

Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism and the Holy Names

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Introduction: Theology of the Holy Names

The form of Vaiṣṇavism inspired by the 16th century saint-reformer Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (1486-1533 C.E.) rested heavily upon a belief in the purifying and salvific powers of the names of God, whose fullest self-revelation Caitanya believed to be Kṛṣṇa. While other medieval Vaiṣṇava traditions certainly also shared this belief to some extent, none of those traditions placed as much stress on the holy names as the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The Caitanya tradition took quite seriously the idea, drawn from various passages of the Purāṇas, that *kīrtana* or more specifically *saṅkīrtana* is the proper form of religious practice for the current age, which the Hindu texts identify as the Age of Kali, the Age of Quarrel. *Kīrtana* means “praising” or “glorifying” and *saṅkīrtana* means “loudly praising or glorifying.” This latter religious practice often takes the form of congregational singing of Kṛṣṇa’s names with the accompaniment of various kinds of musical instruments (drums, cymbals, harmoniums, and so forth). As the singing becomes emotionally charged, various kinds of dancing often break out as well. *Saṅkīrtana* is generally a public performance, in that it is often carried out in public areas such as the streets and the squares of villages, towns, and cities.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* provides the most famous stanza identifying *saṅkīrtana* as the religious rite right for this age:

The wise worship by sacrifices, primarily in the form of *saṅkīrtana*,

one whose letters are “k-ṛ-ṣ-ṇ-a” and whose complexion is dark along with all his parts, subparts, weapons, and companions.¹

There are many ways of praising Kṛṣṇa. One may praise him by recounting his activities or “sports” (*līlā*), as they are called, or by praising his good qualities (*guṇa*), or by describing the beauties of his forms (*rūpa*), or by repeating his various names. For the followers of Caitanya, the best way of praising Kṛṣṇa is by means of his various names. An early follower of Caitanya and one of the movement’s first theologians, Sanātana Gosvāmin (1465?-1554 C.E.), wrote that “among the various kinds of glorification (*kīrtana*) of Kṛṣṇa, loud glorification (*saṅkīrtana*) by means of his names is the foremost. Since it is able to produce quickly the treasure of love for Kṛṣṇa, it is considered the best of all.”² He explains why in his commentary on that verse: “because it is able to cause love for Kṛṣṇa to appear without dependence on anything else.”³ What is meant here is that the various names of Kṛṣṇa encompass all the other forms of glorification mentioned above and thus are not dependent upon any of them. Take for instance the name Śyāmasundara, “beautiful dark one.” Here one has a description of Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful dark form. Or, in the name Navanīta-taskara, “butter thief,” one has a name that refers to one of his childhood activities or sports, stealing butter. In the name Dīna-dayālu, “compassionate to the poor,” is indicated Kṛṣṇa’s quality of compassion for the downtrodden. Thus, all the other forms of praise can be encompassed within praise through Kṛṣṇa’s names. In other words, they can be accomplished through the vehicle of Kṛṣṇa’s varied and limitless names. The Caitanya tradition, therefore, has concluded that praise of Kṛṣṇa through his names is the best of all forms of praise.

¹Bhāg., 11.5.32. The connection of the practice of saṅkīrtana with the Age of Kali is supplied by the context. The stanza just prior to this in the *Bhāgavata* begins “Now hear about [dharma] in the Age of Kali” (*kalāvapi tathā śṛṇu*). Parts and subparts refers to Kṛṣṇa’s various plenary expansions and sub-expansions as represented by his elder brother Balarāma and others in his own descent (*avatāra*). By the clever application of the rules of sandhi in Sanskrit grammar and hermeneutics the Caitanya tradition has interpreted this verse as a reference to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya himself. Thus, they see him as a descent of Kṛṣṇa whose renunciation name, Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, contains the letters “k-ṛ-ṣ-ṇ-a,” who was by complexion “not dark,” (*tviṣā akṛṣṇam* instead of *tviṣā kṛṣṇam*), that is, light or golden. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya’s complexion is said to have been light or golden and his enthusiasm for and participation in *saṅkīrtana* is known from the many eyewitness accounts contained in his early biographies.

²Sanātana Gosvāmin, *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (BB), 2.3.158.

³Sanātana Gosvāmin, *Dig-darśinī* on BB, 2.3.158.

Theology of the Holy Names

Because of its focus on the names of Kṛṣṇa as a means for cultivating love for Kṛṣṇa,⁴ the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition has developed over the centuries what might be called a theology of the names of Kṛṣṇa or a theology of the Holy Names. While there are many dimensions to that theology, especially as it has been developed by more recent authors, its fundamental insight is that Kṛṣṇa and his names are, in all respects except one, non-different. Drawing on an important verse from the *Padma Purāṇa* for support, the Caitanya tradition asserts that by vocalizing or even just remembering his names one is brought into the presence of Kṛṣṇa himself. That verse is:

Because the Holy Name and the Holy Named are non-different, the Name is a thought-jewel, the very embodiment of consciousness and joy (*rasa*), full and pure, eternally liberated, and of the very nature of Kṛṣṇa himself.⁵

In this verse the Holy Name is called a thought-jewel, which like the mythic philosopher's stone, fulfills all of one's desires. One thinks it and one has it. The Holy Name like the thought-jewel is capable of granting all one's wishes, it is an embodiment of consciousness and joy, it is full and eternal, and it is eternally liberated because it is non-different from Kṛṣṇa himself in all ways but one. The Holy Name according to the Caitanya tradition is greater in compassion than even Kṛṣṇa himself because though the Name is beyond the grasp of material senses, as Kṛṣṇa is, it appears in them anyway.⁶ By that purifying contact with the non-material Name, the material senses are cleansed of their materiality — so argue the theologians of the Holy Names — and become capable at last of perceiving the

⁴The Caitanya tradition appears to be alone in its view that the highest goal of human life is not liberation (*mokṣa*), but love (*preman*) of Kṛṣṇa. In the other Vaiṣṇava traditions, *bhakti* (devotion) is regarded as a means to liberation. In the Caitanya tradition *bhakti* has two aspects, *bhakti* as means and *bhakti* as goal. *Bhakti* as means is a set of practices, primarily hearing, glorifying and remembering, aimed at cultivating *bhakti* as goal or *preman*. Once one has developed *bhakti* as goal, one does not discontinue the activities that formerly were viewed as means. Instead one continues those, only now they become avenues of relishing and expressing one's love for Kṛṣṇa. Thus, *bhakti* is both means and goal in this tradition and is promoted to a place above *mukti* as a goal of human life.

⁵*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ, pūrṇa-śuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ; Padma Purāṇa* cited in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 11.503.

⁶See Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.234.

non-material realm of Kṛṣṇa. The Holy Names are thus like a perpetual descent (*avatāra*) or an enduring appendage of Kṛṣṇa in the world.

