

Mantra Meditation

We are all familiar with how the power of sound affects us. Studies have shown how even plants display dramatic changes when various kinds of music is played, withering or becoming stunted in their growth with harsh and pounding music, and thriving when exposed to uplifting classical music.

According to the ancient Vedic literatures, the power in the names of God are beyond any sound produced in this material world. Not only do they uplift our consciousness but they are imbued with the power to purify the unwanted things within our hearts. And what are those unwanted things: lust, anger, envy, greed, and illusion... the enemies of righteousness, religiosity and peace.

We live in a world promoting these very causes of unhappiness which create turmoil within and without. As a result we are experiencing a very fearful situation on our planet, although it is not surprising since the Vedas tell us we are in the iron age of Kali, which began 5000 years ago and is characterized by violence, hypocrisy and quarrel. The very airwaves are filled with lying propaganda and people in general are being misled by irreligious and atheistic leaders.

The peace we so desperately desire is not possible without a foundation of God consciousness.

Whatever we associate with, we become like, in the same way that iron touching fire becomes red hot just like fire. God is all good, possessing every exalted quality. Therefore He is called Bhagavān, one who is full in all six opulences. All we admire in this material world are present in their complete fullness in God: beauty, power, fame, intelligence, wealth and renunciation. Those who become godly display divine characteristics. These are enumerated in the Bhagavad-gītā in the chapter entitled Divine and Demonic Natures: charity, self-control, simplicity, non-violence, compassion and freedom from covetousness; gentleness, modesty and steady determination; forgiveness,

fortitude, cleanliness, freedom from envy and the passion for honor, truthfulness and freedom from anger.

The recommended process of self-realization in this age of Kali is to chant the names of God. God is absolute and therefore His names are on the same absolute platform. That means we can immediately associate with Him anywhere, anytime, simply by chanting His Names. This is a great science. Many persons in the past achieved the highest goal of life by following this simple formula of chanting these sixteen names of God: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

The Lord is very kind. As He has given freely to us the sun, sky, and stars and the earth with all her beauty, He has also given us His supremely powerful and purifying Holy Names. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain if you choose to take up this chanting. This prayer is a cry from the soul, to Mother, Father God. Oh energy of the Lord, Oh Mother Hara, please bless us to receive the grace of our Father Hari. Please engage us in Your eternal, loving service.

Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the great apostle of love, inaugurated this chanting process 500 years ago in India. He predicted this chanting would one day reach every town and village of the world and all the people in all the nations would come together and forget their differences based on superficial bodily and mental designations, and unite on the platform of the soul.

Our Founding Fathers had this basic understanding and therefore they wrote: "All men are created equal." Certainly we are not equal on the material level, but spiritually, before the sight of God we are indeed equal. Some are choosing to be obedient sons and daughters of God and some are choosing otherwise. This chanting has the power to change the heart. If willingness is there, anyone can have a

change of heart, because we come from God who is all good, therefore in our essence, we too are all good.

The media promotes sense gratification as the highest goal but we see the result of this perverted propaganda. No one is happy or satisfied living only to satisfy their senses. It is like increasing a fever to cure the disease. That will not work. The fever must be brought down. We are not these bodies, we are souls, so how will we ever be satisfied pampering this body as if it were all in all? We will only become frustrated and dissatisfied and our pleasure seeking endeavors will become only more abominable. That is the sad state of affairs due to the atheistic influences so prevalent on our planet at this time.

This prayer is called the Mahā-mantra, or the great mantra for deliverance. Mahā means great. Chanting the Holy Names of the Lord has the power to reawaken our dormant love for Him which naturally exists in each of our hearts. When that love is awakened, how would we be able to mistreat other living beings, whether humans, animals or our Mother earth?

We are trapped in this world of repeated birth and death due to our attempts to be controllers and enjoyers. But we are not happy despite all our plans and endeavors. One of the Lord's dear devotees once said that we must become like children to enter into the Kingdom of God. But right now there are many coverings on our hearts which are keeping us from knowing or seeing our true selves.

No matter what we may have done, or who we are, the all compassionate Lord is ready to welcome us back Home. These powerful Holy Names of the Lord can remove these coverings little by little when we chant with sincerity. We do not realize how eager the Lord is to be with us again, more eager than we are to be with Him.

