

Chanting with attention

How attentive chanting is the key to all advancement

Three categories of inattention

Distraction

Laziness

Indifference

1) **Drowsiness**

2) If we are not sleepy, we are **Unfocused**.

3) If we are focused, still it is an **Apathetic** focus.

4) This apathetic focus is frequently, easily interrupted by **Troubles & Worries** about unpleasant things.

5) ...or by **Hopes & Ambitions** for pleasant things.

He also explains:

The problems are progressively worse in attempts to deeply practice kīrtan, śravama, and smarana.

In other words, it is easiest to attain *steadiness* in the practice of kirtana. It is harder to attain in while practicing *hearing* (for example, listening to someone speak Srimad Bhagavatam). It is the most difficult to attain in *japa*, where the focus is entirely on contemplation (*smarana*)

Cures

Quantity

Place

Company

Hearing

Extended chanting

Time

Further Cures

Results

Meditation

So this is practice. First of all think of the Deity. First of all think of the lotus feet, then the knees, then the eyes, then the belly, then the chest. In this way, as you become practiced, then go further, advance. In this way, when you become fully practiced, then automatically, in whatever condition you are, you will be able to meditate upon Krishna. That is the highest perfection of life. Satatam kirtayanto mam [Bg. 9.14]. Satatam cintayanto mam. If you always think of Krishna, always chant... Chanting is also meditation. As soon as you chant, you immediately remember Krishna, His form, His name, His quality, His pastimes. So where is difficulty?

Lecture Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.28.19 -- Nairobi, October 29, 1975

"yoga practice is meditation on the Supersoul within; similarly, by chanting Hare Krishna one fixes his mind always on the Supreme Lord. The mind is fickle, and therefore it is necessary to engage the mind by force to think of Krishna" Gita 8.8 purport

While chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna you should always feel the presence of Krishna in Person and as soon as you remember Krishna in Person you can remember also about His talks with Arjuna. If you cannot remember Krishna in Person you should try to hear attentively the word Krishna, Hare as you go on chanting.

Letter to: Ballabhi — New York 5 May, 1967

It is very easy, not difficult. Without any condition. You simply chant and remember Krishna. It is not at all difficult. Everyone can... Here you are seeing the Deity of Krishna. So while chanting, if you remember this Deity, is it very difficult?

Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.19 -- Denver, July 2, 1975

Regarding how George may continue his meditation, that meditation may be done by keeping one picture of Krishna, keeping his mind concentrated on the picture of Krishna and softly chanting the Hare Krishna Mahamantra as long as he likes. That will complete both his meditation and Krishna Consciousness perfectly according to the last verse of the sixth chapter of Bhagavad-gita which says, "And of all yogis, he always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in Yoga, and is the highest of all."

Letter to: Syamasundara -- Los Angeles 12 April, 1970

"The Hare Krishna mantra chanting means keeping Krishna always within your heart. This is not... It is not expensive at all. You haven't got to make a very exalted throne for Krishna. You can imagine that "In my heart I have placed now a very diamond throne, and Krishna is sitting." That is accepted. It is... Actually it becomes. Even within the mind you think that "I have kept one diamond throne, very costly throne, because Krishna is coming. He will sit down here," that is not false. That is a fact. So you create such situation within your heart. "Now Krishna has seated. Let me wash His feet with the Ganges water, Yamuna water. Now change His dress to a first-class costly garments. Then I decorate with ornaments. Then I give Him for eating." You can simply think of this. This is meditation. Svantah-sthena gadabhrta. It is so nice thing. Anywhere you can sit down and think that Krishna is sitting in your heart and you are receiving in so nice way. They are not false. They are also fact. It is so easy."...So here is the... If you simply carry Krishna within your heart always in a very devotional service, exalted devotional service, and chant Hare Krishna, and think of Krishna, wherever you will go, you will purify the whole place.

Lecture, Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.13.10 Geneva on 6/1/74

It is essential for a devotee to worship the form of the Lord and not only meditate upon the form of the Lord within his mind with the chanting of the mantra given by the spiritual master.

SB 4.8.56 purport

As soon as you utter the name of Krishna, you remember Krishna's form, Krishna's pastimes, everything

lecture The Nectar of Devotion -- Calcutta, January 25, 1973

By chanting the Hare Krishna Lord, which are not different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, naturally his mind becomes absorbed in thought of the Lord.