Although there are countless names of Kṛṣṇa, the Caitanya tradition, following the lead of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya himself, has given a place of special honor to a form of those names called the Mahāmantra or Great Chant. The Mahāmantra is the well known formula:

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
*hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*⁷

This formula contains three names, Hari, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma, all in the vocative case of the Sanskrit language. It thus essentially constitutes a series of calls to Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Hari is a common name of Viṣṇu; Kṛṣṇa is his eighth descent, recognized as deity in the *Mahābhārata*, and Rāma is the seventh descent of Viṣṇu, divine hero of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. Sometimes in the Caitanya tradition it is said that the Rāma meant in the chant is not Sītā's Rāma of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's older brother. Though exact meanings of the names is obscure, the tradition supplied meanings, based on imaginative etymologies, that could be pressed into theological service. Hari, for instance, is said to mean "he who takes away one's sufferings." Kṛṣṇa means "the all-attractive one," and Rāma "the pleasing one." All the names are then regarded as referring to aspects of Kṛṣṇa himself in the Caitanya tradition, since in that tradition Kṛṣṇa has thoroughly superseded the ancient Vedic Viṣṇu in religious evaluation. Kṛṣṇa is regarded as the source of Viṣṇu rather than Viṣṇu the source of Kṛṣṇa.⁸ Not satisfied with the aforementioned understanding of the great chant, therefore, some members of the Caitanya tradition have given other interpretations. Hari is replaced with the feminine name Harā, for instance, which in the vocative is also Hare. Harā is then made to refer to Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's primary lover and his pleasure-giving power (*hlādinī-śakti*), because she alone is able to steal away Kṛṣṇa's mind and heart. Rāma is also reinterpreted to mean Kṛṣṇa as "the pleasing one" who makes passionate love (*ramaṇa* to Rādhā. Thus, the mantra is transformed into an expression of the love relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In this way the first line of the mantra

⁷This the form the mantra is given in in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, Uttara-khaṇḍa, 6.55. In the *Kali-santarāṇopaniṣat* it is given with the *hare rāma* half first.

⁸This view is based on an important verse in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (1.3.28), *ete cāṁśakalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*, "These [descents] are all portions and parts of the Puruṣa, but Kṛṣṇa is the Lord himself."

indicates Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's mutual attraction to each other and the second their union with each other in conjugal love. The mantra has even been interpreted more elaborately by placing it within the frame of a story about Rādhā chanting it as she desires reuniting with Kṛṣṇa.⁹

In one of the passages translated below Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is described as advising his followers to do *japa* of this Mahāmantra, to chant it day and night, and to know that there are no rules or regulations governing its chanting. Japa is the repetitive pronunciation of a mantra, either silently in one's mind or out loud in one's speech. In some texts it is said that there are three kinds of japa: mental, whispered, and vocal. All three types are accepted by the Caitanya tradition, but the type of japa that is done loudly or vocally has generally been favored. The reasons for that can be found in another of the passages translated below. Basically, chanting to oneself, in one's mind or in a whisper, is beneficial for oneself, but chanting loudly is beneficial for oneself and for all those who hear. Loud chanting is thus said to be a hundred times more beneficial than silent chanting. The loud or vocal repetition (japa) of the names of Kṛṣṇa is considered in fact to be a form of kīrtana.¹⁰

There is another aspect of glorification through Kṛṣṇa's names that should be mentioned before concluding this brief introduction. Those who chant or repeat Kṛṣṇa's names sometimes experience intense joy and occasionally go into ecstatic trances. This was certainly typical of Śrī Caitanya's experience of glorification of the Names as several of the translations below demonstrate. Caitanya's frequent ecstasies during kīrtanas have prompted some scholars to suggest that he was given to epileptic fits.¹¹ Be that as it may, the history of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism is filled with saints who have experienced ecstatic trances in the context of kīrtana. While this may be true of those who are regarded as elevated in the tradition it is certainly not the case of those who are just beginning the practice of repeating the names of Kṛṣṇa. Rūpa Gosvāmin (1470?-1555), one of the tradition's finest poets and theologians, has made an interesting comment on this in his *Upadeśāmṛta* (Nectar of Instruction):

It may be that the sugar of the names and activities of Kṛṣṇa is not

⁹As in Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmin's *Harināmārtha-ratna-dīpikā*, for instance, in which Rādhā, feeling the pain of separation from Kṛṣṇa begins to chant the Mahāmantra and at each word imagines herself meeting with Kṛṣṇa and fulfilling her desire to be with him.

¹⁰See Sanātana Gosvāmin's commentary on *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 11.472.

¹¹See *Itihāser Śrī Caitanya* by Amulyacandra Sena

pleasing to a tongue overheated by the bile of ignorance. Still, if one tastes them with respect every day, gradually they become delicious, destroying the source of that disease.¹²

In the beginning of the cultivation of preman one may not feel much attraction to the Holy Names, but after one has practiced reciting them regularly for some time, one begins to taste their innate sweetness. Through the regular rubbing of the Holy Name against it, the mind gradually is wiped free of its pollution of ignorance as a mirror is wiped free of dust and smudges. Ignorance takes the form of misconceptions about the nature of the self, misidentification with the body and things related to the body, and a truculent and intractable egotism. A sign that those effects of ignorance are becoming loosened is found in the development of a deep sense of humility. Then the Name is said to rise like the sun in the mind of the practitioner, and the practitioner's heart, softened by the warmth of that sun, becomes ripe for the experience of sacred rapture (*bhakti-rasa*). This tasting of sacred rapture is what is manifested in the extraordinary joys and ecstatic trances that sometimes overcome those engaged in kīrtana. The symptoms of ecstasy signal the appearance of the final goal as envisioned by the Caitanya tradition, the development of bhakti as goal, bhakti as love (preman) for Kṛṣṇa. This then is a very brief summary of the tradition's theology of the Holy Names.

