

শ্রীমন্নামামৃতসিঞ্চুবিন্দু

The Nectar of the Holy Name

Manindranath Guha

Introduced, translated, and annotated
by
Neal Delmonico

Blazing Sapphire Press
715 E. McPherson Street
Kirksville, MO 63501 (USA)

Copyright ©2005 by Blazing Sapphire Press

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be duplicated in any way without the expressed written consent of the publisher, except in the form of brief excerpts or quotations for review purposes.

ISBN 0-9747968-1-6

Published by:
Blazing Sapphire Press
715 E. McPherson Street
Kirksville, Missouri 63501
(USA)

Distributed by:
Nitai's Bookstore
715 E. McPherson Street
Kirksville, Missouri 63501
Phone: (660) 665-0273
Email: ndelmonico@sbcglobal.net
<http://www.blazingsapphirepress.com>
<http://www.nitaisbookstore.com>

Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Translator's Introduction	vii
Blessings	xxvii
Introduction	xxix
The Author's (Laghu's) Dedication	xxxi
Appreciations	xxxiii
Dedication of the Second Edition	xxxv
1 Prologue	1
2 The Best Way of All	3
2.1 Viśvanātha Cakravartin's Conclusion	10
2.2 Sanātana Gosvāmin's Conclusion	11
2.3 The Easiest Way?	12
2 First Principles of the Holy Name	11
2.1 The Holy Name: its Compassion and Generosity	14
2.2 The Semblance (<i>Ābhāsa</i>) of the Holy Name	19

3 Offenses to the Holy Name	23
3.1 The Dangers of Wealth	28
4 Saṅkīrtana in Single-form Practice	35
5 Faith and Initiation	49
6 Divine Love: Easy or Hard to Obtain	59
6.1 Love Not Attained by Many Practices	60
6.2 Love Not Easily Given by Hari	62
7 Saṅkīrtana in Multi-formed Practice	65
7.1 Remembering the Holy Names	69
7.2 The Distinctiveness of <i>Saṅkīrtana</i> in Multi-form Practice . .	76
8 The Case of Ajāmila	83
9 Kali and the Eighth Offense	93
10 One Last Doubt	101
Glossary of Terms and Names	107
Authors Cited	123

Translator's Introduction

I am pleased to be able to present in English Manindranath Guha's classic Bengali work on the theology of the holy name, entitled *Śrīman Nāmāmṛta-sindhu-bindu* ("A Drop of the Ocean of Nectar of the Holy Name," shortened in this translation to simply *Nectar of the Holy Name*). I began this translation way back in 1977 when I was a student at the University of Colorado, Boulder. I had just returned to the United States from India and gone back to college to complete my undergraduate degree. I had dropped out of the university some seven years earlier to explore a form of cultural and religious alterity, immersing myself in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism as a member of the Hare Krishna Movement. After more than six good years in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), I left it in search of a less westernized form of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. What I found among the renunciant *babas* (hermits) of Vraja is the Vaiṣṇava world that is reflected in Manindranath Babu's little book. His work was one of the many Bengali and Sanskrit jewels I discovered around the time of my departure from ISKCON and it exerted a powerful influence on me at that transformative time of my life.

My translation of Manindranath's book began as part of a research project for a course of independent study I took on Hinduism at the University of Colorado, a course in which I was guided by Dr. Robert Lester. I believe I only translated the first ten or fifteen pages for that project and after the course was complete I put it aside for a several years, hardly even thinking of it again. My interest in the text was re-ignited, however, when I met Manindranath Babu again, probably in 1985 when I was in India, this time for my doctoral research as a graduate student of the University of Chicago. At that time he gave me (or I purchased from him) a copy of the much enlarged second edition of this book. This larger edition became the basis of the translation presented here.

The Author and His Other Works

I had the good fortune of meeting Manindranath Guha several times in and around Vrindaban during the years that I lived or visited there. I don't remember when we first met, but I do recall that on several occasions he graciously invited me to his house for chats and to participate in *kīrtana*, the singing of Kṛṣṇa's names. I was never able to take him up on the offer and I profoundly regret that today. It would have given me much more insight into him, his book, and the religious practices and studies out of which this book grew. As it is, what I am about to present of his life and practice I have learned from others who knew him, from hints in his books, and from my recollection of his own stray comments on those few occasions when we had a chance to talk at more length. I apologize to his family and relatives if I have gotten anything wrong. Unfortunately, he is no longer around for me to apologize to him personally.

Manindranath Guha was a bright, motivated and talented fellow, an engineer by training and profession. On the title pages of his books he refers to himself as a retired, assistant Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department of West Bengal. Thus, he held a rather high and important post in the government of West Bengal, an indication of his ability, drive, and intelligence. His wife's name was Savitri. She had a master's degree in Sanskrit, though I am not sure from which university, and two *tīrthas*, special degrees granted in the traditional Sanskrit education system in India: one in the area of Purāṇic studies and the other in Vaiṣṇava philosophy. I don't know for sure if Manindranath and his wife Savitri had any children, but I believe they did not.