SB 4.8.44 purport

As soon as you chant Hare Krishna, immediately you remember Krishna, Krishna's form, Krishna's fighting, Krishna is sitting on the chariot of Arjuna. If you read Krishna book always, some of His pastimes will immediately come, appear in my brain, immediately, as soon as you chant Hare Krishna. That is required. Smaranam, automatically. As soon as you chant Hare Krishna... If you mechanically chant, thinking of something nonsense, then it will be useless. (long pause) It will take time. But if there is immediate remembrance of Krishna... We are hearing about Krishna, so many things; reading about Krishna. Why not remembrance? That means inattention. That means deficient in Krishna consciousness. We should immediately, as soon as we chant Hare Krishna, immediately, at least we should remember the picture that Krishna is so kind that He has become a chariot driver of His devotee, Arjuna, and He is giving His instruction, Bhagavad-gita. Or Krishna is playing in the forest along with His cowherd boys, friends, eating very nicely on the bank of the Yamuna, and some demon came, and He is killing, and the boys are, I mean to say, encouraging Him with claps. This enjoyment is going on. What is the difficulty in remembering Krishna? What for this Krishna book is there? You read it and remember it. That will make you..., keep you in Krishna consciousness.

Lecture Srimad Bhagavatam 7.7.35–7 & 7.5.22–4, San Francisco, March 19, 1967

So the Krishna consciousness movement is giving this benefit to the human society. It is very easy, not difficult. Without any condition. You simply chant and remember Krishna. It is not at all difficult. Everyone can... Here you are seeing the Deity of Krishna. So while chanting, if you remember this Deity, is it very difficult?

lecture Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.19 -- Denver, July 2, 1975

It is essential for a devotee to worship the form of the Lord and not only meditate upon the form of the Lord within his mind with the chanting of the mantra given by the spiritual master. The worship of the form must be present.

purport SB 4.8.56

Regarding your first question, is it offensive to think of Krishna's Pastimes while chanting, I think you should know that it is not offensive, but rather it is required. One must try for the point when he simply hears Krishna and immediately all of Krishna, His Pastimes, His Form, His Quality, are in his thoughts. So to always be immersed in thoughts of Krishna this is our process. When we are full in Krishna then where there can be any chance for maya in us? So this is our duty to remember Krishna's Pastimes. One who cannot remember Krishna, let him always hear Hare Krishna and then when he has perfected this art, then always he will remember Krishna, His Activities, His Qualities, etc.

The answer to your second question is that when one becomes accustomed to inoffensive chanting, then his fruit is that he is promoted to the stage of pure Love of Godhead, or prema. This prema is the perfectional stage of consciousness and the most blissful by very far.

Letter to: Sivananda -- Los Angeles 4 December, 1968

Yes. This is our prescription, that "Chant Hare Krsna mantra without any stop." And even death comes... Death may come at any moment, but if at the time of death, somehow or other, you can utter "Krsna" or remember Krsna, as soon as you utter the name of Krsna, you remember Krsna's form, Krsna's pastimes, everything. So let us chant Hare Krsna mantra twenty-four hours. There is no, I mean to say, impediment. Anyone... Ahaituky apratihata. Nobody can check it. If you are determined that "I shall always chant Hare Krsna mantra," nobody can check. But we do not feel so much attached to the chanting. Therefore it is checked. So therefore we have fixed up a certain rounds. Just like we have given to you sixteen rounds. At least, as a regulative principle, you must chant. Then gradually we may increase and automatically chant Hare Krsna mantra.

lecture The Nectar of Devotion -- Calcutta, January 25, 1973

one may simply chant, "Lord Visnu, Lord Visnu, Lord Visnu," and always think of Lord Visnu. Visnor aradhanam param: this is the highest form of worship. If one remembers Visnu always, even though one is disturbed by many bad elements, one can be protected without a doubt. ... one must become a Vaisnava and think of Visnu constantly. This is made easier by the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra.

purport SB 10.6.27-29

Mood

"One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord." Raising my hands, I declare, "Everyone please hear me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance." (CC.Adh 17.31-32)

Progress

Devotee (8): When chanting our sixteen rounds, we are not sure if these rounds are sincere...

Prabhupada: You should be sure.

Devotee (8): How can we be sure?

Prabhupada: There is beads.

Brahmananda: No, he's saying that when we chant our rounds, how can we be sure that when we chant the round that the round is a perfect, attentive round, sincere?

Prabhupada: Therefore it is sastra, "You must." There is no question of understanding.

Brahmananda: The quality of the chanting he's asking. How can we make the quality the best?