Texts Presented Here

Most of the passages translated here come from Bengali texts dating from the early 16th century up to the 20th century. However, since the Caitanya tradition depends so heavily on the Purāṇas for support of its theology of the Holy Names, the textual translations begin with a small sampling of the numerous Sanskrit verses glorifying the recitation or chanting of the names of Kṛṣṇa. Those verses are selected from the huge number of verses from the Purāṇas, Itihāsas (Epics), and other texts that were collected together in the eleventh chapter (11.272 to 11.529) of the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (Manifestations of Bhakti for Hari) compiled and arranged by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmin (1500-1587). Next come some Sanskrit verses on the Holy Name by immediate followers of Caitanya along with a

¹²Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Upadeśāmṛta*, verse 7. The disease Rūpa had in mind was something like jaundice for which sugar is a cure (or at least an aid), but during which sugar is not pleasing to the taste.

couple of verses on the same subject from the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (Eight Verses of Instruction) which is attributed to Caitanya himself. Following that is a Sanskrit hymn written by Rūpa Gosvāmin, called the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka* (Eight Verses on the Names of Kṛṣṇa). This short hymn has been the springboard for much of the theology of the Holy Names that has developed in the Caitanya tradition in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The next section contains a few of the thousands of Bengali songs written by followers of Caitanya, some of whom were his companions, portraying Caitanya's own involvement in kīrtana and the ecstatic moods and trances he experienced in that context. We turn next to one of the early hagiographies of Caitanya, the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* by Vṛndāvana Dāsa (fl 1540). In it we find the story of Haridāsa, a Muslim convert to Kṛṣṇa bhakti who is regarded by the tradition as the model teacher (*ācārya*) of the chanting of the Holy Names. We also find there Caitanya's own instructions to his followers on the chanting of the Holy Names. Next, we skip to the middle of the 19th century and witness an important event in the life of the Vaiṣṇava saint Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Caraṇa Dāsa Bābā or Boḍo Bābā (Big Bābā) (b. 1853). During the kīrtana described in that passage Boḍo Bābā falls into a trance and reveals the chant (*bhaja nitai gaura rādhe śyām; japa hare kṛṣṇa hare rām*) that became the primary form of kīrtana for his community of followers, which is even today one of the most lively communities of modern Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism.

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. I refer to them as the theologians of the 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 the Names of Hari) was completed in 1878.¹³ He draws together hundreds of Sanskrit verses from a variety of sources, organizes

¹³It was apparently published in 1879. There is a copy of the 1879 edition in the British Library (shelf-mark VT1850). It has twelve chapters called *tarāṅga* (waves). They are entitled: (1) The dharma 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 for Hari, and (12) Description of the different kinds of bhakti for Hari.

them into twelve general headings and provides his own translation-commentary on them in versified Bengali. 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 Holy Names called the *Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* (Thought-jewel of the Names of Hari). A brief excerpt from his discussion of the phenomenon of “reflected light” of the Holy Name (*nāmābhāsa*) is given here.

In the 20th century there were a number of writers on the Holy Names. Perhaps the greatest of them was Kanupriya Goswami. His work, which eventually extended to three volumes, is entitled the *Śrī Śrī Nāma-cintāmaṇi* (Thought-jewel of the Holy Names). 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*). Inspired by Kanupriya’s work another great scholar of the 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. Perhaps the best short introduction to modern Vaiṣṇava thinking and teaching about the Holy Names, however, comes from Manindra Nath Guha, one of the disciples of Kanupriya Goswami. His book entitled *Śrīman-nāmāmṛta-sindhu-bindu* (A Drop from the Ocean of the Nectar of the Holy Name) presents a dialogue between a disciple and his guru on the subject of the Holy Name. A small passage on the non-difference between the Holy Name and the Holy Named from Manindra Nath’s book is the final passage presented here.

Sanskrit Sources

Glorification of the Holy Names

[From the Epics and Purāṇas]

All of his names, king, bring about the achievement of all goals. Therefore, in all endeavors you may chant with devotion whichever of Kṛṣṇa’s names you wish.¹⁴

¹⁴Viṣṇu-dharmottara cited in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (Hbv), 11.314.

You are indeed pure, since, like the sun, attachment to glorifying Hari does not arise without destroying all the darkness in human beings.¹⁵

Let humans not fear the lighted flames of sin. Those are destroyed by the drops of water from the dense rain clouds of Govinda’s names.¹⁶

“Govinda” spoken with devotion or even without burns away all sins like the conflagration at the end of the ages.¹⁷

The auspicious powers capable of destroying all sins, [powers] that are inherent in the giving of charity, the keeping vows, austerities, the visiting of holy bathing sites and places of pilgrimage and so forth, and that are in the Rājasūya, Aśvamedha, and the other sacrifices, and in knowledge of the higher self, all of those powers Hari has drawn together and placed in his own names.¹⁸

There is one great boon among the many faults characteristic of the Age of Kali, king, and that is that by glorification of Kṛṣṇa one is freed from bondage and goes to the supreme.¹⁹

If one desires the highest knowledge and from that knowledge the highest abode, then with great respect, king of kings, glorify Govinda.²⁰

Kṛṣṇā [Draupadī], this debt of mine is increased so much that I never leave the heart of someone who cries out “Govinda” to me though I live far away.²¹

If someone should sing my names and dance near me, this I say to you truthfully: I am purchased by that person, Arjuna.²²

Sweetest of the sweet, most auspicious of the auspicious, true fruit of the vine of all revealed texts, consciousness by nature, the name of Kṛṣṇa sung even once either with respect or by accident, best of Bhṛgu, saves any human being.²³

The name of Hari, the name of Hari, the name of Hari is my life. In the Age of Kali there is no other, is no other, is no other way.²⁴

¹⁵ *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* cited in the Hbv, 11. 315.

¹⁶ *Garuḍa Purāna* cited in the Hbv, 11.316.

¹⁷ *Skanda Purāna* cited in the Hbv, 11.322.

¹⁸ *Skanda Purāna* cited in the Hbv, 11.398-9.

¹⁹ *Bhāgavata Purāna*, 12.3.51.

²⁰ *Garuḍa Purāna* cited in Hbv, 11.441

²¹ Kṛṣṇa speaking to Draupadī, also called Kṛṣṇā, in the *Mahābhārata* as cited in the Hbv, 11.445.

²² Kṛṣṇa speaking to Arjuna in the *Ādi Purāna* cited in Hbv, 11.446

²³ *Prabhāsakhaṇḍa* cited in Hbv, 11.451.

²⁴ The words of Nārada from the *Brhan-nārādīya* cited in the Hbv, 11.460.

Because the Holy Name and the Holy Named are non-different, the Name is a thought-jewel, the very embodiment of consciousness and joy (*rasa*), full and pure, eternally liberated, and of the very nature of Kṛṣṇa.²⁵

[From the Saints]

May glorification of Kṛṣṇa be most victorious! It cleanses the mirror of the mind, puts out the great fire of worldly existence, spreads moonlight to the lily of good fortune, is the life of the wife of wisdom, increases the ocean of bliss at each step, and causes the tasting of the fullest nectar.²⁶

In your names are invested many of your own powers. The time for remembering them is not restricted. Such is your mercy, lord, but such is my misfortune that no passion for them has been born [in me].²⁷

Victory, victory to the blissful name of Murāri which ends the drudgery of following one's own dharma, of meditation, of performing rites of worship and so forth; that name, if somehow uttered even once, gives liberation to living beings and is the greatest nectar. It is my whole life, my only ornament.²⁸

Kṛṣṇa! Getting free from the cords of hearing, you are caught by the ropes of meditation. Escaping from those, too, you are captured by the chains of glorification (*saṅkīrtana*) of your Names. Now I, who am unsettled by *bhakti* for you, will never let you go. You are surrounded and firmly held by that cloth of yellow silk.²⁹

Among the various kinds of glorification of Kṛṣṇa, glorification through his names is the foremost. Since it is able to produce quickly the treasure of love for Kṛṣṇa, it is the best.³⁰

The name of the lord is even more dear than his form. It benefits the whole world, is easily worshipped, and is enjoyable. [Therefore,] it has no equal.³¹

²⁵ *Padma Purāṇa* cited in the Hbv, 11.503.