Like so many talented and educated young Bengalis in the first half of the 20th century, he was first drawn to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism through the proselytizing efforts of the Gauḍīya Math and especially by its charismatic leader Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. When this occurred and for how long, I am not sure. And again like so many of the brightest of those, after the passing of Bhaktisiddhanta he became inspired by exemplary Vaiṣṇavas from the mainstream Vaiṣṇava community, beyond the confines of the Gauḍīya Math organization. Thus, along with great Vaiṣṇava leaders, writers and practitioners like Puridas, Sundarananda Vidyavinoda, Dr. O. B. L. Kapoor, Anantadas Baba (Govindakunda), Kṛṣṇadas Baba (Madrasi), Haripadadasa Baba (Kṛṣṇadas Baba's brother), and many others, Manindranath left the Gauḍīya Math and sought shelter with a

teacher (*guru*) from the traditional Vaiṣṇava community. He eventually was accepted as a disciple by Kanupriya Goswami of Nabadwip, who was famed as a great writer and speaker and who was recognized in the Vaiṣṇava community as an exemplary teacher of the “science” of the holy name (*nāma-vijñānācārya*). It was no doubt in large part the influence of Kanupriya Goswami that led Manindranath to write on the theology of the holy name. It is certainly Kanupriya Goswami who he has in mind as the “Goswami” in the dialogue in this book.

After his retirement, Manindranath and his wife eventually settled in Vrindaban and he began his career as a writer of books on Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. His first book, the *Śrī Mādhava-mādhurya-mañjuṣā*, “The Treasure Chest of the Sweetness of Mādhava,” was published in 1969 by his wife Savitri. Replete with diagrams, charts, lists and of course, numerous quotes from the original Vaiṣṇava scriptures, both in Sanskrit and Bengali, it describes Kṛṣṇa’s sport in Vṛndāvana as perhaps only an engineer would dare to, with an eye for detail and schematics. I don’t know how good Manindranath’s knowledge of Sanskrit was, but although he does not mention it anywhere as far as I know, I am sure his wife, whose knowledge of Sanskrit was apparently quite good, gave him a great deal of assistance with the Sanskrit passages. One of the fine qualities of all of Manindranath’s books is the nearly mistake-free citation of long and complicated Sanskrit passages in the footnotes and the high quality of the translations into Bengali of those passages. Manindranath’s wife no doubt deserves much of the credit for that.

Encouraged by the success of his first book, Manindranath published his second book in 1971, the *Śrī Gaura-karuṇā-candrikā-kaṇā*, “A Ray of the Moonlight of Gaura’s Grace.” This book on the life of Śrī Caitanya (Gaura) is even larger than the first book and like the first book is filled with numerous quotations from the old Vaiṣṇava scriptures. It also contains two pictures of Śrī Caitanya drawn by his wife. Manindranath regarded his first two books as the results of his own realizations and insights arising from his study and practice of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. He often humbly warned people that this is what they were getting, not a reproduction of a standard work of the Caitanya tradition.

In 1971 Manindranath also published his edition of the *Śrī Caitanya-candrāmṛta*, “Ambrosia of the Moon of Caitanya.” by Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, an early follower of Śrī Caitanya. Included in that edition was the commentary by Ānandi on the text and Manindranath’s translation into Bengali of both text and commentary. This was the first of several

edition-translations that Manindranath was to publish. Manindranath published yet a third book in that extraordinarily productive year, an edition with a long Bengali commentary of the eight verses of instruction attributed to Śrī Caitanya called the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, "Eight Instructive Verses." In this book Manindranath presented for the first time the idea, no doubt received from his guru, that the first of those eight verses presents in a nutshell the whole process of the cultivation of *bhakti* as it is envisioned in the Caitanya tradition from the beginning of practice, called *bhajana-kriyā*, to the stage of the "great emotion," *mahābhāva*, said to be the highest stage of the development of divine love, a stage believed to be found only in Śrī Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's best lover among the cowherd women.

The next book that Manindranath published, in 1975, was an edition of the Sanskrit play by the great Vaiṣṇava poet Kavi Karṇapūra, the *Caitanya-candrodaya*, "The Rise of the Moon of Caitanya," on the life of Śrī Caitanya. This he published with a Sanskrit commentary and his own Bengali translation, again of both text and commentary. After that he published the first edition of the book translated here, the *Śrīman-nāmāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, "A Drop of the Ocean of Nectar of the Holy Name." It was published in 1976 with the second, longer edition coming out in 1984.

For his next work, Manindranath undertook a huge and difficult task, the editing and translation of Kavi Karṇapūra's masterpiece on Kṛṣṇa's sport in Vṛndāvana, the *Ānanda-vṛndāvāna-campū*, "Joyful Vṛndāvana." The first volume came out in 1982 and was eventually followed by the second volume. That work is extremely difficult because of the author's complex and skillful use of pun and double-entendre. It is not uncommon for Karṇapūra to play three levels of meaning, parallel but distinct, off each other in some places in the poem. A *campū* is a genre of Sanskrit poetic work which mixes passages of prose with verse. One has to admire Manindranath for undertaking not only an edition of the text, but its complete translation into Bengali.

The final work that Manindranath undertook was an edition with commentaries of the Tenth Canto of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. At least three volumes of that work came out before Manindranath passed away. It includes two commentaries, the *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* of Śrī Jīva and the *Sārāthadarśinī* of Viśvanātha Cakravartin, again with full translation into Bengali. In this way, Manindranatha and his wife Savitri spent their retirement days living in Vrindaban, and writing, editing, and translating works on Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism.