Prabhupada: Quality, you'll understand first of all come to the quality. Without having quality, how he'll understand the quality? You follow the instruction of your spiritual master, of the sastra. That is your duty. Quality, no quality -- it is not your position to understand. When the quality comes there is no force. You will have a taste for chanting. You will desire at that time, "Why sixteen round? Why not sixteen thousand rounds?" That is quality. That is quality. It is by force. You'll not do it; therefore at least sixteen rounds. But when you come to the quality, you will feel yourself, "Why sixteen? Why not sixteen thousand?" That is quality, automatically. Just like Haridasa Thakura was doing. He was not forced to do. Even Caitanya Mahaprabhu, He requested, "Now you are old enough. You can reduce." So he refused, "No. Up to the end of my life I shall go on." That is quality. Have you got such tendency that you will go on chanting and nothing to do? That is quality. Now you are forced to do. Where is the question of quality? That is given a chance so that one day you may come to the quality, not that you have come to the quality. Quality is different. Athasaktih. Asakti, attachment. Just like Rupa Gosvami says that "How shall I chant with one tongue, and how shall I hear, two ears? Had it been millions of tongue and trillions of ear, then I could enjoy it." This is quality. Quality is not so cheap. Maybe after many births. For the time being you go on following the rules and regulations. It is being done by force. Where is the quality? So you wanted to understand quality. This is the quality. You'll not be forced, but automatically you'll desire. That is quality. I am writing books. I am not being

forced by anyone. Everyone can do that. Why one does not do it? Why I get up at night, one o'clock, and do this job? Because I cannot do without it. How one will do it artificially? This is quality. Therefore they like my purports. That quality is shown by Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Sunyayitam jagat sarvam govinda virahena me. "Oh, I do not see Govinda. The whole world is vacant." Sunyayitam jagat sarvam govinda virahena me. This is quality. Just like we have got practical example. One man's beloved has died, and he is seeing the whole universe vacant. Is it vacant? So that is quality of love. So there is no formula of quality. It is to be understood by himself. Just like if after eating something you feel refreshed and get strength, that is quality. You haven't got to take certificate: "Will you give me a certificate that I have eaten?" You'll understand whether eaten or not. That is quality. When you will feel so much ecstasy in chanting Hare Krishna, that is quality. Not artificially -- "Chant. Chant. Otherwise get out." This is not quality. This is in expectation that someday you may come to quality. That requires time. That requires sincerity. But quality is there. Sravanadi suddha citte karaye... It will be awakened. Not by force. Just like love between two persons, it cannot be forced. "You must love him. You must love her." Oh, that is no love. That is not love. When automatically you love one another, that is quality. Dora vede(?) prema. And therefore formerly, at least in the Indian society, at an early age they were married. There is no quality in that quality. But gradually, remaining together, the quality of love increases. Then the wife takes care of the husband, and the husband takes care. They become bound up, united in love. That is quality. In the beginning, what the child knows about love? No. But they are allowed to remain as husband and wife. They are thinking that "I have got my husband," "I have got my wife," and as the age increases, the dealings become intimate. Then they become affectionate. That is quality. Not in the beginning there is any quality. It is by the parents' arrangement.

Morning Walk -- November 2, 1975, Nairobi

Method

Alice Coltrane: I like the mental chanting better. I seem to be more and more enlightened...

Prabhupada: This is my message.

Tamala Krishna: She says that she likes the mental chanting more than chanting out...

Alice Coltrane: With the mind, you know.

Tamala Krishna: She likes to chant more with the mind.

Prabhupada: As it is convenient. But chanting with mouth is better. You can hear; others can hear. If you chant within, then you'll remember only. But you chant loudly, others can hear. Others are benefited. (japa)

Alice Coltrane: (indistinct)

Tamala Krishna: She said, how many rounds should she chant? Every day she does some meditation, so before meditating, she wants to know, how many rounds should she chant?

Prabhupada: Well, with chanting you can meditate. The Deities are there. So you can think of the Deities -- that is meditation -- and chant.

Tamala Krishna: Is there a certain number of rounds you would recommend for her?

Prabhupada: That is minimum... Because these people are not accustomed, only sixteen rounds.

Tamala Krishna: Sixteen rounds.

Prabhupada: But the chanting is recommended twenty-four hours.

Tamala Krishna: Twenty-four hours.

Alice Coltrane: (laughs)

Room Conversation with Alice Coltrane -- July 1, 1977, Vrndavana