As eternal, spiritual beings, we will never be satisfied only trying to enjoy temporary pleasures. When God is put back into the center of our lives,

everything changes. No matter what is going on in the world we can begin to connect with our true identity separate from matter and experience real peace and satisfaction. This is the platform of actual freedom and empowerment. God is the source of unlimited power. If we want to change the world, the inspiration, direction, dedication and manifestation all comes from Him.

The potency of this mantra is present when it comes through a bonafide spiritual lineage through one who is self-realized. In the West we are used to mental speculation and everyone having their opinion. But the ancient Sanskrit texts describe four lineages of knowledge coming down over many thousands of years. To understand the power of pure transmission, please consider this point. There were over 600 editions of Bhagavad-gītā available before His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda came to the West and gave us Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. But not one devotee of the Lord was made. Everyone used this famous, ancient text for their own purposes, explaining it in so many inventive ways which covered the meaning. But in the short ten years Śrīla Prabhupāda was with us, over 108 centers were established worldwide, including vegetarian restaurants and farm communities with thousands of devotees choosing to live simple lives dedicated to the Lord's service. Śrīla Prabhupāda translated not only the Bhagavad-gītā but over 60 volumes of books from Sanskrit and Bengali with word for word translations and transliterations and dozens of original paintings and photographs. This was an astounding feat for someone who came to America at the age of 69 on a cargo boat almost penniless. It all became possible by the chanting of this sacred mantra uttered from the lips of the Lord's pure representative.

We invite you to give this a try. As they say, "The proof of the pudding is in the tasting," as George Harrison of the Beatles said in the introduction he wrote to Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even if you do not have beads to chant on right now, you can begin chanting out loud and see for yourself the result.

There are many wonderful descriptions of what it is like to experience this awakening of love within the heart. We must be a little patient and there are refinements in our lifestyle which contribute to the effectiveness of this process. But as Śrīla Prabhupāda told us, “There are no hard and fast rules,” so we can begin at once, wherever we are, whether walking, on the train, or plane, or subway, or in the privacy of our homes. Instead of allowing our minds to wander in so many disagreeable directions that cause us anxiety and fearfulness, we can keep company with the Lord directly and bring our minds under His shelter.

Our minds are always disturbed. Arjuna tells Krishna in the Bhagavad-gītā that the mind is as difficult to control as the wind. Anyone who has tried to meditate can testify to this fact. But the mind can be trapped and properly fixed on this transcendental sound vibration with a simple process.

When we chant out loud while using beads, we fix the mind between the sound of our voice and the touch of our beads. This process has been used by saintly persons for hundreds of thousands of years. Our mood is a humble offering of love to the Lord for His pleasure.

The process of chanting is simple. We hold our mala in our right hand. Each mala is composed of 108 beads separated by a knot with a head bead in the middle. We skip the index finger and let the strand rest on our middle finger, pulling down each bead with our thumb, as we say the whole 16 syllable mantra once. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. We chant on each of the 108 beads and that completes one round. We do not go over the head bead when we are finished, but turn the mala around to continue our chanting. One can also have a small string of counter beads to help keep track.

If you choose to make this ancient practice of mantra meditation part of your daily routine then see if you can complete one whole round at a

time rather than stopping and starting. From there it is up to you in regards to your time how many you would like to commit to daily. Be steady, then increase. This is not a race, it is a spiritual discipline that is meant to engage all our senses in the Lord’s service. After all, if we want to cultivate a relationship with someone, then we spend time with that person. It is the same with the Lord. One round can take up to 10 minutes. or a little more. Be patient, hear each word, pronounce them carefully. You can increase depending upon your individual situations and capacities.

Let us remember Lord Chaitanya when we chant and pray for His mercy and blessings. It is said that for one who remembers Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, what is hard becomes easy: a lame man can cross mountains and a blind man can see the stars in the sky. The mantra for this remembrance is śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda and can be chanted before we begin each round.

Many of us find it helpful to chant with Śrīla Prabhupāda. If you are interested, we have a recording available for you at www.HearPrabhupada.com. Scroll down to the 9th category called Instructional recordings. It is entitled “Chanting Japa.”

The best time for spiritual practices is the hour and a half before sunrise, called the brāhma-muhūrta hour. It is the most serene time of the day, allowing for the greatest level of concentration and connection. But since we all have different situations just do your best and pray to the Lord for His help. This is a great science and we are committed to supporting you in your journey of self-realization. Please feel free to contact us with your questions. Be patient and know that your sincere efforts will certainly bring the Lord’s mercy. Do not doubt that we can turn around the fearful situation on this planet. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us if we take one step towards the Lord, He will take one hundred steps towards us.

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