²⁶ Śrī Caitanya, *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, 1.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 2. The author expresses his humility here when he says that he feels no passion for the names of Kṛṣṇa. This kind of expression of humility, expressing a sense of one's own fallen-ness, is common among the writers and poets of the Caitanya tradition.

²⁸ Sanātana Gosvāmin, *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 1.1.9.

²⁹ Sanātana Gosvāmin, *ibid.*, 2.1.1.

³⁰ Sanātana Gosvāmin, *ibid.*, 2.3.158.

³¹ Sanātana Gosvāmin, *ibid.*, 2.3.184.

May they rule supreme, those syllables ‘hare kṛṣṇa’ springing from the mouth of Śrī Caitanya, his own names, inundating the whole world with love.³²

I don’t know how much nectar the two syllables “kṛṣ-ṇa” are made with, but when they dance on my tongue they create a desire for a whole string of tongues. When they blossom in the hollows of my ears they create a desire for millions of ears. When they enter the courtyard of my mind they overcome the operations of all my senses.³³

Rūpa’s Eight Verses on the Names of Kṛṣṇa

Holy Name! The luster of the crown jewels of all the Vedas illumine your lotus-like feet. I seek complete shelter in every way in you who are worshiped even by liberated souls. (1)

Victory to you, Holy Name, praised by the sages. You have a form of the highest syllables for the pleasure of the people. Even though pronounced without respect or only partly, you nevertheless destroy all fearsome sufferings. (2)

What talented person is able to describe your sublime greatness in the world, Sun-like Name of the Lord? By even the first reflections of your arising, the darkness of the existence of those gripped by ignorance is destroyed and you give the power of sight that guides to bhakti even to those blind to the truth, (3)

The Veda roars out that what is not achieved by the direct experience of Brahman, namely the destruction of the effects of past actions that are already fructifying, is accomplished by the appearance of the Holy Name. (4)

Holy Name, let my love for you grow immensely, you who have many forms like Aghadamana (“Punisher of Agha”), Yaśodānandana (“Son of Yaśodā”), Nandasūnu (“Son of Nanda”), Kamalanayana (“Lotus-eyes”), Gopīcandra (“Moon of the Gopīs”), Vṛndāvanendra (“King of Vṛndāvana”), Praṇatakaruṇa (“Merciful to the Surrendered”), and Kṛṣṇa. (5)

Holy Name, you have two natures: the conveyed and the conveyor. I understand the latter to be more merciful than the former, since even a living being who has committed some grievous offense to the former may honor the latter with his mouth and be ever submerged in an ocean of joy. (6)

³²Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 1.4.

³³Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Vidagdha-mādhava*.

Holy Name, obeisance to you, destroyer of the pains of those sheltered by you, lovely consciousness and joy in nature, great festival of Gokula, Kṛṣṇa's full body.
(7)

Name of Kṛṣṇa, enlivener of the *vīṇā* of Nārada, soaked in the sweetness of syrupy waves of nectar, please, if you wish, appear on my tongue joyfully [*rasena*] forever. (8)

Early Bengali Sources

Songs

(1)

Long-armed Caitanya Rāya³⁴ used to dance.
Golden hued was Gaura³⁵ Rāya.
In love (prema) he fainted time and again,
his pure body decked with goose-bumps.
What more can I say: his feelings were endless
to take away the greed of the world.
Hearing loud singing of his own qualities and names,
he was undone, his dancing broken.
The people of Nadīyā forgot their pains and pleasures
and floated away on waves of love.
Passing out jewels and raining down love's nectar,
the whole world was drenched.
Caitanyadāsa sings: "A matchless gift of love
and me, I've missed out!"³⁶

(2)

Lord Gaurāṅga³⁷ dances in Nadīyā town.
Hearing this, the three types of people do not stay home.
Jewelry of gold and gems adorn his body,

³⁴Rāya means "king," here used as an expression of respect.

³⁵Gaura means "golden" or "white." Caitanya's skin color was white or golden.

³⁶Caitanyadāsa in the *Śrī Gaurapada-taraṅgiṇī*, 4.2.1.

³⁷"Golden-limbed." An epithet of Caitanya.

his limbs smeared with sandal, a drop of musk within.
 Is this the sandaled Moon or well-dressed Meru?
 A garland of jasmine decorates his neck.
 In front dances Advaita for whom he has descended.
 Outside Gaurāṅga dances, the joy of all.
 Dancing, dancing whichever way Gaura goes
 thousands light lamps, some sing “Hari.”
 The wives of houses give up all and sing “Hari.”
 A river of love flows from the tears of everyone’s eyes.
 His curling hair is surrounded by many flowers,
 a branch of oleander, some jasmine with leaves.
 Is this a stylish dancer or my Lord dancing?
 What need have I for austerity, recitation, or Vedic rules?
 By the names of Hari he [Caitanya] has saved even the outcastes.
 Wives and the rest have left their household chores.
 Ascetics quit their penances, renunciants their renunciation.
 When he dances, sings, and chants the names of Hari,
 Balarāma Dāsa is robbed of that nectar.³⁸

(3)

His companions form a circle;
 in its center is Gaura, the dancer.
 Viśvambhara [Caitanya] dances with Gadādhara;
 Nityānanda Rāya dances too.
 In his [Caitanya’s] former sports he tastes the joy of love,
 realizing it in his own nature.
 To one house after another
 he gives love for Śyāmasundara.
 He offers praise [saṅkīrtan] and gives away love,
 with all of his companions.
 The male dances in the mood of the female;
 The female in the mood of the male.
 Whatsoever their nature, realizing their true nature,
 how many hundreds of classes dance!
 Says Nayanānanda: “The joy of Nadīyā
 fills the world with bliss. Sad is my life. Therefore,

³⁸Balarāma Dāsa, *ibid.*, 4.2.3.

I beg shelter at the feet of Mādhava.³⁹

(4)

Gaura dances filled with love; again and again he shouts “Hari,”
One moment recalling Vṛndāvana, the next the queen of his life.⁴⁰
The color of lac [red] is the cloth round his hips; shining brightly
Gaura sings.

Sometimes he shouts “Yamunā” and runs to the Ganges’ bank.
“Thaw-thaw, thie-thie” sound the drums; “jhan-jhan” ring the bells.
From his lotus eyes a Ganges flows; on his neck a garland swings.
The source of all joy is Gauracandra;⁴¹ merciful to those who have
nothing at all.

