

## **GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **Next Sunday, Mar 28**, Dr. Loyd Allen, of the McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, will speak to us about “Stages of Faith: Killing Lesser Gods.” His talk will be based on the work of Thomas Merton.
- **You may want to mark your calendar** — the way it looks now, our first face-to-face meeting as a congregation will be on July 4th. We should all be vaccinated by then, if the government’s plans work out.

## **CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC**

### **Chaitanya's Prayer: The Perfect Primer**

March is a month for study of Raja Yoga, a spiritual path often called the yoga of meditation. As a raja yogi, you use ancient, proven spiritual techniques to quiet your mind and gain control of your attention.

Regular daily practice of Raja Yoga increases your ability to concentrate, and may lead to meditation. This can unite you with the Divine Presence, the source of your being, and liberate you from the cycle of rebirth and death. Raja yogis call this state of liberation *kaivalya* — independence.

Next Sunday, the 28th will be celebrated as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s birthday this year. Ordinarily, this talk would have been given on that day. Yet, since it was most convenient for Dr. Allen to speak with us on the 28th, we’re marking “the golden avatar’s” — Gauranga’s birthday today.

Every Great Teacher, Incarnation, avatar brings a special message to suffering humanity — each one tells us how to move from where we find ourselves at this moment, to the realization of our true original nature, or knowledge of God.

**Rama • Krishna • Christ • Buddha • Shankara • Chaitanya •  
Ramakrishna.**

This morning we’ll take up the message of Chaitanya as offered to us in his *Prayer*. As interpreted by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, the prayer is recited here during morning Arati. It is also heard in the temples, convents, and monasteries of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, at Vivekananda Retreat Ridgely, and other Vedanta centers in the U.S.

*Chaitanya’s Prayer* brings the practice, goal, and results of chanting the Divine Name — *nama japa* — into sharp focus in about three minutes. It is therefore a primer in the truest sense of the word. The prayer’s tone and language are intense; it can be thought of as one of the most beautiful love songs ever written.

Chaitanya calls forth the heart's bliss, instructs the mind in how to overcome obstacles, and, in the voice of a spiritually awakening heart and soul, speaks lovingly and directly to the Divine within.

This morning we will explore the prayer and its teachings. We will include an introduction to Sri Chaitanya, and some discussion of the high regard in which the saint was held by Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother.

### **Who is Chaitanya?**

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (*mahaprabhu means Great Lord*) is regarded by millions in India and elsewhere as an Incarnation of God — a reincarnation of RadhaKrishna, who lived about 5,000 years ago.

Many disciples and followers of Sri Ramakrishna also think of Chaitanya as a previous Incarnation of the Master. Sri Chaitanya was born in West Bengal, India in 1485 — 536 years ago.

Swami Vivekananda — after this the Swami will be referred to simply as Swamiji — had this to say about Chaitanya:

*“The brightest of (India’s) prophets of comparatively modern times in the North was Chaitanya... This one great Northern sage, Chaitanya, represented the mad love of the Gopis (for Sri Krishna).*

*(Chaitanya was) a Brahmin, born of one of the most rationalistic families of the day, himself a professor of logic fighting and gaining a word-victory — for, this he had learnt from his childhood as the highest ideal of life — and yet through the mercy of some sage the whole life of that man became changed; he gave up his fight, his quarrels, his professorship of logic and became one of the greatest teachers of Bhakti the world has ever known—mad Chaitanya.”*

**Note:** He also became a monk — a sannyasi. About that, Sri RK said:

*“Chaitanyadeva became a sannyasi so that all would salute him.*

*Whoever salutes an Incarnation, even once, obtains liberation.” — Gospel of Sri RK, p717*

Back to Swamiji: *“(Chaitanya’s) Bhakti rolled over the whole land of Bengal, bringing solace to every one. His love knew no bounds.*

*The saint or the sinner, the Hindu or the Mohammedan, the pure or the impure, the prostitute, the streetwalker — all had a share in his love, all had a share in his mercy...” EOQ Swamiji ...*

So here we have a respected Brahmin, a famous pundit of his time and place, a great success in the world as we usually think of success — and Chaitanya renounces it all to become a wandering monk, singing and dancing madly along the roads and pathways of Bengal, chanting the name of Hari over and again in ecstatic bliss.

