

HOW TO CHANT 64 ROUNDS - LESSON 5

by Dharmavir das Prabhu

Introduction to verse 3 of Sri Siskastakam - The Eight Instructions of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu

Lord Caitanya considered humility essential for one who is aspiring to chant the holy names of God. He wrote:

ṭṛṇād api sunīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

"One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly." [Siksastakam, verse 3]

This verse is the most important verse to understand the process of chanting the holy names.

There are three important instructions here:

Humility

Tolerance

Offering respects to others

If one practices the above instructions then one will develop a taste for chanting the holy names.

If we think ourselves lower than a straw in the street, we will not take shelter of duplicity while displaying only a pretense of humility. True humility means to develop a taste for chanting. In other words if you don't have taste for chanting, that means that your humility is false. To show our humility to the envious atheists and hypocrites is not what is meant by being lower than a straw in the street. We should not show our humility to everyone.

Unless we are sincere, we cannot think ourselves lower than a blade of grass. Only those who are free from material desires can become sincere devotees and constantly chant the holy names.

The holy names should be chanted free of pride, false ego and the desire to be respected by others.

Here is a video clip of Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami while chanting japa - just silently murmuring or mentally chanting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFsVmXAQpKg>

Offenses to the Holy Name are the core reason why we don't get any taste. In my second lesson I quoted and explained Srila Prabhupada's direct instruction to chant the holy names of Nityananda and Gauranga to quickly get rid of offenses.

If one practices the third and fourth verse of Siksastakam, one can acquire the taste for the Holy Name very quickly because they focus on humility which is the key for attaining it. It is said: "Only the humble and meek shall enter the Kingdom of God."

The Acharyas Define What is Humility:

"Humbleness is the sign of progress in Krishna Consciousness. A Krishna Consciousness person thinks always about himself as the lowest creature in the world, and the more one thinks like that he becomes elevated more and more. A Krishna Conscious person is never falsely puffed-up; he is satisfied with his humble position as the servant of the servant of the servant of Krishna." [From Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Krishna dasa, June 1, 1968]

To further understand and imbibe the mood of humility we recommend the reader to please read Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's bhajan "Amara jivana" which enumerates one after another the deep feelings of a genuinely humble devotee: <http://kksongs.org/songs/a/amarjivan.html>

Therefore, even though Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was fully self-realised, he genuinely felt himself most fallen. The songs he wrote wherein he expresses his fallen condition were not 'just to teach us' the way to become to become humble, but were coming from his transcendental realizations.

"Chanting the holy name is the chief means of attaining love of Godhead. This chanting or devotional service does not depend on any paraphernalia, nor on one's having taken birth in a good family. By humility and meekness one attracts the attention of Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of all the Vedas. Therefore if one becomes very humble and meek, he can easily attain the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in this age of Kali." [Caitanya Caritamrita, Antya 4.71, purport by Srila Prabhupada]

So it is clear that development of humility depends on our persistent chanting of the holy name of Krishna and that the ability to chant also depends on humility. They are inseparable and interdependent: we cannot chant if we are not humble and we cannot become humble if we don't chant.

"Wherever there is a relationship of love of Godhead, its natural symptom is that the devotee does not think himself a devotee. Instead, he always thinks that he has not even a drop of love for Kṛṣṇa." [Antya 20.28]

Pure devotee knows that anything he attains in the course of his devotional service is simply due to the mercy of the Supreme Lord.

Srila Prabhupada emphasizes that the only way to receive and properly understand the transcendental knowledge is to humbly approach a qualified spiritual master who has personally realized that knowledge and has the power to transfer his blessings unto such a qualified disciple:

"Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others. One should approach the spiritual master with all humility and offer him all services so that he will be pleased to bestow his blessings upon the disciple. Because a bona fide spiritual master is a representative of Kṛṣṇa, if he bestows any blessings upon his disciple, that will make the disciple immediately advanced without the disciple's following the regulative principles. It is clearly stated that without humility, understanding is not truly possible." [Bhagavad-gita 13.8-12, purport by Srila Prabhupada]

Srila Bhaktivinoda further clarifies the verse three of Siksastakam regarding the issue 'offering respect to others'. He instructs that "One should be free from pride and should offer appropriate respect to others. One should offer Vaiṣṇavas the respect due to a Vaiṣṇava, and to those who are not Vaiṣṇavas he should offer the respect that befits any human being. If one does not offer respect to others, he does not acquire the necessary qualification to chant śrī-nāma." [From Jaiva dharma, ch. 8]

Here are all the lessons for download:

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