

How To Chant 64 Rounds - Lesson 3

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Introduction to the verse 1 of Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam - The Eight Instructions of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Today I am going to discuss only verse 1 of the Śikṣāṣṭakam which is only the summary of this verse. At a later time we will discuss this Śikṣāṣṭakam in more detail.

ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam

In this verse Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu is giving a benediction in the form of a declaration that let there be complete victory to the chanting of the pure holy name and explains the effects of pure chanting. The holy names cleanses the mirror of the heart and gives liberation, spiritual ecstasy, pure love of Godhead, transcendental knowledge, expands the ocean of unlimited bliss enabling one to taste the nectar at every step and thoroughly cleanses the self as well as the body, both internally and externally.

Just as the nectarean rays emitted from the moon cause the white lotus to bloom similarly the pure chanting causes ecstatic emotion (bhava) within the hearts of the living entities.

When unalloyed devotion arises in the heart of the devotee by continual practice of hearing and chanting, Bhakti devī destroys the gross and subtle body of the living entity and simultaneously the original pure form of the living entity manifests. One may attain a form in any of the five transcendental relationships with the Lord (neutrality, servitorship, friendship, parenthood or conjugal relationship). This will happen in accordance with one's eternal and devotional sentiment.

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka emanated from the divine mouth of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation that delivers the fallen conditioned souls in the age of Kali. This Śikṣāṣṭaka is the very essence of all the Vedas.

Each time one reads and deliberates on this subject, newer and newer meanings come to light. This Śikṣāṣṭakam is a veritable necklace for all Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees.

For commentary on these verses we have to credit Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thakur. Verses 1 to 5 describes devotion in the stage of practice (sādhana bhakti). Verses 6 and 7 describes devotion on the level of ecstatic emotion (bhava bhakti). Verse 8 describes devotion on the platform of divine love (prema bhakti).

When the mirror of the heart is completely cleansed and purified by chanting of the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vision of one's own constitutional form and service becomes revealed. This blazing forest fire of repeated birth and death can only be extinguished by chanting the pure names of the Lord.

The next lesson will be on verse 2 but please try to properly understand the purport of the verse 1. Mere parrot-like recitation and memorization of these verses will not help. I am keeping the lessons short so that readers can try to grasp the essence and understand the deep meaning.

In this picture:
Lord Gauranga Deity

