as the heretical community (*apasampradāya*) will come and snatch away by force our rightful inheritance. We will no longer be able to find a way into it. If we are to become strong in our own fortress, we will need to take hold of the tremendously potent words of the Gosvāmins. Our power is deposited in them. Whatever we have heard, whatever we have understood, we will have to reconcile that with the words of the Gosvāmins.

In this *Drop from the Ocean of Nectar* the fundamental teaching of the path and philosophy founded by Śrī Gaura has been firmly established through the writings of the Gosvāmins. Beneath each statement citations from words of the Gosvāmins have been given in the footnotes. The fundamental teaching can be known from his (Śrī Gaura's) name — he is called the “father of *sañkīrtana*.” *Sañkīrtana* is the creation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.¹⁸

The way a father is extremely devoted to his son, that is the way Śrī Gaurahari feels towards this *sañkīrtana*. He intensely identifies with it. Among all the kinds of offerings that are used in the worship of Śrī Gaurahari, who is this age's chief object of worship, *sañkīrtana* is the best.

¹⁸Kavi Karṇapūra, Ccn., 8.42: इयमियं भगवत्कृष्णचैतन्यसृष्टिः ।

In it his satisfaction is the greatest. It is not only that it is the best of all — it is essential.

If one is able to go around loudly singing and dancing in the *sañkīrtana* of the Holy Names that Gaura created like someone half mad, then even without remembering and the other forms of *bhakti* cultivation one can enter into the bowers of Vraja. On the other hand, without resorting to the most essential of practices, that is, *sañkīrtana* of the Holy Names, the path to success by the other forms of practice becomes indeed very difficult to negotiate. This principle has been very clearly expressed in this book on the basis of the evidence of the Gosvāmins' writings.

By expert choice of words and cleverness of composition the subject matter has been very beautifully expressed in this book. Mr. Guha has given us sufficient introduction to his expertise in writing, his powers of perception, and his erudition by writing and editing many works on *bhakti* previously. I believe that like his previous books this book too will be properly acclaimed in the society of Vaiṣṇavas. Those who regard the words of the Gosvāmins as one of their treasures will feel immense pleasure in reading this book and will be greatly benefitted. This book will act as a lantern for the practitioner on the path of worship. I desire to spread the news of this book greatly. The author is a dear object of my affection and making known to him my blessings, I end my comments.

Jaya Śrī Nitāi Gaura

Śrī Gaurāṅga Dāsa Bābāji Mahārāja
President of the Gauḍeśvara Vaiṣṇava Sammilanī
Former Mahanta of Rādhākunḍa

The Author's (Laghu's) Dedication

Like a hunchback's desire to lie down on his back this low-born, illiterate, a hundred times offensive householder's desire to discuss scripture is laughable. This is arrogance indeed. Still, who knows? Behind me there is a planet, mischievous or good-natured I don't know which, that makes me dance about — it gives me no opportunity to consider my qualification or lack thereof.

There is one more consideration. In just the same way that Kāj-pāglā was saved by finally giving that demon the job of going up and down the bamboo stick,¹⁹ this writing of books of mine has arisen as a matter of course in order to save myself — otherwise what would I do with my wandering and mischievous mind? Wandering off to some bad or unsuitable places it would wind up finally destroying me.

The scriptures are revealed from the Lord who is the very embodiment of scripture. Those who bind that Lord in the temples of their hearts with the ropes of love are able to become commentators on scripture. Modern folks like me are only able to distribute those commentaries among the populace — whatever little bit is possible.

I have tried to distribute a single drop of nectar in this little book. Not one statement here is my own — it is from my teachers. Of all that Śrī Gaurahari and his followers have said, the basis of this book is whatever tiny drop of that nectar, issuing from the lotus-like lips of my teachers, that has fallen on my mind. My reflection on that drop is this *Drop of the*

¹⁹I am unfamiliar with this story. [Trans.]

Ocean.²⁰ This is an other-worldly thing. It will not become corrupted by the touch of my wicked mind. This is my belief. May you Vaiṣṇavas, who are by nature not finders-of-fault, correct the mistakes and failings of my words — and please don't forget to show this low, unfortunate person a little mercy. I have come to you with the desire of being sprinkled with the dust of your feet. I beg you. Don't be stingy; show me your mercy. The days of this lowlife, racked by the offense of conceit, are coming to an end. Don't let me die just carrying about loads of sugar like a sugar-ox.²¹ Let me have the good fortune of tasting a little, too.

When my teacher gave me his blessings for my edition and translation of the *Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka*, he said: "May he be able to remain dedicated to these kinds of great undertakings — may Śrī Gaurahari always spread his grace on them." Holding my teacher's blessing on my head, I placed this "drop from the ocean" in the hands of my publisher.²²

Jaya Śrī Nāmaprabhu!