One of the notable characteristics of Manindranath's books is found in the way he includes in all but his first book praises and comments on his various books from many of the great Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas of his day. Those sections of his books, usually found at the back, read almost like a who's who of the great Vaiṣṇava scholars and practitioners of that generation, many of whom have left us no other writings except for the letters they wrote praising Manindranath's books. Great Vaiṣṇavas like Kiśorīkiśorānanda Dāsa Bābā, Nṛsiṃha Vallabha Goswami, Gaurāṅga Dāsa Bābā, Priyācaraṇa Dāsa Bābā, Ananta Das Baba (the current mahanta of Radhakund), to name only a few have all written glowing reviews of one or the other of Manindranath's books. This is a practice that was quite common in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava works written in Bengali earlier in the 20th century. Manindranath's guru, Kanupriya Goswami, for instance, did much the same thing in many of his books, including remarks from the likes of Atulakrishna Goswami, Pranagopal Goswami, Rasikamohan Vidyabhusan, Pramathanath Tarkabhusan, and many others. Several other examples can be cited for this practice.

As far as Manindranath's personal practice of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism is concerned, I understand that he, without fail, chanted out loud one *lakh* (100,000) of the names of Kṛṣṇa each day in the form of *japa* of the Mahāmantra.¹ In addition to that he sang *kīrtana* for up to two hours a day, just as he recommends in this book. He also remained a householder to the end of his days, never entering the renounced order of life to become what is known in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism as a *bābā* (lit. father). For him the householder life must have seemed perfectly suited for the kind of service he wanted to offer the tradition.

Short Analysis of this Work

Manindranath's book on the holy name is of interest from a number of perspectives. In the first place it is the work of someone I would consider an amateur theologian, as opposed to what might be understood as a professional theologian in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. For instance, he was not born into one of the traditional Goswami families

¹*Japa* is a type of repetition of the holy names or of a *mantra* that one counts on a rosary or on one's fingers. 100,000 repetitions of Kṛṣṇa's names in the form of the Mahāmantra amounts to 64 rounds on a Vaiṣṇava rosary which contains 108 beads. The Mahāmantra is, of course: *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare; hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare.*

for whom Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism has been a family treasure and tradition for centuries. The word 'Goswami' (Master of Cows) is a title of honor and respect that has become almost a family name for numerous families who trace their ancestry back to the companions and close followers of Śrī Caitanya. While most of those Goswami families have maintained a close connection with the Caitanya tradition and have played important roles in transmitting and preserving the Caitanya tradition down through the centuries, some have not and have taken to other religious beliefs or to none at all. Usually, however, someone born into such a family is educated from the ground up in Sanskrit and in the important texts of the tradition. Some among the Goswamis have become well known teachers and writers of the tradition. This is one group that I would consider "professional" theologians.

Nor was Manindrenath, as mentioned before, a member of the renunciant community, the "bābājīs." Though the main focus of that community is intense, full-time practice, a few of the members of that community have undertaken careful and detailed studies of various aspects of the Caitanya tradition, acquiring the necessary language skills, in many cases, after becoming members. This group is the other source of "professional" theologians. Manindranath's *Nectar of the Holy Names*, however, is by an enthusiastic follower of the tradition for other enthusiasts or would-be enthusiasts and as such lacks something in systematic and logical organization and presentation. In places it strikes one more as a kind of ejaculation of joyful enthusiasm for the holy name that gets at times a bit preachy and dogmatic and at other times rather repetitive.

The book is written in the form of a dialogue between someone called Laghu (Light-weight) and someone called Goswami. Laghu is no doubt Manindranath himself and Goswami is his guru, Kanupriya Goswami.² The dialogue between Laghu and Goswami in this book is probably based on real dialogues between Manindranath and his guru, no doubt expanded, embellished and refined. It is unlikely that Manindranath wrote them down verbatim or that Kanupriya Goswami recited from memory those long passages of commentary from Śrī Sanātana or Śrī Jīva in the course of their discussions together. Kanupriya was indeed a learned man and someone I would consider a professional theologian in the Caitanya tradition. Thus he may have pointed out those passages to Manindranath and left it to him to interpret and apply them properly. Manindranath tells us in his own introduction that his book is the result

²*Laghu*, light, is the semantic opposite of *guru*, heavy.

of his own reflection (*manana*, thinking over) on what he had heard from his teacher. Some of the passages he uses to support his statements were probably discovered on his own or with the help of his wife. There is a good deal of truth in Manindranath's claim that nothing in his book is his own, that he is merely distributing what is already available in the works of the Gosvāmin of Vṛndāvana. But, that is not entirely true. He sometimes adds a little bit here and there of his own interpretation of those works.

The fundamental mission of the book is to encourage a return to what the author views as the basic practices and principles of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition: the idea that *saṅkīrtana* of the holy names is the only practice one needs in order to cultivate and acquire the highest levels of love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. All other religious practices are secondary to and dependent on the *saṅkīrtana* of the holy names. By *saṅkīrtana*, or complete (*samyak*) recitation (*kīrtana*), Manindranath means, following the opinion of the Gosvāmins, melodically singing the holy names with musical accompaniment. Though this can be done alone, it is best done with others who share one's particular way of relating to Kṛṣṇa. Simple or plain *kīrtana*, on the other hand, is merely loud repetition of Kṛṣṇa's names not necessarily done musically. Manindranath makes the point repeatedly that Śrī Caitanya is the "father of *saṅkīrtana*" and is most pleased when his devotees enthusiastically honor his son.