Govinda Dāsa nourishes hope for the shade of those lotus feet.⁴²

(5)

In the skies of Nadiyā a cloud of Praise forms.
Drums, cymbals, and from mouths, deep roars;
the thunder of tumult rises again and again.
The two lords [Caitanya and Nityānanda] rain dense showers of Names.
Their companions sing and dance in fits.
Lightning bolts of feelings flash brightly.
The downpour of love makes the river flood Śāntipura.
(Sadly) Ananta Rāya’s heart is not charmed by that joy (rasa).⁴³

(6)

His body fills up with goose-bumps when he hears his own qualities.
Overwhelmed by love his rolls about on the ground.
One moment he leans on Narahari’s body.
Gazing at Gadādhara’s face he falls unconscious.
One moment he brags, the next he says “Hari.”
Saying “Rādhā, Rādhā,” he loudly weeps.
Saying “Lalitā, Viśākhā,” he heaves deep sighs.
Govinda Dāsa cannot maintain his composure.⁴⁴

³⁹Nayanānanda, *ibid.*, 4.2.8.

⁴⁰Rādhā

⁴¹“Golden-moon.” Another name of Caitanya.

⁴²Govinda Dāsa, *Ibid.*, 4.2.12.

⁴³Ananta Rāya, *ibid.*, 4.2.79.

⁴⁴Govinda Dāsa, *ibid.* 4.3.5.

(7)

My Gaura is the limit of mercy, a treasury of qualities.
On the bank of the Suradhunī, in Nadiyā,
Gaurāṅga sports without limit.
Placing his two arms on the shoulders of his bhaktas,
he is not able to move. Shouting “Haribol”⁴⁵ he weeps.
In love his two eyes are full of tears; how many rivers from them
flow?
His whole body is covered with goose-flesh; the earth cannot hold
them.
With his companions he wanders around, constantly saying “Hari-
bol.”
Placing his two arms on the shoulders of friends, leaning and swaying
he moves.
Filling the world with love he fulfills his name, “Savior of the Fallen.”
Hearing of it no other hope enters Paramānanda’s mind.⁴⁶

Hagiographies

Caitanya-bhāgavata

Victory, victory to Gaurasundara,⁴⁷ friend of the downtrodden.
Victory, victory to the Husband of Lakṣmī, Lord of all.
Victory, victory to his descent for the protection of the devotees.
Victory to the sport of glorification [*kīrtana*], true for all times.
Victory, victory to Gaurāṅga⁴⁸ along with his devotees.
If one hears the story of Caitanya, bhakti comes within reach.
The story of the first division⁴⁹ is a river of nectar
in which one hears of Gaurāṅga’s sports, enchanting to all.
In this way the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha was in Navadvīpa

⁴⁵“Say Hari!”

⁴⁶Paramānanda Sena, *ibid.*, 4.3.6.

⁴⁷Beautiful Golden One, Caitanya.

⁴⁸Golden-bodied One, Caitanya.

⁴⁹The *Ādi-līlā*, or First Division of the Acts or Sport of Caitanya. It is the first of the three parts of Vṛndāvana Dāsa’s *Caitanya-bhāgavata* covering the first 24 years of Caitanya’s life.

living as a householder and teaching as a brāhmaṇa.
 His descent was to reveal the devotion of love.
 He was not doing that at all, and that was the way he wanted it then.
 Everyone's domestic life was completely void of the highest aims.
 The insignificant joys of sense enjoyment had everyone's respect.
 Those who taught the *Gītā* or the *Bhāgavata*
 would not perform or encourage others to perform glorification.
 Or, all of the devotees, clapping their hands
 would get together with one another and sing in praise.
 Even then they would ridicule it in their hearts.
 "Why are these people shouting so loudly?
 I am Brahman; in me sits the immaculate.
 Why distinguish between master and servant?"
 The materialists all would said: "They are just begging for food.
 They call out 'Hari' to let everyone know.
 Let's break down the doors of this bunch's houses."
 All of Nadīyā gathered together and argued like that.
 Hearing this all the devotees were saddened.
 They did not find a person worthy of conversation.
 The devotees saw the material life as empty.
 Calling out "Alas, Kṛṣṇa!" they felt boundless sadness.
 At just that time Haridāsa arrived there,
 a physical manifestation of pure devotion to Viṣṇu.

 Now listen to Haridāsa's story,
 hearing which one reaches Kṛṣṇa in his glory.
 To Būḍhan village descended Haridāsa.⁵⁰
 By his good graces glorification appeared in all those places.
 Staying for a while he came to the Gaṅgā's banks.
 Arriving there, he settled at Phuliyā and Śāntipur.
 There he met Ācārya Gosāñi,⁵¹
 who shouted loudly, no limit to his joy,
 Haridāsa felt the same in Advaitadeva's company.
 On waves they floated in Govinda's ocean of joy.

⁵⁰Haridāsa Ṭākura was born into a Muslim family. He was drawn as a young man to the practice of reciting loudly the names of Kṛṣṇa, and as a result he was persecuted by the leaders of his community.

⁵¹Advaita Prabhu. He was an important senior companion of Caitanya.

Continuously Haridāsa on the Gaṅgā's banks
 wandered about merrily, saying "Kṛṣṇa" quite loudly.
 Foremost was he of those detached from sensuality;
 His fortunate mouth filled with Kṛṣṇa's names incessantly.
 Not even for a moment did Govinda's names cease.
 In tasting bhakti many feelings rose from moment to moment.
 Sometimes he danced all by himself.
 Sometimes he roared like a lion vexed.
 Sometimes he loudly wept.
 Sometimes he laughed outlandishly.
 Sometimes he shouted out ferocious growls.
 Sometimes he fainted, falling hard to the ground.
 One moment he yelled out an unworldly sound.
 The next he gave it commentary most profound.
 Squirting tears, horripilation, laughter, fainting, sweat —
 all of kṛṣṇa-bhakti's somatic perturbations —
 as soon as Prabhu Haridāsa began to dance,
 they all arrived and swarmed through his body.
 In this way his tears of joy dampened all his limbs.
 Even the most wicked seeing him were greatly charmed.
 So amazing were the goose-bumps in his body
 that Brahmā, Śiva seeing them were delighted.
 All of the brāhmaṇa of Phuliyā
 seeing him were filled with joy.
 Everyone developed for him great respect.
 In the village of Phuliyā lived Prabhu Haridāsa.
 Bathing in the Gaṅgā, incessantly Hari's names
 he chanted loudly and wandered about to all places.⁵²

...

In this way Haridāsa in the company of the brāhmaṇas
 fearlessly performed singing in praise with great delight.
 All of the Yavanas⁵³ who had given him pain,
 perished with their families in a short while.
 Then Haridāsa in a cave on the bank of the Gaṅgā
 settled down, remembering Kṛṣṇa day and night in solitude.