An impersonator of a servant
of the servants of the Vaiṣṇavas,
Manindranath Guha (Laghu)
Goṣṭhāṣṭamī,
24 Kārtika, 1382 [1976]

²⁰"A Drop of the Ocean of the Nectar of the Holy Name" is the literal translation of Mani Babu's Bengali title for this book. That has been shortened to *Nectar of the Holy Name* in this translation.

²¹*Cinir balada*, a Bengali expression for someone who works hard for someone else's profit but cannot share it.

²²Mani Babu's publisher was his wife, Savitri Guha, who had an MA in Sanskrit and two Tirthas, one in Purāṇas and one in Vaiṣṇava philosophy. A *tīrtha*, holy ford, that is, a place where a difficult-to-cross river may be crossed, is a special degree given for advanced study in a particular subject in the native system of Sanskrit education in India.

Appreciations

Expert in Private Worship, Great Scholar,
Adorned by the *Bhāgavata*, and
Resident of Govardhana,

Śrī Priyācaraṇa Dāsa Bābā

Though but a drop of the Holy Names,
yet like an ocean in depth,
Victory to this the beautiful
Nectar of Hari's Holy Names,
a benefit to the whole world.²³

Reading the book, *A Drop of the Ocean of the Nectar of the Holy Names*, by Manindranath Guha, I felt immense joy. Though the book is called “a drop” it is more like an ocean. In the life of a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioner, all the questions that generally arise have been accurately answered with great skill. That skill is revealed in different ways. Śrī Gauḥari speaking to Rāma Rāya has said to the world: “Recite a verse that describes the highest objective.” That order has been followed in every statement of this book. Seeing this marshalling of appropriate citations one must conclude that Mr. Guha has entered deeply into the depths of the ocean of scripture like a seasoned diver. His ability to consider what is prior and what is subsequent is fully mature. The subtlety of his

²³Composed by Priyācaraṇa Dāsa Bābā:

नाम्नां बिन्दुस्तथाप्येष गाम्भीर्ये सिन्धुसन्निभः ।
नामामृतं हरेः श्रीमज्जयति विश्वमङ्गलम् ॥

arguments is irrefutable. I am able to say with certainty that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioners will be greatly helped by reading this book. I desire that this book, which bears within it the sweetness of the glory of the Holy Name, the very life source of our community, be spread far and wide.

Mr. Guha is one of my own, a very dear object of my affection. May he live a long life and be engaged in the service of our community by writing and editing many more books like this one. This is my prayer at Śrī Gaura's feet.

An insignificant servant
of the servants of the Vaiṣṇavas,
Śrī Priyācaraṇa Dāsa Bābā

Established in renunciation, knowledge, and *bhakti*,
Great Scholar, and resident of Vṛndāvana

Amar Sen

I received your book, *Drop of the Ocean of Nectar of the Holy Names*, from Śāstrī. I read it with great enthusiasm and offer my humble obeisances at your feet over and over. Taking shelter in the Holy Names is our main form of practice. You have taken all of the problems that arise in the heart of the practitioner while he or she is cultivating the Holy Names and put them in question form. Then you have given all of the solutions to those problems in an unprecedented way, citing all the scriptural evidence. Thus you have given a great gift to the world of practitioners like us. Those of us practitioners who follow the Vaiṣṇava view will remain eternally grateful to you.

An insignificant servant
of the servants of the Vaiṣṇavas,
Śrī Amar Sen

Dedication of the Second Edition

Though there is no good arrangement for its distribution, by Śrī Gau-
rahari's grace the first edition of this book is nearly gone. Since the de-
mand for it is increasing more and more, it is necessary to bring out this
second edition. Such a rapid exhaustion of an edition of a book on reli-
gion is undoubtedly a very encouraging sign for an author. This second
edition has grown a good deal in size. Like a flowing river, it runs bub-
bling along amidst the addition of new topics and the expanded discus-
sion of the older topics as needed. The Name and offense to the Name
are the measures of our life and death. On this topic, like in the maxim
of fixing in the post²⁴ repeating again and again is required — as much
as it is repeated, that much is the ocean of joy increased — here there is
no such thing as too much.

Śrī Jīva in the beginning of his *Harināmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa* (Grammar of
the Ambrosia of the Names of Hari) has said:

“Shortening by even half a syllable is as joyous as the birth
of a son;” this is the statement of the [Sanskrit] grammarians.
In the case of the syllables of the name of Hari, however, that
sort of reasoning is condemned.²⁵

²⁴“As a stake or post to be firmly fixed in the ground is again and again moved and
thrust inward, so this maxim is used when one (say, a disputant) adds several corrob-
orative illustrations, arguments, etc. to strengthen and confirm still more firmly his strong
position.” Apte, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Appendix E, p. 76.