What happened to Chaitanya? Listen to Swami Ranganathananda, from his book *Divine Grace*:

*“That is the way in spiritual life. First (you) strengthen yourself, assert yourself, and then sacrifice yourself, deny yourself in surrender to God, through super strength. That is the correct attitude and way. First comes manliness, then comes saintliness or godliness.*

*Erect your saintliness on your manliness; that will be a powerful saintliness.*

*So work hard, build up your individuality; and then, when you are strong and spiritually mature... you look up and see a greater courage and a greater strength beckoning you, which makes you experience and say: ‘Not I, but Thou; Thy will be done!’”*

As we know, Ranganathananda goes on to develop those thoughts beautifully in his book. He refers to the *Bhagavad Gita*, the works of Shankaracharya, and many other sources as he writes about how to move from a high state of worldly achievement to a great spiritual awakening.

Yet, even though his book is pocket size, it would be quite a challenge to memorize all of the Swami’s observations and instructions.

Not so Sri Chaitanya’s lesson plan. His primer on how to progress from a confession that one is utterly without devotion to the Lord, to saying “Do with me what Thou wilt — for Thou are my heart’s beloved, Thou and Thou alone” — is only **45 lines long**. We can legitimately call that a Primer: It is a short tutorial that covers the basic elements of a subject, and it is memorable.

(It’s interesting to note that in Middle English, primer actually meant devotional manual.)

## **SO, LET’S HEAR THE PRAYER**

### **“Unpacking” the Prayer**

Now, let’s look closely at the profoundly poetic images of what was just recited. The first line is a simple, straightforward “call to action”:

#### **CHANT THE NAME OF THE LORD AND HIS GLORY UNCEASINGLY**

#### **WHAT DOES CHAITANYA MEAN BY GLORY?**

Swami Prabhavananda often recited this hymn at the beginning or end of a talk ...

*“Our salutations to that Supreme Being, who is one without a second. Whom the sages call by various names. Our salutations to Him, whose glory has been sung through the rapturous hymns of the worlds, but whose limitless and infinite glory none can comprehend.*

*But again, whom the sages and devotees realize within their deepest contemplation.*

*Him we salute again and again. May he shine in our hearts, manifest there in all His glory, and dispel all darkness and ignorance.”*

SO, THE CALL TO ACTION: CHANT THE NAME OF THE LORD AND HIS GLORY UNCEASINGLY

Unceasingly? Really? Why should we go to all *that* trouble? Well, according to the *New Testament, The Way of the Pilgrim*, and our own Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, Swamiji, and Swami Brahmananda — the results are worth the effort.

**First, from the New Testament** (*this was found on the website of The Community of the Beatitudes*):

“We are all called to pray without ceasing,” says St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. The real question is, how. As we’ll see, the Jesus Prayer provides one good way to pray constantly...

Our task is to draw nearer to God. St. Isaac of Syria says that it is impossible to draw near to God by any means other than increasing prayer.”

**Next, from the book, *The Way of A Pilgrim*** (*these quotes are on the website hermitary.com*): “The pilgrim recalls how he heard (St. Paul’s) admonition to ‘pray ceaselessly’... and has set out to discover how... (He finds an Eastern Orthodox teacher), a *starets*... it is the simple advice of the *starets* that falls like a revelation upon his ears.” (*The teacher said:*)

*“Sit down in silence. Lower your head, shut your eyes, breathe out gently, and imagine yourself looking into your own heart.*

*Carry your mind, that is, your thoughts, from your head to your heart.*

*As you breathe out, say, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Say it moving your lips gently, or simply say it in your mind. Try to put all other thoughts aside. Be calm, be patient, and repeat the process very frequently.”*

And that is all... Soon, as the *starets* had suggested, the pilgrim found the prayer at his lips and in his mind every waking hour, as spontaneous and effortless as his breath itself.” **EOQ *The Way of A Pilgrim***

**Our own beloved teachers say this about constant prayer:**

**Sri Ramakrishna:** “*Japa means silently repeating God’s name in solitude. When you chant his name with single-minded devotion you can see God’s form and realize Him. Suppose there is a piece of timber sunk in the waters of the Ganges and fastened with a chain to the bank. You proceed link by link, holding to the chain, and you dive into the water and follow the chain. Finally you are able to reach the timber. In the same way, by repeating God’s name you become absorbed in Him and finally realize Him.*”

**Sri Sarada Devi:** “*The Mantra purifies the body. Man becomes pure by repeating the name of God. So repeat His name always... The name of God is more powerful than the senses... Prayer to God makes your heart as pure as the*