⁵²Vṛndāvana Dāsa, *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, 1.11.1-35.

⁵³The Muslims who arrested Haridāsa and beat him in the section of this story I have skipped.

Three hundred thousand names he chanted every day.
That cave of his became a mansion of *Vaikuṅṭha*.⁵⁴

...

Seeing the people's lack of respect for bhakti,
Haridāsa felt great sadness inside.
Still Haridāsa in a loud voice
performed full-throated praising of the Lord.
Even then extremely wicked sinners
were not able to tolerate loud praise of Hari.
In the village of Harinadī lived a rascal brāhmaṇa.
Seeing Haridāsa he said this to him angrily:
“Hey Haridāsa! What are you doing
calling out the Name? What is the reason?
You should chant in your mind. That is the right way.
What scripture says to shout out the Holy Name?”
Whose teaching is it to shout the name of Hari?
Tell it to this assembly of scholars.”
Haridāsa replied: “All the principles of this
you all know, you know the greatness of Hari's name.
After hearing of it from all of you I am repeating it.
I shall describe whatever little I know.
If one chants it loudly there is a hundred times more merit.
Scripture does not call it a fault; rather, it is a good trait.
‘Loudly it becomes a hundred times more fruitful.’”⁵⁵
The brāhmaṇa asked: “If one chants the Name loudly,
the chanter gets a hundred times more merit? What is the reason?”
Haridāsa replied: “Hear, great sir,
the teaching on this in the Veda and *Bhāgavata*.”
All the scriptures appeared in Haridāsa's mouth.
He began to explain, feeling the bliss of Kṛṣṇa.
“Listen, Vipra! If they hear only once the name of Kṛṣṇa,
animals, birds, even insects go to the abode of *Vaikuṅṭha*.
As it says in the Tenth Canto of the *Bhāgavata*:

Since chanting of your name immediately purifies all

⁵⁴ibid., 11.167-70. *Vaikuṅṭha* is the transcendent realm of Viṣṇu beyond the material universe.

⁵⁵*uccaiḥ śataguṇaṃ bhavet*, source unidentified.

hearers as well as the one chanting, what more need be said of one who has been touched by your foot.⁵⁶

Animals, birds, insects, and so forth are not able to speak,
but if they hear the Holy Name they all are saved.
A person who chants silently [*japa*] Kṛṣṇa's name saves himself.
By chanting loudly a person helps others.
Therefore, if a person shouts praise out loudly
the result is a hundred times greater, all the scriptures say.
As the *Nārādīya Purāṇa* says:

Chanting loudly is a hundred times greater than the
silent chanting of the names of Hari because by loud
chanting one purifies oneself and the hearers.

Why is the loud chanter a hundred times greater
than the silent chanter according to the Purāṇas?
Listen, Vipra, carefully to the reason for this.
Chanting silently one only nourishes oneself.
If one loudly praises Govinda,
all living beings hearing it are liberated.
Even though they have tongues all living beings except for humans
are not able to make such a sound as Kṛṣṇa's name.
That from which these poor ones gain liberation —
what is wrong with doing that, please tell me.
Someone takes care of only himself.
Someone else takes care of a thousand persons.
Between these two who is greater, consider it for yourself.
For this reason there is goodness in loud praise.”
That brāhmaṣa hearing Haridāsa's words
began to say terrible things in anger.
“Now Haridāsa has become a philosopher.
We see over time how the Vedic path has been destroyed.
'At the end of the age, śūdras will explain the Vedas.'
We see that now; why at the end of the age?
In this way you have revealed yourself.
You wander from house to house eating good food.

⁵⁶*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, 10.34.17.

The explanation you have given, if it is not correct,
may your nose burst into pieces in front of all.”
Hearing the words of that lowest of brāhmaṇas,
Haridāsa said ‘Hari’ and smiled faintly.
Then not giving him any reply
he departed singing praise loudly.⁵⁷

...

“For so long have you studied and listened.
Now finish your education: glorify Kṛṣṇa.”
The disciples asked: “What sort of glorifying do you mean?”
The Son of Śacī, the Master himself [Śrī Caitanya], taught them.
haraye namaḥ kṛṣṇa yādavāya namaḥ
*gopāla govinda rāma śrīmadhusūdana.*⁵⁸
Showing them the way, the Master raised his hands
and did *kīrtan* himself with his disciples.
The Lord of Kīrtan himself led *kīrtan*;
And all the disciples sang, surrounding him on all sides.⁵⁹

...

Bringing gifts, everyone came to visit the Master.
Seeing the Master all bowed down.
The Master said: “May everyone have *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa.
Speak of nothing else but Kṛṣṇa’s qualities and names.”
Then the Master himself instructed them all:
“Listen to the details of Kṛṣṇa’s Name, the Mahāmantra:
hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare,
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare.”
The Master said: “I have spoken this Mahāmantra.
With it perform recitation (*japa*) with persistence (*nirbandha*).
From this, every perfection will arise for all.
Say it every second; there is no other rule.
Some of you should gather, sitting at the door and all do *kīrtan* clap-
ping your hands:

⁵⁷ibid., 1.11.261-291.

⁵⁸Obeisance to Hari, o Kṛṣṇa, obeisance to [you] descendant of Yadu, o Gopāla (Protector of cows), Govinda (Pleaser of cows), Rāma (Pleasing one), Madhusūdana (Killer of the demon Madhu)!

⁵⁹ibid., 2.1.397-401.

*haraye namaḥ kṛṣṇa yādavāya namaḥ
gopāla govinda rāma śrīmadhusūdana.*

I have told you all of this *kīrtan*.
Gathering together wives, sons, and fathers,
go to your homes and perform it.”⁶⁰

...

When invited for an alms-meal the Master said laughing:
“First you go and become lords of a hundred thousand.
I will eat where there is a lord of a hundred thousand.”
Hearing this all the brāhmaṇas became troubled.
The brāhmaṇas offered prayers and said: “Goswami,
What to speak of a hundred thousand, none of us has a thousand.
If you do not take alms-food from us, our households,
let them burn to ashes this instant!”
The Master said: “Do you know who is a lord of a hundred thousand?
He who chants a hundred thousand Holy Names every day.
I call that person a lord of a hundred thousand.
There do I take alms; I don’t go to other homes.”
Hearing the merciful words of the Master, the brāhmaṇas
gave up their worry and became joyful in heart.
“We will chant a hundred thousands Names, Master. Please take our
alms.
What good fortune! In this way you teach us.”
Every day all the brāhmaṇas chanted a hundred thousand Names
in order to have Caitanyaandra take alms-food at their houses.”⁶¹

Modern Bengali Reflections

Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Caraṇa Dāsa Bābā

[Revelation of the Nitai Gaura Mantra]⁶²

⁶⁰ibid., 2.23.72-80.