²⁵Hnv, 1.2:

मात्रालाघवमात्रं पुत्रोत्सव इति परेऽभिमन्यन्ते । हरिनामलाभाद्वयं त्वमृदुक् तिरस्कुर्मः ॥

This book's main purpose is to sing the glories of Lord Holy Name (Nāmaprabhu) and after seating him in his proper place, on the throne of the emperor, to carry out his worship. There is no intention in this of putting down any other form of worship. Whatever has been placed wherever in a comparative manner, that is all done on the strength of the path approved by all the saints and the scriptures. "Then Sūta Gosāi in his heart felt great fear. Whatever was the characteristic of something, that he ascertained."²⁶

When Śrī Gaurahari, whose complexion was like molten gold, was before the eyes of the world, the universe was submerged in the flavors of love and the practice of loud, tumultuous *kīrtana* of Hari was started. Alas! Will that sweet time ever return again?²⁷

Though gradually diminishing, the heat of a lighted fire is felt for a long time. Therefore, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, eighty-two years after the disappearance of Śrī Gaurahari, sitting on the bank of Rādhākuṇḍa wrote: "All the circles [groups] of Vaiṣṇavas who live in Vṛndāvana are fully sheltered in Kṛṣṇa's Name, most auspicious."²⁸ Through this verse it is understood that even eighty-two years after the disappearance of Śrī Gaurahari for all of the Vaiṣṇavas that were in Vṛndāvana the Name of Kṛṣṇa was the best of all refuges — their highest regard was for the Holy Name.

We have come a great distance since those days. The heat of that fire of love is today almost unfelt. Sarasvatī's aforementioned heartfelt

²⁶Cc., 1.2.56:

*tabe sūta gosāi mane pāñā baḍo bhaya
yār ye lakṣaṇa tāhā karila niścaya*

²⁷Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, Cca, 139:

अभिव्यक्तो यत्र द्रुतकनकगौरहरिरभू-
न्महिम्न तस्यैव प्रणयरसमग्नं जगदभूत् ।
अभूदुच्चैरुच्चैस्तुमुलहरिसङ्कीर्तनविधिः
स कालः किं भूयोऽप्यहह परिवर्त्तेत मधुरः ॥

²⁸Cc., 1.5.228:

*vṛndāvane baise yata vaiṣṇava maṅḍal
kṛṣṇanāmaparāyaṇa parama maṅḍal*

prayer²⁹ is directed at living beings like us suffering in the Age of Kali. Alas, today we don't know how or when or even where the priceless gem given by our father has been lost. Today that loud, tumultuous *sañkīrtana* of Hari is no longer heard in every house and those intense tears, shivers and goose-bumps are no longer seen in every body.³⁰ Nevertheless a heartfelt prayer by one of Śrī Gaura's companions cannot be unsuccessful. Those good days will again return. When will we again go out dancing in the midst of loud, tumultuous *sañkīrtana* of Hari? When will we put aside politeness and dive into that intoxication?

O Vaiṣṇavas! Oceans of causeless mercy! Show your grace to this low, fallen person. I am only the distributor. In the confectioner's house are my lord Śrī Gaurahari and his companions. Don't cheat yourselves out of tasting *rasa* by staring at this ill-shapen distributor and wincing. Keep your gaze in the direction of the confectioners and taste this little drop. This little drop will, by the good qualities of your enriched hearts, appear like an ocean. Jaya Rādhe!

An impersonator of a servant
of the servants of the Vaiṣṇava,
Śrī Manindranatha Guha
15, Baiśakh, 1390 [1984]

²⁹Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, the author of the *Caitanya-candrāmṛta*, the source of the last Sanskrit verse cited above.

³⁰Prabodhānada Sarasvatī, Cca, 114: अभूद्गहे गेहे तुमुलहरिसङ्कीर्तनरवो बभौ देहे देहे विपुलाश्रुव्यतिकरः

Prologue

I praise the supreme controller,
Śrī Kṛṣṇacaitanya, whose grace
makes the lame cross over mountains
and the dumb recite the Vedas.³¹

Laghu: Master, Dearest of Mukunda,³² Teacher of the Holy Name! Today, seeing the frightening progression of this material world, my mind is depressed. Nowadays I am severely wounded by onslaughts of desires and subconscious urges. In front of me death spreads wide its mouth. In the currents of the river of time we are like little bubbles that appear for a second and then dissolve forever. In the midst of all this, what is the best and easiest way to gain victory over death and attain immortality? Please show me your grace and tell me.

