

Practice of the name of the Lord

If there is anything sweeter than all things sweet, more auspicious than all things auspicious, holier than all holy objects, verily, it is the name of the Lord—or the Lord Himself. Give up the company of the worldly minded, the association with those infected by demonic qualities. Keep away from every type of wrong doing. Seek always the company of the wise, the good. Take refuge in the Lord Himself (Narayana); He, the pure One, is the perfect embodiment of peace, of happiness, and of wisdom. He, the Lord (Sri Hari), is seated within everyone. He stays constantly in the place where devotees sincerely and with single-mindedness honour His name. Therefore, first, you have to practice intense devotion toward the Lord. Then, you can certainly attain real and permanent happiness and wisdom.

Of what use is the pursuit of the fleeting pleasures of the senses? Worship the Lord (Hari) who lives in the cavity of your heart, nearer to you than your dearest friend, or your father, mother, or guru, the Lord who is all these and more to you. The physical body for whose sake you crave all this comfort and luxury is subject to damage and decay. One day, it will become food for dogs and jackals. The Lord, on the other hand, makes for joy and the thrill of holy love. Surrender your heart to Him; He desires nothing else from you. He can be won by no other means, by neither unlimited scholarship nor pompous vows and colorful ritual.

Of the span of human life, one half is wasted in sleep; the other is frittered away in satisfying stupid desires, in the helpless ignorance of childhood and boyhood, in misery, travail, and illness, in the inanity of old age. You can devote yourself to some worthwhile activity, but beware of misusing even these for the silly pursuit of sensual pleasure. Use at least these precious years for the contemplation of the glory of the Lord, for fixing your mind on His lotus feet ever more firmly, and thus for transporting yourself across the vast ocean of birth and death.

Therefore, practise at all times and under all conditions, with love and devotion, remembrance of the name of the Lord. That name is a thunderbolt that will pulverize mountains of sin. It is the unfailing cure for the dread disease of sheer worldliness. Surely, that name will endow you with peace!

The name of God (Hari) is as the effulgence of the rising sun, which scatters the darkness of delusion; it is as luminous, as universal, as sacred. Do not misuse that sacred name even for a second. Do not let even a second pass without bringing that name to mind. Remember, the sweetness of that name when repeated by Prahlada overpowered the hearts of the demons who heard him; the children of the demons repeated the Name along with Prahlada, and, led by him, they began to sing and dance with joy, arming themselves with axes to defend their leader!

The name of the Lord, which can transform the demonic character and purify it into nectar, is verily the heaven of peace for all, for the world. To repeat that name without break, to love that form and that name with intensity, that is what deserves to be called devotion (*bhakti*). Devotion means the highest, purest love directed toward the Lord. Anyone can attain this devotion. The door of the *yoga* of devotion is open to all. The only passport needed is the desire for liberation (*moksha*). That desire entitles everyone to their heritage.