As mentioned before Manindranath in his book provides support for almost everything he says by citing passages from the works of the Gosvāmins of Vṛndāvana. The Gosvāmins of Vṛndāvana (16th century C.E.) are widely regarded in the modern Caitanya tradition as the most authoritative presenters of the tradition. They are believed by many to have been taught by Caitanya himself.³ Among the Gosvāmins, Manindranath quotes Sanātana Gosvāmin far more than the others. This is somewhat unusual because it is usually Rūpa Gosvāmin who gets most of the attention in such scriptural discussions. This focus on Sanātana drives home the point quite nicely that Sanātana, as the eldest, was in many ways the trailblazer among the Gosvāmins. The other Gosvāmins, especially his younger brother Śrī Rūpa and his nephew Śrī Jīva, developed certain aspects of Sanātana's thought to a far greater degree than he did, but Sanātana deserves credit for pointing them in the very rewarding directions he did. This return to Sanātana probably reflects in

³And so is it represented by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja (16th century CE) in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Manindranath and in those practitioners of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Vraja with whom he associated a renewed desire to tap into one of the most original sources of insight in the tradition, a source that even Śrī Caitanya himself appears to have relied on.⁴ After Sanātana, the most quoted of the Gosvāmins in Manindranath's book is Śrī Jīva. Śrī Rūpa, though only called on occasionally, nevertheless makes several very important contributions to the discussion.

There is a good deal of repetition in Manindranath's book. This can be quite disconcerting to readers who are not used to it. Those who are used to repetition or who subscribe to a cyclical worldview, as many Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas do, will perhaps find it reassuring or even enjoyable. Manindranath seemed aware of this as a potential problem when he wrote the introduction to the second edition. He invokes there the maxim of "digging or fixing the post" (*sthūṇā-nikhanana-nyāya*), one of those numerous examples of folk wit and wisdom that are referred to in Sanskrit works by brief, pithy maxims.⁵ This maxim is used to describe a method of argumentation in which an excess of evidence is supplied to make an already strong point even stronger. Just as one fixes a post securely in the ground by repeatedly pounding it in, so has Manindranath repeatedly driven home his main point, that there is no better way to develop love for Kṛṣṇa at this time or, for that matter, at any time than through *saṅkīrtana* of the names of Kṛṣṇa. For Manindranath and for the audience he targeted with this book, repetition is not a fault but a good quality. As he says in that same introduction: repetition such as this increases the ocean of joy. Hearing such things over and over, then, is considered a source of pleasure. That is because his message is basically a good message, a message of hope and well-being that points to a bright future. It is a gospel of love and thus is pleasing to the ears of the believers.

While Manindranath's message is basically a message of good news, there is nevertheless a trace of a sharp edge to it. Those who practice the Vaiṣṇava practice of remembering (*smaraṇa*, a kind of meditative, visualization practice involving mentally picturing and participating in the daily activities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their eternal paradise) will find a sharp blade hidden in the soft gauze of Manindranath's words. In

⁴*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, 3.4.155: "You are my teacher, a respected authority." Śrī Caitanya says this to Sanātana according to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

⁵This one is used by Śaṅkarācārya. It is found in his commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, 3.3.53.

Manindranath's view one should not on one's own initiative take up that kind of remembering practice. To do so would be to diminish the importance of *sañkīrtana*. Rather, remembering will grow organically out of the practice of *sañkīrtana* of the holy names when the time is right. It should not be undertaken artificially before one is ready. He uses a rather odd example to characterize the way the practice of remembering enters into the life of the practitioner. It is like being possessed by a ghost, he says. In the way that without desiring a ghost, a ghost may come and take one over and having taken one over may refuse to leave, so does remembering come uninvited and possess one and once it arrives it never again departs. One need not strive separately for remembering. Instead, one should devote all one's effort and attention to *sañkīrtana* of Kṛṣṇa's names and then, when the time is ripe, uninterrupted remembering of Kṛṣṇa will land on one's shoulders like a ghost dropping from a tree and take possession of one's heart. Like a ghost, too, once it arrives it will not easily depart.

From Manindranath's somewhat peculiar example one should not get the idea, that remembering, like being haunted by a ghost, is an unwanted experience among Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. Constant remembering of Kṛṣṇa is in fact a sign of having arrived at the highest level of religious cultivation in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. Someone who deeply loves Kṛṣṇa will constantly be thinking about him and saying his name and will not forget him even for a second. This characteristic of one who has attained that perfect love for Kṛṣṇa in turn becomes one of the main forms of practice for those who are striving for that perfect love. This is an age-old principle behind religious practice in India and has been recognized as such by saint-scholars as different as and as separated in time and place as Śrī Śaṅkarācārya (7th century C.E., South India) and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmin (16th century C.E., North India).⁶ Manindranath's point here is that the path to the perfection of all-consuming love for Kṛṣṇa which is accompanied by a constant, loving, and spontaneous remembrance of Kṛṣṇa runs most directly through the practice of singing and repeating Kṛṣṇa's names.