Goswami: Look, the material world is like a forest fire, but until the mind is a little purified it does not notice the heat. It is a very good sign indeed that you are able to perceive it a little. Whatever the case may be, your question is very timely and appropriate. A sign of the intelligence of the intelligent and the wisdom of the wise is found in their gaining immortality by means of the mortal body.

³¹An oft used *maṅgala* verse:

पङ्क्तुं लङ्घयते शैलं मूकमावर्तयेत् श्रुतिं ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे कृष्णचैतन्यमीश्वरम् ॥

³²One of the many names of Kṛṣṇa. It is said to be a combination of the word *muku* (liberation) and the suffix *da* (giver) meaning thus “Giver of Liberation.” (Trans.)

Chapter 1

The Best Way of All

Goswami: All right then, listen. Different religious prescriptions are found in the scriptures according to person, time and place. In the peaceful Satya-yuga (Age of Truth), when the religious mind was strong, there was the prescription of meditation (*dhyāna*). Like that, in this tumultuous Age of Kali (*kali-yuga*, Age of Quarrel), when the irreligious mind is strong, *saṅkīrtana* (loud, congregational chanting)¹ of the Holy Names is the prescribed practice. When society is troubled by the flames of the three miseries,² when even the smallest sign of peace is not found anywhere, when society is fidgeting about in the heat of the conflagration of the sense objects produced by absorption in unnatural enjoyments, a prescription is needed that is capable of putting out that fire and granting great peace. That is why the most compassionate Lord himself, Śrī

¹*Saṅkīrtana* has no exact or easy translation in English. It is from the Sanskrit root $\sqrt{kīrt}$ which means: mention, make mention of, tell, name, call, recite, repeat, relate, declare, communicate, commemorate, celebrate, praise and glorify. Adding the *sam* prefix to the root to make the derivative noun *saṅkīrtana* gives the meaning “to celebrate completely.” In the context of the Caitanya tradition this means congregational singing, often with musical accompaniment, of the names of Kṛṣṇa or of songs about him and his companions. Since this is more or less a technical term with no exact English equivalent, it is left in the text untranslated. See the glossary for a more detailed discussion of the term. (Trans.)

²The three miseries refers to the three sources of suffering identified in Indic traditions: sufferings caused by other living beings (*ādhibhautika*, ie. insects, animals, humans, etc), sufferings caused by one’s own body or mind (*ādhyātmika*, ie. disease, old age, etc), and sufferings caused by higher powers (*ādhidaivika*, ie. natural calamities and so forth). (Trans.)

Gaurahari,³ came down from Goloka⁴ to earth in the middle of this frenzied dance of the Age of Kali. He brought with him a downpour of the highest nectar in the form of the *sañkīrtana* of the Holy Names, the best and most powerful means in his treasury of putting out the forest fire of material existence. He calls out to the living being burned by the three flames of Kali:

The *sañkīrtana* of the Names of Kṛṣṇa cleans the mirror of the mind, puts out the forest fire of the ills of material existence, acts like the moon in causing the lily of the most auspicious love for Kṛṣṇa to blossom, becomes the very life of the *bhakti* of love,⁵ increases the ocean of joy, gives one tastes of the fullest nectar at every step, and floods all the senses with joy; may it gain the highest victory.⁶

He also says:

Among the forms of worship,
bhakti's nine are best.⁷
 Love for Kṛṣṇa has great power

³Golden Hari (Viṣṇu), another name for Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. (Trans.)

⁴The eternal residence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and their joined form Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. (Trans.)

⁵The original has "life of true knowledge which is like a wife" (*vidyā-vadhūjīvana*). The author, Manindranath, has translated wife-like true knowledge as the *bhakti* of love (*preman*). *Bhakti* is the attitude of fundamental secondariness towards and participation in the deity that this tradition recognizes as paramount in religious consciousness. Like the word religion which means to re-bind to or reconnect with the divine, *bhakti* means at the very least to recognize one's essential dependence on and participation in the divine. Participation takes the form of deep love: love of the deity for the living beings and love of the living beings for the deity. In this sense, one might think of *bhakti* as true knowledge which has deep ramifications for one's self-understanding and emotional experience. (Trans.)