*star. As a result of sincere and regular Japa and meditation you will find that God will speak to you. All your desires will be fulfilled and you will experience pure Bliss... Even the injunctions of destiny are cancelled if one takes refuge in God. Destiny strikes off with her own hands what she has written about such a person... ”*

**Swamiji:** *“Prayer and praise are the first means of growth. Repeating the names of God has wonderful power. Mantra is a special word, or sacred text, or name of God chosen by the Guru for repetition and reflection by the disciple. The disciple must concentrate on a personality for prayer and praise... These words (Mantras) are not sounds of words but God Himself, and we have them within us. Think of Him, speak of Him. ... Buddha’s Sermon on the Mount was, ‘As thou thinkest, so art thou.’”*

**Raja Maharaj:** *“Practice japam and meditation regularly. Do not miss even one day. Try repeatedly to steady (the mind) by fixing it on (a Name or Form of God) —*

*and at last you will become absorbed in Him.*

*If you continue your practice for two or three years, you will begin to feel an unspeakable joy and the mind will become steady... (At first) You must forcibly pour the thought of God into your mind, then as you persist, you will be flooded with joy...”*

**All these Great Teachers just quoted agree, the results of chanting the Lord’s Name unceasingly do indeed justify the effort.**

So, what does Chaitanya himself say are the effects of unceasingly chanting the Lord’s name?

He starts with two “summary” assertions:

... THE MIRROR OF THE HEART MAY BE WIPED CLEAN

AND QUENCHED THAT MIGHTY FOREST FIRE, WORLDLY LUST, RAGING FURIOUSLY WITHIN...

**First assertion.** The mirror of the heart will be wiped clean...

Swami Sridharananda, a senior swami of the Ramakrishna Order, was asked about this image; he said:

“Repetition of the Name (your mantra) is like a very soft cloth, slowly and slowly, very naturally wiping away layer after layer of accumulated dust — until at last is revealed an ancient mirror, and an image in that mirror, of unimaginable, incomparable beauty.

**That mirror both is, and reflects, the Self, your inmost being, your true original nature.”**

Breathtaking. That which we struggle and yearn for as we run after this and that, that and this, as we chase the Divine, the Truth, in its limited forms, distorted and diluted by Maya, it is, always has been, **right here**, waiting for us.

**Second assertion:** That mighty forest fire, worldly lust, raging furiously within, will be quenched — **that means extinguished**.

Sri Chaitanya promises that, if we indeed chant the Name of the Lord and His glory unceasingly, that forest fire of lust for the world raging furiously within us will be dead!

Can any of us pretend we don't know what that "mighty forest fire" is? Cartoonists have our number, don't they? Think of an animated cartoon that features some young guy cruising along in his shiny new convertible. He passes an attractive young woman strolling down the street, and "boinnnggg!" — his cartoon eyes pop right out of his head — right out of his head, as he ogles that woman!

What the artist is showing us is that our senses don't just quietly lie in wait for sensations.

Oh no, they reach out for stimulus; they "rage" after what they desire. And they argue with us vehemently when we try to restrain them.

Maybe you're driving down the avenue when you spot a sign that says, "If its something sweet, cold & creamy you crave, come to McDonald's for an ice cream cone — only 99 cents!" Good ad copy, huh? Gotcha! But you think to yourself, reasonably, "Yes, but I know perfectly well I don't need that cone, those extra, empty calories." And the mind right away talks back: "But it's low fat, and it's only 99 cents!"

Unless you yield to that voice of temptation as you drive by the McDonald's in the next block, the senses that crave that "sweet, cold & creamy" treat will probably chatter at you all the way home. And when you get there, they will remind you there's a Fudgesicle in the freezer!

Swamiji, in his commentary on *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*, and elsewhere, offers detailed explanations of why and how Chaitanya's promise is actually kept.

For here and now, suffice it to say that Swamiji affirms chanting the Name — japa, nama — actually does calm the mind so deeply that lust for the things of the world loses its grip on your consciousness and your actions.

In four poetically charged lines, Chaitanya has made his case for what you are to do — chant the Lord's name and glory unceasingly — and the results you can expect to achieve if you do as he asks:

- Your true original nature will be revealed in all its splendor.
- Your experience of that splendor will no longer be fragmented and lost among ever-self-renewing, unsatisfiable cravings.