⁶¹ibid., 3.10.117-125.

⁶²This extraordinary chant: *bhaja nitai gaura rādheśyām, japa hare kṛṣṇa hare rām*, was revealed by Boḍo Bābā (Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Caraṇa Dāsa Bābā) in the midst of an intense *kīrtana* he led during a prolonged stay in the town of Krishnagar in Bengal. It has become one of the main

Bābā became overwhelmed with emotion and with a choked up voice began to sing:

Nitai⁶³ and Gaura dance like Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa
Everyone sings "hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma."
If you really want this Gaurāṅga,
become a servant of Nityānanda.
Even one who says only with his mouth:
"I am a servant of Nityānanda"
will perceive the true form of Gaura.
The love of the *gopīs* as in the *Bhāgavata*
one will get only from Nityānanda in this world.
Nityānanda is the giver of love;
Gaurāṅga is his greatest treasure.
In the pleasure of the Rāsa dance,
one will meet Śrī Rādhāramaṇa.
Climbing aboard the boat "hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma,"
cross over the ocean of rebirth to Vṛndāvana.
My Nitai frolics, my Nitai plays,
All who are maddened with love he makes his own.
Here my Nitai dances, overwhelmed with emotion.
Whomever he finds, even a Cāṇḍāla,⁶⁴ he pulls onto his lap.

While singing that song Boḍo Bābā went into a deep trance. Tears began to flow from his eyes in streams and his body was covered with goose-bumps. A moment later his body shook violently like a tree in a powerful wind and he fell to the ground unconscious. The devotees surrounded him and began to chant the Holy Names. Seeing in his body the rising and falling waves of powerful emotions, the devotees were astonished. When he became paralyzed with emotion, it seemed as if his body was devoid of life. Then a moment later he began to laugh, the next moment he cried, a moment later he shivered and a moment after that he was covered with goose-bumps. The devotees surrounded him and after chanting the Holy Names for quite a while he came halfway back to consciousness and stutteringly uttered:

songs used in the performance of *kīrtana* by a sizeable community of modern Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. This excerpt is from Boḍo Bābā's biography, *Carita-sudhā*, vol. 2, 33-34.

⁶³An abbreviated form of Nityānanda, one of Caitanya's close companions.

⁶⁴A community beyond the pale of the caste hierarchy, an outcaste.

*bhaja nitai gaura pābe rādheśyāma
japa hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma*

Worship Nitai and Gaura (Caitanya)
and you will get Rādhā and Śyāma.
Recite Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma

All the devotees who surrounded him began to sing in unison these words and that grew into a *kīrtan* that lasted long into the night. By about 10:30 at night no one even remembered their bodies. One group of them sang the first line and another group responded with the second line: each group, seemingly trying to overpower the other, sang praise with all their might and danced, overwhelmed with emotion, their arms raised high. Some time later during the *kīrtana* Boḍo Bābā, leaning against a wall, his eyes half open, his body drenched in tears and covered with goose-bumps, a smile on his face, raised the pointing finger of his right hand and swayed back and forth in intense emotion. At some point, too, a wonderful aroma, attracting hearts and minds, filled the place and some of the devotees tried to find its source, but none of them were able to. The flood of Holy Names continued on in the same manner. Around about midnight, the *kīrtan* began to wind down, but Boḍo Bābā continued to be overwhelmed with feeling, leaning up against one of the walls.⁶⁵

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda

[Discussion of the Reflection of the Holy Name]⁶⁶

Glory to Gadāi,⁶⁷ Gaurāṅga, and the Life of Jāhnavā⁶⁸ [Nityānanda].

⁶⁵ *Carita-sudhā*, vol. 2, pp. 33-34.

⁶⁶ This is a translation of part of the Third Chapter of Bhaktivinoda's *Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, pp. 26-31. (Svarūpagaṅja, Nadīyā West Bengal: Gaudīya Mission, 1963) *Ābhāsa* is translated here as reflection. The Holy Name is often compared with the sun. *Ābhāsa* is the indirect or diffused light of the sun just before it rises or when it is covered by clouds or fog. Like the sun the Holy Name is sometimes thought to have a diffused or indirect influence. Though the sun is not directly visible, its diffused or reflected light nevertheless destroys darkness of night and brings warmth and the ability to see things. So does the reflected "light" of the Holy Name have a beneficial effect on the practitioner.

⁶⁷ An abbreviated version of Gadādhara, one of Caitanya's dear companions.

⁶⁸ Jāhnavā or Jāhnavī is the name of Nityānanda's senior wife. After the death of Nityānanda she became an important leader in the Caitanya movement.

To Sītā and Advaita glory and to the devotees headed by Śrīvāsa.
Mahāprabhu, becoming compassionate towards Haridāsa,
arose and then, reaching out his lotus hands,
said: “Listen Haridāsa to my words.
Tell us now clearly about the reflection of the Holy Name [nāmābhāsa].
If you inform us about the reflection of the Holy Name, the Holy
Name will become pure.
The living beings will easily become freed by the qualities of the Holy
Name.

The Name is like the sun; it destroys the darkness of *māyā*.
Fog and clouds cover the Name again and again.
The ignorance of the living being and all its harmful habits
are like powerful clouds and fog.
The sun of the Name of Kṛṣṇa has risen in the sky of the mind.
Fog and clouds again cover it over.

One who does not know that the Name is consciousness by nature
brings on the darkness of the fog of ignorance.
One who knows not that Kṛṣṇa is lord of all
worships many different gods and wanders the path of works.
One who knows not that the living being is by nature consciousness
is constantly in ignorance under the influence of *māyā*'s matter.”
Then Haridāsa said: “Today I am fortunate.
Caitanya will hear about the Holy Name from me.
Kṛṣṇa, the living being — lord, servant — and dull *māyā* —
one who does not know them has ignorance's shadow on his head.

Desire for the unreal, weakness of the heart, and the offenses;
All these harmful things are obstacles in the forms of clouds.
They cover the rays of the Name-sun and reflection of the Name oc-
curs.

They perpetually cover the self-existent Name of Kṛṣṇa.

As long as one does not have knowledge of relationship (*sambandha*)
the reflection of the Holy Name is the living being's shelter.
Even if a practitioner finds shelter with a real guru,
it is by expertise in worship that the clouds are driven away.

When the clouds and fog have dispersed, the Name-sun
appears and gives the devotee the gift of love.

The true guru gives knowledge of relationship
and encourages cultivation of the Name as the meaning.
The Name-sun in a short while becomes strong
and drives away the fog of harmful things.
Then it bestows the ultimate goal, the treasure of love.
The living being who has obtained that love sings the Names.

At the feet of a true guru the living being with respect
first acquires knowledge of relationship with thoughtful discussion.
Kṛṣṇa is the eternal master, the living being his eternal servant.
Love of Kṛṣṇa is eternal, a manifestation of the living being's true
nature.