⁶This is the first of the eight verses of instruction, called the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, which are attributed to Śrī Caitanya (Trans.):

चेतोदर्पणमर्जनं भवमहादावाग्निनिर्वापनम्
 श्रेयःकैरवचन्द्रिकावितरणं विद्यावधूजीवनम् ।
 आनन्दाम्बुधिवर्धनं प्रतिपदं पूर्णामृतास्वादनम्
 सर्वात्मस्त्रपनं परं विजयते श्रीकृष्णसङ्कीर्तनम् ॥

⁷These are the nine forms of *bhakti* mentioned in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* (7.5.23): hearing about, speaking about, remembering, serving the feet of, worshipping, praising, serving, becoming the friend of and offering oneself to Viṣṇu. (Trans.)

to bestow Kṛṣṇa himself.
 Among those (nine), the best of all
 is *saṅkīrtana* of the Name.
 If one says the Name without offense,
 one receives the treasure of love intensely.”⁸

Although *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Names is the practice of the age (*yuga-dharma*) in every Age of Kali, in this present age *saṅkīrtana* has a special trait and that is that this time he (Kṛṣṇa) has given it to the world with his own hand, infused with a shower of his own limitless compassion. Therefore it occupies a place of even greater magnificence, a magnificence for which there is no equal. As Śrī Jīva says in the *Bhakti-sandarbhā*: “and in Kali, it is compassionately given by the Lord himself. Thus, its praise is comparatively greater.”⁹

Śrī Gaura, taking a verse from the Sātvata scripture, the *Padma Purāṇa*, has given to the world the practice of the age, *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Names, along with his own grace-filled commentary:

The name of Hari, the name of Hari, only the name of Hari! In
 the Age of Kali, there is not, there is not, there is not another
 way.¹⁰

Kṛṣṇa descends in the Age of Kali
 in the form of his Holy Name.¹¹

⁸Kṛṣṇadāsādāsa Kavirāja, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Cc), Antya, 4.70-71:

*bhajaner madhye śreṣṭha navavidhā bhakti
 kṛṣṇaprema kṛṣṇa dite dhare mahāśakti
 tār madhye sarvaśreṣṭha nāmasaṅkīrtana
 niraparādhe nāma laile pāya premadhana*

⁹Śrī Jīva, Bs, 273: कलौ च श्रीभगवता कृपया तद्ग्राह्यत इत्यपेक्षयैव तत्र तत्प्रशंसेति स्थितम्

¹⁰Though the author gives this verse as from *Padma Purāṇa*, it is given in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* as from the *Bṛhan-nārādīya Purāṇa*. No numbering is given there, but from another source the chapter and verse numbers are given as 38.126. (Trans.)

हरेर्नाम हरेर्नाम हरेर्नामैव केवलम् ।
 कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ॥

¹¹This is a word by word commentary on this important verse placed in the mouth of Śrī Caitanya himself by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, author of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The verse in transliteration is: *harernāma harernāma harernāmaiva kevalam; kalau nāstyeva nāstyeva nāstyeva gatiranyathā*. (Trans.)

From his Holy Name comes
 the salvation of all the world.
 For emphasis *harernāma*¹²
 is thrice repeated in this verse.
 To make even dullards understand
 there is again an *eva*.¹³
 The word *kevala*¹⁴ again
 makes it even more certain.
 Rejected are knowledge and *yoga*,
 austerities and rites and the rest.
 Whoever thinks otherwise is not delivered.
 “Not!” “Not!” “Not!” and each with an *eva*.¹⁵

The followers of Śrī Gaura join their voices with that of their dear Lord’s in praise of the Holy Name.

Sanātana Gosvāmin says:

Kṛṣṇa! Slipping out of the threads of hearing (*śravaṇa*), you are again caught by the ropes of meditation (*dhyāna*). Escaping from those, too, you are captured by the chains of *saṅkīrtana* of your Name. Unsettled by *bhakti* for you, I will never let you go now that I have you. You are surrounded and tightly held, Wearer of Yellow Silk.¹⁶

¹²“the name of Hari (Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa)”

¹³That is, after the third *harernāma eva* is used. *Eva* is used to emphasize what immediately precedes it and generally means “indeed, for sure, alone.” (Trans.)

¹⁴The last word of the first half of the verse. *Kevala* means “alone, only.” (Trans.)

¹⁵Cc., Ādi, 17.19-22:

*nāmarūpe kalikāle kṛṣṇa avatāra
 nāma haite haya sarva jagat nistāra
 dārdhya lāgi harernāma ukti tin bāra
 jaḍaloka bujhāite punar evakāra
 kevalaśabda punarapi niścaya karaṇa
 jñāna-yoga-tapa-karma-ādi nibāraṇa
 anyathā ye māne tār nāhika nistāra
 nāhi nāhi nāhi e tin evakāra*

¹⁶Sanātana, *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (Bb), 2.1.1:

कृष्ण श्रवणपासात्त्वं निर्यातो ध्यानरज्जुभिः
 ग्राह्यस्ताभ्यश्च निर्यातो नामकीर्तनशृङ्खलेः ।

Here, following the teaching of a verse in the *Bhāgavata*,¹⁷ the best of the various forms of *bhakti* is shown through a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of *śravaṇa* (hearing), *kīrtana* (loud repetition),¹⁸ and *smaraṇa* (remembering, visualization). If the *bhakti* of hearing is like binding with silk threads, the *bhakti* of remembering is like binding with cow ropes. And compared to that the *bhakti* of *kīrtana* is much more firm like binding with iron chains. Remembering pulls a mind absorbed in hearing away and makes it absorbed in remembering, and again *kīrtana* pulls a mind absorbed in remembering away and makes it fully absorbed in *kīrtana*. But *kīrtana* of the Holy Name effects such a firm binding that nothing else has the power to pull the mind away. In terms of power, the *kīrtana* of the Holy Name is the best of all; it has no equal. This has been shown here.