Another point that Manindranath makes that is worthy of note has to do with his beliefs about Kṛṣṇa's peculiar methods of appearing to and disappearing before his devotees. Perhaps he wished to reassure those practitioners who have been at the practice a long time and were wondering why Kṛṣṇa had not appeared to them yet. Manindranath presents

⁶See Śaṅkara on *Bhāgavad-gītā*, 2.55 and Sanātana on *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 2.6.168.

scriptural evidence from the works of the Gosvāmins to show that Kṛṣṇa will often appear briefly to his advanced devotees and then withdraw from them. The purpose of this withdrawal is to intensify their desire and passion for him. The classic example is, of course, his disappearance from the cowherd girls who went into the Vṛndāvana forest to meet him at night. According to the *Bhāgavata* account, Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the company of the group taking with him one special cowherd girl (Rādhā). The cowherd women who were left behind wandered about the forest in the night seeking him, inquiring about Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts from all the plants, trees, and animals they met. When he finally reappeared he explained his behavior to them in a very interesting verse:

But, though they are worshiping me, I do not reveal myself to living beings so that their attachment, eagerness, and longing for me will increase. It is just like a poor person who, after finding a great treasure, has lost it. Consumed by the thought of it, he knows nothing else.⁷

Thus, his disappearance from the cowherd girls and eventually from that one special cowherd girl, too, is meant to increase the intensity of their longing for him. This is based on the idea taken from the realm of literary criticism that love-in-separation increases the intensity and sweetness of the love enjoyed in union. Shortly after this verse in the *Purāṇa*, however, comes the famous verse in which Kṛṣṇa tells the cowherd women that he is unable to repay them for their goodness in loving him and suggests that their own goodness be their ultimate repayment.⁸

⁷Bhāg., 10.32.20:

नाहं तु सख्यो भजतोऽपि जन्तून्
भजाम्यमीषामनुवृत्तिवृत्तये ।
यथाधनो लब्धधने विनष्टे
तच्चिन्तयान्यन्निभृतो न वेद ॥

⁸Bhāg. 10.32.22. There is something final and foreboding about that verse that must have suggested to Sanātana the idea of final separation that he puts forward in his *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Part One, Chapter Seven.

Theology of the Holy Name

About the time I rediscovered Manindranatha Babu's little book on the holy name, I also discovered that, like his book, there were several other books devoted to the discussion of the holy name in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism and written not by scholars for scholars but by practitioners for other practitioners. Though not the product of critical scholarship, the books were nevertheless scholarly in their own fashion, containing discussions of and numerous references to works considered authoritative in the Caitanya tradition. This area of thought and writing I have come to refer to as the theology of the holy name.

The practices of reciting the names of Kṛṣṇa, meditating on them, and singing them loudly with musical accompaniment have been a prominent feature of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism from its very beginning. Most Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas recognize repetition of the holy names as the foundation upon which the entire religious tradition was built. As a result, a great deal of thought and discussion has been devoted, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the names of Kṛṣṇa, their relationship to Kṛṣṇa, the one who is named, and their efficacy in bringing about what is regarded as purification in the minds and hearts of the tradition's practitioners. The ultimate goal of all the practices of the Caitanya tradition is to cultivate an intense and deeply emotional love for Kṛṣṇa, a love that overpowers and subdues all other loves and brings those loves into alignment with itself. The primary driving force behind this cultivation is the divine power believed to be invested in the names of Kṛṣṇa.

There is a great deal of that old, primitive, magical thinking connected with names and naming in this Caitanyite system of beliefs concerning the names of Kṛṣṇa. It was a commonly held belief in ancient and primitive societies that by knowing the name of something one gains control or power over it. The name is somehow intimately connected with or inseparable from the person or thing named. Thus, names were often kept secret as one sees for instance in the way the name of God (YHWH) was handled in the Hebrew Bible. It was never pronounced because it bears the awful and dangerous power of the one who is named, God himself. By uttering the name of God one was placing oneself in God's powerful presence, too close for comfort, which, considering how God was conceived in the Hebrew Bible, was considered a definite threat to one's health.

One can see a similar way of thinking in the ancient hymns of the

Vedas. There, the names of the gods are used along with various praises to invoke them and make them present at the rituals at which the hymns were sung. Thus, the names are used there to bring the gods close so that an interaction with them (offerings and requests) can more easily be made. It was not so much a matter of calling the gods as it was of making them present by the very pronunciation of their names. The names were the gods and the gods their names. Knowing the correct names of the gods and pronouncing them correctly was considered the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful rite. Thus, the power of the rites was in the *brahman*, the sacred speech, and especially in the sacred names. Those who spoke the sacred speech and handled the sacred names, filled with sacred power (*brahman*), were known as the *brāhmaṇas*, the ritual specialists.

A similar principle operates even in the Upaniṣads, the later and final portions of the Vedas. There certain words, the great statements (*mahāvākya*) for instance, were believed to have great power and efficacy. Thus, when the famous Upaniṣadic statement *tattvamasi*, "you are that (*brahman*, here spirit or self)," was pronounced by the Upaniṣadic teacher at the conclusion of his teaching to his dear disciples, the ignorance (*avidyā*) of the student was supposed to be overcome suddenly by the light of knowledge and realizing himself to be *brahman*, the student would respond with *aham brahmāsmi*, "I am *brahman*." The words are the things they represent. There was, it was believed, a unity between word (*pada*) and meaning (*artha*). Thus the Vedas and the Upaniṣads were restricted to the hearing of only certain groups and that only after ritual initiation.