The living being, the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, has forgotten that
and wanders in the world of māyā searching for happiness.
The world of māyā is the living being's prison,
punishment for the living being's fault of aversion.
Then if the living being, by the grace of holy Vaiṣṇavas
through knowledge of relationship again finds the Name of Kṛṣṇa,
it obtains the treasure of love, the essence of all religion,
before which [love] the five types of liberation are rejected.
As long as knowledge of relationship is not steady,
one remains, gripped by harmful habits, in the reflection of the Name
Even in the stage of reflection of the Holy Name there are benefits.
The living being's merit becomes stronger.
By the reflection of the Name sins are destroyed.
By the reflection of the Name liberation comes and Kali is weakened.
By the reflection of the Name a person purifies his community.
By the reflection of the Name all diseases are impeded.
All doubts are chased away by reflection of the Name.
One in reflection of the Name finds peace from all misfortunes.
Yakṣas, Rakṣas,⁶⁹ ghosts, ghouls, and all planetary influences
by reflection of the Name are driven far away.
A person fallen into hell easily gains liberation.
All emergent effects of past actions depart because of reflection of the
Name.
It is greater than all the Vedas, better than all places of pilgrimage.
Reflection of the Name is the best of all auspicious rites.

⁶⁹Yakṣas and Rakṣas are demonic beings of various sorts mentioned in the Purāṇas.

It bestows the four goals: piety, wealth, sense enjoyment, and liberation.

Reflection of the Name, the savior of the living being, possesses all powers.

It gives joy to the whole world and bestows the best abode.

It is the one goal of those without goals, the best abode of all.

By the reflection of the Name one attains the worlds of Vaikuṅṭha and the rest

especially in the Age of Kali. So all the scriptures say.

Manindranath Guha

[The First Principles of the Holy Name]⁷⁰

Just as iron in contact with fire gains the qualities of fire, by mere contact with an immortal thing we, too, are able to become immortal. That immortal thing is the Holy Name.

Because the Holy Name and the Holy Named are non-different, the Name is a thought-jewel, the very embodiment of consciousness and *rasa*, full [undivided] and pure [free of connection with *māyā*], eternally liberated [beyond *māyā*], the very nature of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Jīva in a commentary on this verse has said:

The Holy Name is a thought-jewel: it grants all one's desires [i.e., while in contact with the Holy Name, which has the nature of truth, whatever is thought of becomes true. Therefore it is a thought-jewel. See Bhāg., 11.15.26: *yathā saṅkalpayet ...*]. Since the Holy Name is Kṛṣṇa, it has the nature of Kṛṣṇa. Consciousness and so forth are adjectives of Kṛṣṇa. The reason the Holy Name is Kṛṣṇa is that the Holy Name and the Holy Named are not different. *One eternal, conscious, joyful, rapturous, truth has appeared as two.*⁷¹

⁷⁰This passage is from Manindranath Guha's *Śrīman-nāmāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, 2nd edition, pp. 10-14. (Śrī Vṛndāvana: Sāvitrī Guha, n.d.)

⁷¹Jīva Gosvāmin on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.233.

Joyful astonishment is called *rasa*. This *rasa* is consciousness *rasa* — it has no relationship with *māyā*. It is as though a liquid substance, poured into two molds, one in the form of a human and the other in the form of syllables, settled in two forms. One is the human form — Śyāmasundara, Vaṁśīdhārī, Tribhaṅgi — and the other is the highest syllabic form ‘kr̥ṣṇa.’ The two are embodied consciousness and *rasa*, the highest nectar,⁷² a condensed ocean of the highest joy.⁷³ The Holy Name possesses a full form.⁷⁴

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmin whose very life and decoration was the Holy Name, the highest of nectars, has revealed the truth of the Holy Name with his own lips in a rapturous outburst:

Hey! The name of Kṛṣṇa is an extremely elevated *rasa*-filled thing. Why *rasa*-filled? Because it is composed of soft, sweet, syllables, or, because it is made of the *rasa* of eternal being, consciousness, and joy, it is *rasa*-filled. Or, because it presents a particular kind of *rasa*, either the ninefold *rasa* headed by *śṛṅgāra*, the *rasa* of *bhakti*, or the *rasa* of *preman*. Also, even in the states of separation and union the name appears, therefore it is *rasa*-filled. Or, *rasa* is meant in the sense of passion; this name is accompanied by passion. Or, it without failing brings about love of the Lord. Therefore this name is *rasa*-filled. Or, the name creates in the minds of its servants or of everyone love for itself, therefore it is *rasa*-filled. Or, *rasa* might be understood as a kind of potency this name possesses; it has the greatest of powers, therefore, it is *rasa*-filled. Or, *rasa* can be a special kind of quality — this name delivers all distressed people, therefore it is *rasa*-filled.⁷⁵

It is as if he drank so much *rasa* that his outburst will never end. Therefore again the outburst continues:

If *rasa* is viewed as a kind of happiness, the name is made of intense happiness, therefore it is filled with *rasa*. Or, the name is sweetness at its highest limit, or supremely sweet, therefore it is filled with *rasa*.

⁷²Sanātana Gosvāmin, *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (BB), 1.1.9

⁷³Rūpa, *Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka*, 7

⁷⁴Rūpa Gosvāmin, *ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁵Sanātana Gosvāmin, his commentary on BB, 2.3.184.

This name is sweeter than sweet, extremely sweet, therefore it is incomparable.⁷⁶

The Named himself and the syllables of the Name, these are, without dependence on anything else, fully, that is, completely non-different in power and in sweetness. They are just like the way a mango and an apple molded from solid sugar are independently the same in taste, aroma, and in sweetness.

Therefore, even though Ajāmila was completely devoid of any connection with the Named, Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha, at the time he called to his own son named Nārāyaṇa, as a result of the contact of his tongue with those four syllables he got sudden liberation.

Furthermore, in Rūpa’s play *Vidagdha-mādhava* (Clever Mādhava) Paurṇamāsī said: *no jāne janitā kiyadbhiramṛtaiḥ kṛṣṇetivarnadvayī*, “I don’t know how much nectar the two syllables *kṛṣ-ṇa* are made of.” This is the sweetness of the Holy Name. “One truth, in the form of eternal being, consciousness, joy, *rasa* and so forth, has appeared as two.”⁷⁷ This statement of Śrī Jīva, in his discussion of the Holy Name, is the definitive statement. It has authority everywhere, or, in other words, it is the final conclusion.

The Holy Name is a Vaikuṅṭha substance⁷⁸ — that is, a substance always without weakness; it does not become impure in any condition; it does not become corrupted by incursion of the faults of an offender, nor, in the reflection of the Name, is it changed.

⁷⁶ibid.

⁷⁷From Jīva Gosvāmin’s comm. on Brs. 1.2.233.

⁷⁸*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, 6.2.14.