Śrī Jīva says, commenting on another verse in the *Bhāgavata*:¹⁹

There, too, it is taught as the highest practice and the highest

त्वङ्किलोलितेनाद्य न मया जातु मोक्ष्यसे
वृत्तो धृतोऽसि गाढं त्वं पीतकौशेयवाससि ॥

¹⁷Bhāg. 2.1.5:

तस्माद्भारत सर्वात्मा भगवानीश्वरो हरिः ।
श्रोतव्यः कीर्तितव्यश्च स्मर्तव्यश्चच्छ्रताऽभयम् ॥

Therefore, Bhārata, Hari, who is the self of all, the lord and the controller, is to be heard about, proclaimed and remembered by anyone who desires fearlessness. (Trans.)

¹⁸Here the word *kīrtana* is used instead of *saṅkīrtana*. The difference between the two seems to be merely a matter of degree in presentation. In one place Jīva distinguishes between them by saying that *saṅkīrtana* is *kīrtana* with more than one person involved and that it is better than the latter because it brings about a special delight (*Bhakti-sandarbhā*, 269, अत्र च बहुभिर्मिलित्वा कीर्तनं सङ्कीर्तनमित्युच्यते । तत्तु चमत्कारविशेषपोषात्पूर्वतोऽप्यधिकमिति ज्ञेयम् ।). Sanātana says *saṅkīrtana* means “loud pronouncing” (*uccāir uccārya*) and points out that it is done for one’s own pleasure and that of others (comm. on Hbv 11.456, सङ्कीर्त्यं सम्यगुच्चैरुच्चार्यति सद्यः स्वपरानन्दविशेषार्थमुक्तम्). In another place Sanātana says that *saṅkīrtana* is “vocalizing the Holy Name, songs and praises that consist of the Holy Names (comm. on Hbv, 11.458, सङ्कीर्तनं नामोच्चारणं गीतं स्तुतिश्च नाममयी). (Trans.)

¹⁹Bhāg., 2.1.11:

एतन्निर्विद्यमानानामिच्छतामकुतोभयम् ।
योगिनां नृप निर्णीतं हरेर्नामानुकीर्तनम् ॥

For yogis who are disgusted with this (world), who desire fearlessness, the repetition of the name of Hari is advocated, king. (Trans.)

goal of all: this *sañkīrtana* of the name of Hari is advocated for those disgusted [with the material world].²⁰

Sañkīrtana of the Holy Names is the highest practice and the highest goal of all, of those desiring piety, wealth, sense enjoyment or liberation, as well as of the single-minded devotee.

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartin says in his commentary on that verse:²¹

Although from scriptures like the *Bhāgavata* and others it is understood that *bhakti* is what is to be described (*abhidheya*) in them, the question arises which, among all the forms of *bhakti*, remembering etc., has been ascertained as the primary one. In answer it is said that *kīrtana* of the names of Hari that are dear to one has been recognized as the best of all, like an emperor above great kings. Among all the forms of *bhakti*, *śravaṇa*, *smaraṇa*, and *kīrtana* are the primary ones (vide Bhāg. 2.1.5). In this verse it is said that among those three, *kīrtana* is the main one. Again among the various forms of *kīrtana* (focusing on the names, the forms, the qualities, and the acts), *kīrtana* of the names is the best. Moreover, in this *kīrtana* of the names, *kīrtana* of names that fit one's own type of *bhakti* is considered the best of all. In other words, in the sweet (erotic) *rasa*,²² for instance, pronouncing names like Gaura, Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, Rādhāramaṇa, Rādhā, and so forth, is the best. There is nothing equal or superior to it.²³

In the present Age of Kali, all success comes without fail to those who travel the path of spiritual cultivation that was initiated and bestowed by

²⁰तत्रापि सर्वेषामेव परमसाधनत्वेन परमसाध्यत्वेन चोपदिशति — एतन्निर्विद्यमानानां हरेर्नाम-कीर्तनम्

²¹Bhāg., 2.1.11

²²*Rasa* is the experience or "tasting" of one's fully developed love for Kṛṣṇa. It has five main varieties and seven minor varieties. The "sweet" (*madhura*) *rasa*, which is the erotic *rasa*, is considered the foremost of them all. See the Glossary for a more detailed discussion of *rasa* and its varieties. (Trans.)