On this ancient background, the fundamental principles of the theology of the holy name developed: that the name and the named are not different, are inseparable. To use an example drawn from Manindranath's book: they are the same sweet, candy syrup poured into two different molds, one a syllabic form and the other a human-like form. Of course, a radical distinction is drawn between mundane names and the names of Kṛṣṇa (including the names of his various descents and expansions). Mundane names *are* different from the things or persons they name. That is why one can say "pie" and not have one's mouth filled with pie. But, the case is different with Kṛṣṇa, the holy name theologians tell us. Utter his name and he is fully there, personally present on one's tongue and in one's ears and in the ears of all those who hear his name at that instant. His presence brings about an immediate transformation

in one if one is without offense when one says or hears Kṛṣṇa's name, or a gradual purification of the senses and mind if one is not. The chanter eventually becomes able to see into and experience the otherwise invisible spiritual realm of Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore, to the fundamental doctrine of the unity of holy name and the holy named, are added some discussions of the various obstacles that interfere with the efficacy of the holy name, the offenses (*aparādha*). Then, one can add some discussion of the borderline cases called "semblance or similitude of the holy name" (*nāmābhāsa*) in which the holy name is applied to someone who is not the holy named. When one adds some discussion of the relationship between chanting the holy names and other forms of *bhakti* practice (hearing discourses on sacred topics, worship of images, meditation, pilgrimage and so forth), one has all the main elements of that area of thought in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism called the theology of the holy name.

One often also finds in the theology of the holy name glorification of the powers of the holy name to destroy sins, to save or free one from rebirth and discussions involving the peculiar cyclic view of time commonly found in Hinduism. In that system it is claimed that we are currently living in the fourth or worst of all ages, the Age of One or the Age of Quarrel (Kali-yuga), and that therefore all other forms of spiritual cultivation, being more complicated and difficult to perform, are beyond our reach. Only the chanting of the holy names, especially when it is done loudly, in a group, and with musical accompaniment, can save us in this dark, diminished age. This came to be regarded in the tradition as the one great quality of this age, that the highest form of the divine love can be approached so easily through the repetition of the divine names and approached by everyone no matter what their qualifications might be.

Other Works on Theology of the Holy Names

There are several outstanding figures in the more recent history of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition who have written on the theology of the holy names. They are theologians of the holy names because of their efforts to try to flesh out that special domain of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theology. Perhaps the earliest of them was Vipinavihārī Gosvāmin whose

work entitled the *Hari-nāmāmṛta-sindhu* (Ocean of the Nectar of Hari's Names) was completed in 1878.⁹ It has twelve chapters called *tarāṅga* (waves) and is written in Bengali verse with Sanskrit verses interspersed. The chapters of Vipinavihārī's book are entitled: (1) The *dharmā*¹⁰ of the age and the good quality of the Age of Kali, (2) The greatness of the names of Hari, (3) The method of glorifying Hari and the greatness of such glorification, (4) The method of hearing the names of Hari and the greatness of that hearing, (5) The method of remembering the names of Hari and the greatness of that remembering, (6) The method of thinking of Hari and the greatness of that thinking, (7) Description of the origination of the names of Hari, (8) Inquiry into Śrī Rādhā, (9) Description of Hari and Brahman and the real difference between them, (10) The practice of cultivating the names of Hari, (11) Description of the way of attaining *bhakti*¹¹ for Hari, and (12) Description of the different kinds of *bhakti* for Hari. He draws together hundreds of Sanskrit verses from a variety of sources, organizes them into those twelve general headings and provides his own translation-commentary on them in versified Bengali. As one can tell from the titles of the chapters, much more is covered here than just the holy names. The practice of reciting the names of Kṛṣṇa is used as the frame around which the system of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava beliefs is organized. The same might be said of this book of Manindranath's. Much else besides the holy names is covered in connection with his discussion.

One of Vipinavihārī Gosvāmin's major disciples was Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda (1838-1914). He wrote, among numerous other works on Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, a classic work on the theology of the holy names called the *Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* (Thought-jewel of the Names of Hari). It is also written in Bengali verse though here no Sanskrit verses are interspersed. It is written in the form of a dialogue between Śrī Caitanya and Haridāsa, a Muslim who became a follower of Śrī Caitanya and who is recognized in the old biographies of Caitanya as the "Teacher of the Holy Name" (*nāmācārya*). According to Bhaktivinoda's text, Śrī Caitanya after finishing his bath in the ocean at Purī comes one day to the Bakula tree under which he and his followers often used to meet. There he asks Haridāsa what the easiest way for living beings to find

⁹It was apparently published in 1879. There is a copy of the 1879 edition in the British Library (shelf-mark VT1850).

¹⁰The recommended religious practice. See the glossary for a more detailed discussion of the semantic range of the word *dharmā* in Indic religion.

¹¹See the glossary.

salvation is. Haridāsa reviews all the various options and concludes that “remembering the holy names and *sañkīrtana* of the holy names is all the living beings need to observe.”¹² The dialogue continues on from there in a very systematic and organized manner. There are fifteen chapters in the book. The first three are entitled: “Indications of the Greatness of the Holy Names,” “Considerations about Reciting the Holy Names,” and “Considerations about Semblance of the Holy Names (*nāmābhāsa*). Chapters Four through Thirteen are each about one of the ten offenses to the holy name. Chapter Fourteen is about offenses in the matter of service and Chapter Fifteen is about the method of worship by means of the holy names. This last chapter discusses the various stages in the process of rising to the peak experience of *rasa* or sacred rapture through the chanting of the holy names. With Bhaktivinoda’s book the theology of the holy names began to take on its characteristic shape, involving a discussion of the offenses, of the non-difference posited between the holy names and the holy named, and of the superiority of the practice of reciting the names to other forms of *bhakti*.