**Sri Chaitanya continues his instructions.** First, he says, ask the Lord directly for what you need to begin and start to move ahead:

O NAME, STREAM DOWN IN MOONLIGHT ON THE LOTUS HEART,  
OPENING ITS CUP TO KNOWLEDGE OF THYSELF.

Chandi, speaking of the Mother of the Universe: “You are of the form of the moon and moonlight, and happiness itself ...”

Moonlight is the reflected glory of the sun and sunlight — (explain)

*Swami Yatiswarananda, (Swami Y's first teacher) who was a disciple of Brahmananda and served as a vice-president of the Ramakrishna Order, commented: “...(T)he spiritual aspirant... feels there is a lotus at the level of the heart, the petals of which are directed downwards.*

*When this centre is reached (by the mind), the bud of the lotus opens and the petals get directed upwards--the lotus blooms.”*

And so it becomes the cup, open to receive the Knowledge of God for which you are praying.

KNOWLEDGE OF THYSELF — What is this Knowledge? Let's go back over some quotes from our teachers about the nature of this Knowledge:

- *Ramakrishna* — When you chant his name with single-minded devotion you can see God's form and realize Him.
- *Sarada Devi* — As a result of sincere and regular Japa and meditation you will find that God will speak to you.
- *Swamiji* — The disciple must concentrate on a personality for prayer and praise... These words (Mantras) are not sounds of words but God Himself, and we have them within us.
- *Brahmananda* — If you continue your practice for two or three years, you will begin to feel an unspeakable joy and the mind will become steady...

This knowledge is not book learning, not theoretical musings, not something heard from a speaker on Sunday morning. It is direct experiential knowledge of God, your Self, found within.

**Chaitanya then speaks directly to that Self:**

O SELF, DROWN DEEP IN THE WAVES OF HIS BLISS,  
CHANTING HIS NAME CONTINUALLY,  
TASTING HIS NECTAR AT EVERY STEP,

Ramakrishna said, “Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty: If you can plunge to the uttermost depths, There you can find the gem of Love.”

Like OM, Love is a single word that “says” what God is. Another Name for God, a more complex word, is Satchidananda.

That Bliss Chaitanya speaks of is, so to speak, one-third of that term; yet Satchidananda cannot be separated.

So, when you dive deep, when your mind is “drowned” in the continual chanting of the Name, you are immersed not just in Bliss, but in the totality of inseparable Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute — of God. (*Shabdha-Brahman*)

Therefore, when you truly are chanting His Name continually, when your entire consciousness is suffused with the Nectar of His Being, Satchidananda itself transforms you! Your actions (karma) will change, and as Holy Mother said, “Even the injunctions of destiny are cancelled... Destiny strikes off with her own hands what she has written about such a person...”

### **Chaitanya continues, still speaking to the Self within:**

BATHING IN HIS NAME, THAT BATH FOR WEARY SOULS.

If your soul is NOT weary, Chaitanya’s bath probably is not of much interest. If it is, then as Holy Mother said, “Man becomes pure by repeating the name of God. So repeat His name always... (this will make) your heart as pure as the star.”

Over and over, we are told by the Great Teachers that there is great power in God’s Name — even the great non-dualist Shankaracharya wrote and sang *Bhaja Govindam*.

Chaitanya underlines this, and frees his recommended practice from both rigidity and priestly entanglement:

VARIOUS ARE THY NAMES, O LORD,  
IN EACH AND EVERY NAME THY POWER RESIDES.

NO TIMES ARE SET, NO RITES ARE NEEDFUL,  
FOR CHANTING OF THY NAME,  
SO VAST IS THY MERCY.

This is the subject for another talk: Chaitanya the mad avatar also was a rebel against religious bigotry — that fanatical devotion to one Form or Name of God, denouncing all others — **and** the encrustation of priest-craft — the insistence that a schedule of esoteric rites, rituals and ceremonies performed by others is necessary to attract God’s compassion and grace.

Chaitanya was another of India’s great reformers, restoring eternal Vedic truths and traditions and forthrightly denouncing both religious bigots and greedy priests.

Not surprisingly, Swamiji clearly echoes these thoughts: “*Japa is repeating the Holy Name; through this the devotee rises to the Infinite. This boat of sacrifice and ceremonies is very frail; we need more than that to know (God)... It is not necessary to go through all these ceremonials to reach the meaning of the Vedanta...*”

So, having celebrated the Lord's omnipotence, liberality, and compassion, Chaitanya now speaks for the first time in the voice of the devotee. In three stunning lines the aspirant confesses —

HOW HUGE THEN IS MY WRETCHEDNESS,  
WHO FIND IN THIS EMPTY LIFE AND HEART,  
NO DEVOTION TO THY NAME.