²³नन्वत्र शास्त्रे भक्तिरभिधेयवगम्यत एव । तत्रापि भक्त्यङ्गेषु मध्ये महाराजचक्रवर्तिवत्किमेकं मुख्यत्वेन निर्णयते । तत्राह नामानुकीर्तनमिति । सर्वेषु भक्त्यङ्गेषु मध्ये श्रवणकीर्तनस्मरणानि त्रीणि मुख्यानि तस्माद्भारत इति श्लोकेनोक्तानि । तेषु त्रिष्वपि मध्ये कीर्तनम्, कीर्तनेऽपि नामलीलागुणादिसम्बन्धिनि तस्मिन्नामकीर्तनम्, तत्राप्यनुकीर्तनं स्वभक्त्यनुरूपनामकीर्तनम् (निरन्तरकीर्तनं वा) निर्णीतं पूर्वाचार्यैरपि न केवलं मयैवधुना निर्णयत इति ।

Śrī Gaura, resting whole-heartedly and with deep respect in the knowledge that *kīrtana* of the Holy Name is the absolute best. On the other hand, however, there really *is* no other way in this age for living beings to gain salvation. Śrī Gaurahari proclaimed this with his own lips, repeating the truth three times: *nāstyeva nāstyeva nāstyeva gātiranyathā*, “there is not, there is not, there is not another way.” Therefore, Śrī Rūpa said, wishing the best for all the Vaiṣṇavas who follow him:

May victory crown those syllables ‘ha-re kṛṣ-ṇa’ bursting from the lips of Śrī Caitanya, which are his own names, flooding the whole world with love.²⁴

Again, Śrī Rūpa, giving his blessings to the whole world, reveals his heart’s special feeling:

Name of Hari! The luster of the jewels on the crowns of all the Vedas illumine the tips of your lotus-like feet. I seek shelter completely, in every way, with you who are worshiped even by those who are already liberated.²⁵

An item of particular note here is that Śrī Rūpa who is usually extremely measured with his words has used two words that have the same meaning in characterizing his taking wholeheartedly to the Holy Name: *paritas* and *saṁśrayāmi* which mean ‘in every way’ and ‘I seek shelter *completely*,’ respectively. The point of stating one idea twice is to make it clear that this subject is so important for the practitioner that if he does not grasp it, his entire life of practice will become useless. Therefore, the extremely compassionate Rūpa has stated it twice for emphasis.

Laghu: I understand that *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Name is the best of all forms of worship, but some have an opposing opinion here, don’t they?

²⁴Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* (Lb), 4:

श्रीचैतन्यमुखोद्गीर्णा हरे कृष्णवर्णिकाः ।
मज्जयन्तो जगत्प्रेम्नि विजयन्तां तदाह्वयाः ॥

²⁵Rūpa, *Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka*, 1:

निखिलश्रुतिमौलिरत्नमालाद्युतिनीराजितपादपङ्कजान्त ।
अयि मुक्तकुलैरुपास्यमानां परितस्त्वां हरिनाम संश्रयामि ॥

Is this conclusion only applicable to *vaidhī bhakti* (rule-motivated *bhakti*) or does it apply to *rāgānugā bhakti* (passion-pursuing *bhakti*), too?²⁶ Some say that in *rāgānugā bhakti*, *smaraṇa* (remembering, visualization) is the best.

Goswami: What some people say is not supported by the scriptures. Though in *rāgānugā bhakti smaraṇa* is indeed important, still, hierarchically speaking, important is not the final word. Beyond important there is more important, most important, and finally the ‘fourth’ (*turīya*). Viśvanātha Cakravartin makes such distinctions in his commentary on Karna-pūra’s work, the *Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū* (“Blissful Vṛndāvana”).²⁷ In the world of spiritual cultivation (*sādhana*) the ‘fourth’ is *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Names, than which there is nothing better.

In this connection, here are some of the considered conclusions of the Gosvāmins:

1.1 Viśvanātha Cakravartin’s Conclusion

Viśvanātha has said that since *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Name is the ‘fourth’ it is better than *smaraṇa* and all the rest and has called it the emperor among great kings in many places.²⁸ While agreeing that in *rāgānugā-bhakti smaraṇa* is of central importance, he has nevertheless compared *smaraṇa* with the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, beneath the emperor, *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Name.