In the 20th century there were a number of writers on the holy names. Perhaps the greatest of them was Manindranath’s guru Kanupriya Goswami. His work, which eventually extended to three volumes, is entitled the *Śrī Śrī Nāma-cintāmaṇi* (Thought-jewel of the Holy Name). Because of his work on the Holy Names Kanupriya Goswami was recognized in the Vaiṣṇava community as the “Teacher of the Science of the Holy Names” (*nāma-vijñānācārya*). The first volume of Kanupriya Goswami’s book (1943) is on the nature and fundamental principles of the holy name. It contains eight chapters and they are entitled: (1) The necessity and superiority of scriptural evidence, (2) The name and the named, (3) The power and the possessor of power, (4) The non-difference of the Lord and His name, (5) The distinctiveness of the holy name in the definition of the name and the semblance of the name, (6) The true nature of the Lord and the non-difference of the name from that true nature, (7) The non-difference of the form of the Lord from His true nature, and (8) The superiority of the name of the Lord over the Lord’s true nature and form. Volume Two (1979) gives a detailed and subtle discussion of the ten offenses to the holy name with numerous quotes from the scriptural sources. The introduction contains what is described as a history of the offenses to the holy names. Volume Three of Kanupriya’s book (1989) is

¹²Bhaktivinoda Thākura, *Śrī Harināmacintāmaṇi*, p. 14. (Nadia (West Bengal): Jagjīvanadāsa, 1963) I do not have a date for the original publication of the text. It was certainly first published after Vipinavihārī’s work in 1879, however.

a long and involved commentary on the first verse of the eight verses of instruction attributed to Śrī Caitanya. There he develops in great detail the idea that the whole process of *bhakti* cultivation, from the beginning of practice to the experience of the higher stages of *preman*, is described in the progressively ordered parts of that one verse. Manindranath gives a much abbreviated version of discussion towards the end of this book as well.

Inspired by Kanupriya's work another great scholar of the modern Vaiṣṇava tradition, Sundarānanda Vidyāvinoda, wrote a work in Bengali on the theology of the holy names called *Śrī Śrī Nāma-cintāmaṇi-kiraṇa-kaṇikā* (A Small Ray of Light from the Thought-jewel of the Holy Names) spanning nearly six hundred pages. His work is primarily an extended commentary on Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmin's eight verses on the names of Kṛṣṇa called the "Eight on Kṛṣṇa's Names" (*Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka*). It contains eighteen chapters covering all the major topics of the theology of the holy name already mentioned with copious citations from the original Sanskrit and Bengali texts. It also contains an appendix that contains all the names of Kṛṣṇa that are mentioned in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* with glosses on their meanings from the commentaries of the major Caitanyite commentators. In short, it is a massive work by one of the best writers in the Caitanya tradition in the 20th century.

Manindranath Guha's book is thus only the most recent work in a long line of works on the theology of the holy name stretching back almost a century and it is probably the shortest among them. It nevertheless manages to raise all the questions that are considered important in this area of Caitanyite thought and the answers one finds in it are not always what one would expect. Manindranath was certainly aware of many of the works written before on the subject, especially those by his teacher. He was probably also familiar with the work by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and by Sundarānanda Vidyāvinoda. Manindranath's book is thus a fine introduction to this wealth of Vaiṣṇava theological reflection on the nature of the holy name that has occupied some of the modern tradition's finest thinkers and writers.

The Translation

This translation has been done with two audiences in mind. The first consists of scholars and students of world religions who would bene-

fit from reading an accessible and relatively short religious tract on the essential practices and beliefs of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism written by a Caitanya Vaiṣṇava for other Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. I have kept that audience in mind in providing a good deal of explanatory and scholarly apparatus in the form of introduction, footnotes (clearly identified as my own), glossaries, and bibliography. I think the members of this audience will learn a great deal about this tradition from this little book. Almost all of the fundamental beliefs and practices of the tradition are clearly if only briefly discussed. Such readers will find much that is familiar in the work, much that reminds them of certain segments of their own traditions, no doubt, or of other traditions with which they are familiar. The text is thoroughly theistic. One feels that in some places one could almost replace Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā with Yahweh, Jesus, or Allah and transform the work into a fine Jewish, Christian, or Muslim text. The insistence that “there is no other way” with respect to *saṅkīrtana* of the holy names is reminiscent of Christianity’s insistence on its having cornered the market on truth in Jesus. The focus on God’s names recalls both Jewish (Kabbalah) and Islamic mysticism (Sufism). The convoluted, hair-splitting, and subtle lengths to which Manindranath sometimes must go, guided no doubt by his Gosvāmin teachers, to interpret “properly” a troublesome verse of scripture is common in almost all religious traditions with highly developed literatures.

For members of the Caitanya tradition I have done my best to translate Manindranath’s work faithfully so that they might reap the benefits he hoped that they would from it. All of his footnotes, which he primarily uses to cite passages of Sanskrit in support of the points he is making, are present and have been checked and corrected whenever necessary. I have capitalized words the way I think he would have wanted (Lord instead of lord, Holy Name instead of holy name). I have avoided, however, the overly saccharine kind of language that is usually found in English works belonging to the Caitanya tradition. Transcendental, pastimes, Supreme Personality of Godhead, bliss, blissful, and perhaps worst of all Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī have all been avoided in this translation. Thoughtful readers I trust will not feel any loss at all at the exclusion of these and other tired and largely nonsensical expressions.