This is the crux, the turning point, of Chaitanya's Prayer — this recognition that, though the Lord offers to take the yoke from his heavy-laden shoulders, the devotee is as yet unbending and cannot kneel so that the yoke can be removed.

What courage it takes to make such a statement! This is not the *mea culpa* of a weakling; it is a powerful, honest recognition of bitter truth — the aspirant's wretchedness is of his own making.

The aspirant's soliloquy continues — first directed within:

O, MY MIND,  
BE HUMBLER THAN A BLADE OF GRASS,  
BE PATIENT AND FORBEARING LIKE THE TREE,  
TAKE NO HONOR TO THYSELF,  
GIVE HONOR TO ALL,  
CHANT UNCEASINGLY THE NAME OF THE LORD.

The devotee reviews, step by step, what must be done to break his unbending pride, to gain devotion.

Swami Yatiswarananda once told Swami Yogeshananda, "For every one step forward spiritually, you must take two steps ethically!"

Humility, patience, forbearance, modesty, magnanimity — those are ethical steps. And then the repeated instruction: Let nothing deter me from chanting the Holy Name.

Next, addressing the Lord, the devotee **affirms** that discrimination and renunciation are replacing his yearnings for the attractions of a worldly life:

O, LORD AND SOUL OF THE UNIVERSE,  
MINE IS NO PRAYER FOR WEALTH OR RETINUE, THE PLAYTHINGS OF  
LUST OR THE TOYS OF FAME;

Instead, the aspirant now prays for the highest:

AS MANY TIMES AS I MAY BE REBORN  
GRANT ME, O LORD, A STEADFAST LOVE FOR **THEE**.

A quick note about being reborn: Listen to this verse from the *Devi Mahatmyam* (700 Mantras on Sri Durga, the Divine Mother) — "*Salutations be to you, O Narayani, O you who, in the form of minutes, moments and other divisions of*

*time, bring about change in things, and have thus the power to destroy the universe.”*

Based on this premise, and on Sarada Devi’s promise that, “Even the injunctions of destiny are cancelled if one takes refuge in God...”, it is possible to think that you do not need to wait for another lifetime for your life to change. It’s possible you can be reborn, and Mother can grant you that precious, steadfast love for the Lord this instant, this very instant. (EXPECTATION)

Since we can’t imagine that any word of Chaitanya’s Prayer was written carelessly — he was, after all, a master logician — it could be that in these next, very dramatic lines, the Mahaprabhu also makes a small joke — a clever play on words. He wrote:

A DROWNING MAN IN THIS WORLD’S FEARFUL OCEAN IS THY SERVANT,  
O SWEET ONE.

IN THY MERCY  
CONSIDER HIM AS DUST BENEATH THY FEET.

If, in His mercy, the Lord makes you part of the dust beneath His feet, it’s pretty clear your drowning days are over! An intimate connection with the Divine is complete — where is the world’s fearful ocean then?

Naturally, there’s much more to these four lines than a sort of spiritual jest. In seed form, they point toward one of the relationships one can have with the Divine — the attitude of a servant.

For indeed we are, whether we are aware of it or not, a servant of the Divine Will! As Sri Sarada Devi said plainly:

*“Listen, dear, when God first created man, He endowed him with the spirit of goodness. As a result, men were born with wisdom and it did not take them long to realize that the world was an ephemeral thing.*

*Immediately they took the Name of God and set out to meditate on Him and by His grace were liberated from the bonds of life.*

*God thought, “This will not do, this is not the way to make them play the game of life.”*

*In the end, along with the spirit of goodness, He mingled in profuse quantities of the spirit of materialism and that of vanity. Now the game of life went on with a swing!”*

**That quote starts on p. 212 of *In the Company of the Holy Mother, By Her Direct Disciples***

Think of what She said: Each of us is serving to make God’s game of life go on! That is a transformative thought, indeed! After all, if we believe Tat Tvam Asi —

That Thou Art — then this is your game, our game! As the Atman, as Sri Krishna says, we are doing this for our own purposes!