In the *Rāga-vartma-candrikā* (Moonlight on the Path of Passion) Viśvanātha says:

²⁶ *Vaidhī bhakti* is *bhakti* motivated by the rules or injunctions (*vidhi*) of scripture or, in other words, performed out of a sense of duty to the regulations of scripture. As Jīva puts it: “There are two kinds of *bhakti*, *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. The first is initiated by the rules given in scripture.” (Bs. 235: भक्तिद्विविधा वैधी रागानुगा चेति । तत्र वैधी शास्त्रोक्तविधिना प्रवर्तिता ।) *Rāgānugā bhakti* is *bhakti* motivated by the desire to have the kind of passion or love for Kṛṣṇa that is found in his close companions. See the Glossary for a more detailed discussion. (Trans.)

²⁷ AvC, 14.53. This is just an example drawn from Kavi Karna-pūra’s work to demonstrate the use of the word *turīya* to describe a state of excellence beyond the “best” or “main.” सङ्गीतनिगमगमकचातुरीतुरीयाचार्या “teacher of the fourth order of expertise in deep natural tones in the art of music” and Viśvanātha’s *ṭīkā*: तुरीया चतुर्थी मुख्या-मुख्यतरा-मुख्यतमा-तोऽप्यतिश्रेष्ठा इत्यर्थः, “*Turīyā* means ‘fourth,’ even better than important, more important, and most important.” (Trans.)

²⁸ In his comm. on Bhāg. 2.1.11 and on Brs. 1.2.230.

The subservience of *smaraṇa*, the central practice in *rāgānugā*, to *kīrtana* must also be emphasized because *kīrtana* has authority in this age and because it is established by all scriptures as the most excellent among all of the various paths of *bhakti*.²⁹

Therefore, not just for rule-motivated (*vaidhī*), but for passion-pursuing (*rāgānugā*) *bhakti* too, *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Names is the best.

1.2 Sanātana Gosvāmin’s Conclusion

The preeminence of *saṅkīrtana* of the Holy Name in attaining the service of Rādhā, the highest prize of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, is shown in a comparative way quite clearly in one of the Gosvāmin’s verses:

That [service of Rādhā], made radiant by *saṅkīrtana* of the names of one’s dearest, is attained by *bhakti* in which meditation on and singing about the various sports of Vraja are dominant.³⁰

In his commentary on that verse Śrī Sanātana says:

Now, the means of attaining the service of Rādhā is stated: “That ...” By ninefold *bhakti* in which remembering and singing of the various Gokula-sports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa predominate, *preman* (sacred love)³¹ is easily achieved. The one qualification that there is in this matter is stated next: *preman* is manifested or clarified by *saṅkīrtana* of the names of one’s desired

²⁹अत्र रागानुगाय यन्मुख्यस्य तस्यापि कीर्तनाधीनत्वमवश्यं वक्तव्यमेव कीर्तनस्यैव एतद्युगाधिका-
रत्वात्सर्वभक्तिमार्गेषु सर्वशास्त्रैस्तस्यैव सर्वोत्कर्षप्रतिपादनाच्च

³⁰Bb, 2.5.218:

तद्धि तत्तद्भ्रजक्रीडाध्यानगानप्रधानया ।
भक्त्या सम्पद्यते प्रेष्टनामसङ्कीर्तनोज्ज्वलम् ॥

³¹*Preman* is the divine love that is the desired objective of the Caitanya tradition. It is selfless love aimed at pleasing fully the person who is the object of that love. See the Glossary for a more detailed account of the nature of *preman*. (Trans.)

lord or the names of the lord that are most dear to one. Although in using the word *gāna* [song], *sañkīrtana* of the Holy Name is included, *sañkīrtana* of the names most dear to one has been mentioned again in particular. The reason for that is that compared to meditating on and singing of the Vraja sports, *sañkīrtana* of the Holy Names is a comparatively more intimate means to *preman*, more primary than the primary, that than which there is nothing better.³²

Or, *sañkīrtana* of the beloved's Holy Name is itself the very essence of the attainment of *preman*.

1.3 The Easiest Way?

Why is the Holy Name the easiest way to attain immortality? That one discovers among the first principles of the Holy Name.³³ Now listen to those principles of the Holy Name.

³²तत्रैव विशेषमाह प्रेष्टस्य निजेष्टतमदेवस्य प्रेष्ठानां वा निजप्रियतमानां भगवन्नाम्नां सङ्कीर्तनेन उज्ज्वलं प्रकाशमानं शुद्धं वा । गानेत्युक्त्वा नामकीर्तने प्राप्तेऽपि निजप्रियतमानामकीर्तनस्य प्रेमान्तरङ्गतरसाधनत्वेन पुनर्विशेषण निर्देशः किंवा तत्सम्पत्तिलक्षणज्ञानाय

³³This is *nāma-tattva* in the original. I have translated it as 'first principles of the Holy Name.' It might also be translated "truths of the Holy Name." *Tattva* means "thatness, the way things are in essence." [Trans.]