My translation has attempted to stay as close as possible to Manindranath’s original Bengali text while yet translating it into idiomatically correct English. This has not been too hard to do and I have sometimes wondered to myself if Manindranath, who knew English quite well, did

not have an English form of expression in mind when he wrote certain passages. At times it simply seemed too easy to come up with an English expression comparable to Manindranath's Bengali wording. There were some passages, though, in which it was difficult to find a suitable English expression for Manindranath's Bengali. In those places I have done the best I could with my understanding of his intended sense and have called attention to them in my footnotes.

As mentioned before, this translation is based on the second revised edition. No later edition of it was produced out as far as I know. Manindranath has not written in the high literary style called *sādhu-bhāṣa*. Most of the other works on the theology of the holy name mentioned above are written in the high literary style. Instead, Manindranath chose the more common colloquial style called *calita*. Why he chose this style is not clear, but perhaps he felt that the colloquial form of the language was more appropriate for the book's structure as a dialogue. The literary form of Bengali used in ordinary speech must sound as stilted as Shakespearean English might to the modern English speaker. That said, it must be noted that the vocabulary is decidedly Sanskritic. The Persian, Arabic, and Portuguese borrowings that are so common in colloquial Bengali appear to have been bleached out of Manindranath's language.

I was faced with a tough choice when Manindranath translates a Sanskrit verse into Bengali. I could have translated the Sanskrit directly from the Sanskrit or from the Bengali of Manindranath's translation. I chose the latter because sometimes Manindranath adds things to or emphasizes things in his Bengali translations that are not obvious in the Sanskrit. Not to translate those verses in the way Manindranath did would have interfered with the flow of his argument. When this sort of thing happens in the translation I have noted in a footnote the difference between what the Sanskrit actually says and what Manindranath says it says. Fortunately, this does not happen often because, in general, Manindranath's translations are faithful to the original. Occasionally, however, his enthusiasm or desire to make a particular point seems to carry him away and he puts words into the mouths of those he translates. For instance, when Sanātana says something like "the highest good" (*parama-śubha*), Manindranath says "the loving service of Rādhā." This is certainly what Manindranath thinks the highest good is, but is it necessarily what Sanātana thinks, too? Manindranath's interpretation of his words in that way imposes his own notion of the highest good on Sanātana's.

Some Sanskrit-Bengali words simply have no satisfying equivalents

in English. Such words I have left in the original and given a more detailed account of their meanings in the glossary. Perhaps the most important example of this sort of word are *sañkīrtana* and its close relative *kīrtana*. I tried several English possibilities for this word at various points during the translation: praising, glorifying, reciting, repeating, etc. Its meaning incorporates all of those possibilities and I found I was not satisfied with any one of them individually. Their connection with the word *kīrti*, which means “fame,” suggests that it has to do with making someone famous or spreading the fame of someone or some thing. *Sañkīrtana* of the holy name, however, does not mean, except perhaps in a secondary way, spreading the fame of the holy name. It means spreading the fame of the holy named *by means* of the holy names. Taken as repeating or reciting, it means the rite of reciting the holy names. *Sañkīrtana* can be connected also with Kṛṣṇa’s forms, qualities, and actions. In each case it means praising Kṛṣṇa by speaking about his forms, qualities, and actions. None of the English words I tried seemed to convey all of this well. So I left it in its original Sanskrit form. There were few other words like this, too, words such as *dharma* and *bhakti*. Detailed discussions of those words can be found in the glossary at the back of the book.

In closing, I would like to say that it has been a pleasure for me over the past few years to try to think along with Manindranath on this topic so dear to the hearts of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. I hope that the members of the two audiences to which I aimed this translation will have an equally good time following its winding, unhurried progression through the exotic, richly forested, flower-filled world of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism.

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 Kiśorikiśorānanda 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 got 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 re-
ligion is a very encouraging sign for an author, there is no doubt. This
second edition has grown a good deal in size. Like a flowing river, it runs
bubbling along amidst the addition of new topics and the expanded dis-
cussion 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 in the Holy Name.

We have come a great distance from 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 परिवर्त्तत 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 fixing your gaze in the direction of 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

Chapter 1

Prologue

I praise the supreme controller,
Śrī Kṛṣṇacaitanya, whose grace
makes the lame cross over mountains
and the dumb recite the Vedas.¹

Laghu: Master, Dearest of Mukunda,² 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

¹An oft used *maṅgala* verse:

पङ्क्तुं लङ्घयते शैलं मूकमावर्तयेत् श्रुतिं ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे कृष्णचैतन्यमीश्वरम् ॥

²One 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.)

of the intelligent and the wisdom of the wise is found in their gaining immortality by means of the mortal body.

Chapter 2

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 *saṁ* 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 intense.”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 स्मर्तव्यश्चच्छताऽभयम् ॥

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 Kṛṣṇapūra’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:

2.1 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 Kṛṣṇapūra’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.

2.2 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*.

2.3 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 प्रेमान्तर-ङ्गतरसाधनत्वेन 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.]