Swami Prabhavananda was fond of saying, we should give every aspect of our lives a “Godward turn.” To apply that thought here, perhaps Chaitanya is suggesting that —since we do serve the Lord’s purposes — it’s best if we purposefully remind the Lord and ourselves that we are His servant and ask for his merciful protection.

Ramakrishna once said to M. (who wrote the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) “...(I)n order to realize God, one must assume one of these attitudes: santa, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, or madhur... Dasya (is) the attitude of a servant toward his Master. Hanuman had this attitude toward Rama. He felt the strength of a lion when he worked for Rama...”

In the next lines of Chaitanya’s Prayer, we hear a devotee whose transformation is nearly complete. Unceasing repetition of the Lord’s name has filled the devotee’s being with the Lord’s presence; any thought of worldly achievement or pleasure has vanished.

All that remains is an intense yearning for union with the Beloved (called Govinda, a name of Krishna).

**Chaitanya wrote —**

AH, HOW I LONG FOR THE DAY

WHEN AN INSTANT’S SEPARATION FROM THEE, O GOVINDA, WILL BE AS  
A THOUSAND YEARS,

WHEN MY HEART BURNS AWAY WITH ITS DESIRE AND THE WORLD,  
WITHOUT THEE, IS A HEARTLESS VOID.

Many great devotional mystics have echoed this abandonment of self to the Divine. Half a world away, a contemporary of Chaitanya put his very similar passionate longing into these words — they are from:

***The Imitation of Christ***, by Thomas a Kempis, a 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> Century German mystic —

“O Thou Beloved:

Love eternal, my whole Good, Happiness which hath no bounds, I desire to appropriate Thee with the most vehement desire, and the most worthy reverence.

I desire to reserve nothing unto myself.

O everlasting light, surpassing all created luminaries, flash forth Thy lightning from above,

piercing all the most inward parts of my heart.

Make clean, make glad, make bright and make alive my spirit, with all the powers thereof, that I may cleave unto Thee in ecstasies of joy.”

“...that I may cleave unto Thee in ecstasies of joy.” Amen! **EOQ from Thomas a Kempis.**

Chaitanya, in the last nine lines of his Prayer, summarizes the final stage of his devotional spiritual practice, the Madhura Bhava – roughly translated, the Sweet Mood.

This is the completely selfless attitude represented by the relationship of Sri Radha to Sri Krishna, in their *lila* in Vrindavan. Sri Ramakrishna called the madhur attitude Chaitanya’s greatest contribution to the spiritual world. Ramakrishna said, “Madhur (is) the attitude of a woman toward her paramour ... This (great mood) includes all the other four.”

**The last nine lines of Chaitanya’s Prayer are:**

PROSTRATE AT THY FEET LET ME BE,  
IN UNWAVERING DEVOTION, NEITHER IMPLORING THE EMBRACE OF  
THINE ARMS NOR BEWAILING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THY PRESENCE  
THOUGH IT TEARS MY SOUL ASUNDER.

O THOU, WHO STEALEST  
THE HEARTS OF THY DEVOTEES,  
DO WITH ME WHAT THOU WILT —

FOR THOU ART MY HEART’S BELOVED,  
THOU AND THOU ALONE.

Shall we think of this poetry as only an intense description of the ultimate state the devotee achieves by chanting the Name of the Lord and His glory unceasingly? It is all that, and more ...

That great mood seized another charismatic devotee of Sri Krishna — a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Rajput princess who became the renowned singer, and some say saint, Mirabai.

This is from the Introduction to a collection of her works, titled ***For Love of the Dark One: Songs of Mirabai***:

*“Tales of Mirabai still circulate. One recounts how, on reaching the vicinity of Vrindavan, the woodlands sacred to worshippers of Krishna, she encountered the famous theologian Jiv Goswami. This redoubtable scholar and fearsome ascetic denied her access to one of Krishna’s temples because she was a woman. Mirabai shamed him with the words, “**Are not all souls female before God?**” Jiv Goswami bowed his head and led Mira by the hand into his temple.”*

That humility, that perfection, says Chaitanya, is the goal, the end. The beginning is:

CHANT THE NAME OF THE LORD AND HIS GLORY UNCEASINGLY, THAT  
THE MIRROR OF THE HEART MAY BE WIPED CLEAN AND QUENCHED  
THAT MIGHTY FOREST FIRE, WORLDLY LUST, RAGING FURIOUSLY  
WITHIN...

## **CONVERSATION AND COMMENTS**

### **Regular Closing prayer**