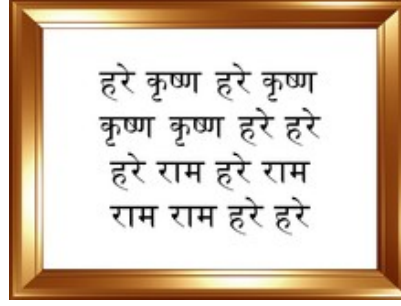


## The Significance and Importance of the Maha Mantra Is Hare Rama or Hare Krishna chanted first in the Maha-Mantra



### The Maha Mantra in Deva-nagiri (Sanskrit)

“Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah”

Dharma protects those who protect Dharma. (Manu Smṛti, Ch8,v15)

Dharma is the principle of righteousness. It is the principle of holiness. It is also the principle of Unity. If you protect it, it will protect you. - His Holiness Swami Shivananda-ji.

Over the years since the emergence and popularity of the Gaudiya Vaishnava movements like ISKCON (Hare Kṛṣṇa's), the Maha mantra has become one of the most popular and well known and recognized Sanatan mantras. Then I am frequently asked by those belonging to the Divine Life Society, Rama-Krishna Movement, The Sai Baba Society and the like but why is the Maha mantra chanted as

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna,  
Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

when the original Puranic texts clearly state

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare,  
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

This article discusses this and much more. In the Kali-Santarana Upanishad (which is the shortest Upanishad and contains just 3 verses and consists of the importance of the chanting of the Maha mantra), states at the end of Dwapara-Yuga, Srila Narada Muni visited his father Lord Brahma and addressed him as thus: “O Lord, how shall I, roaming over the earth, be able to cross Kali Yuga?” To which Lord Brahma thus replied: “Well asked my dear son. One overcomes the evil effects of Kali Yuga through the mere uttering of the name of Lord Narayana, who is the primeval Purusha”. Again Narada Muni asked Lord Brahma: “What are those names revered Pitaji?” To which Lord Brahma replied:

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama  
Rama Hare Hare  
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

नारदः पुनः पप्रच्छ तन्नाम किमिति । स होवाच हिरण्यगर्भः ।

*nāradaḥ punaḥ papraccha tan nāma kim iti / sa hovāca hiraṇyagarbhaḥ /*

Narada asked again: "What are those names ?" Brahma (Hiranyagarbha) replied;

हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे ।  
हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे ॥

*hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare /  
hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare //*

These sixteen names (words) are destructive of the evil effects of Kali Yuga. There is no better means than this is to be found in all the Vedas.”

Narada Muni then asked: ‘O Lord, what are the rules to be observed with reference to it?’ To which Lord Brahma replied “that there were no rules for chanting the maha mantra. Whoever in a pure or an impure state, utters this mantra always, attains the same world of, or proximity with, or the same form of, or the Supreme Lord”

The Viddhi are the rules and regulations governing the circumstances and method of chanting a particular mantra. All mantras require a knowledge of the name of the Rishi who revealed it, the Deity (Devata/Devi) to which it is directed to, the seed mantra (bija) and the secret pin (kilakam) which obstructs the power flow, the energy force (shakti) and the objective (viniyoga); that is the specific number of times the mantra is to be recited, and the conditions under which the anusthana (practice) is to be undertaken.

Furthermore the qualifications of the recipient of the mantra and the procedure of initiation are stipulated. For this mantra none of the above apply. There are no qualifications for receiving this mantra, there is no process of initiation and no rules and regulations for chanting this mantra.

Here the are the five Maha-patakas are mentioned. According to the rules of exegesis (interpretation of a scriptural text) any number of a category refers to all of them. The Pancha (5) Maha-Patakas are the most heinous sins for which there is normally no redemption in the Vedic Law Books. These five are...

Brahma-hatya – the killing or injuring of a brahmin,  
Svarna-steeya - stealing gold or any object dedicated to a deity,  
Sura-pana - the imbibing of alcohol,  
Guru-talpa - having intercourse with the wife of the guru and  
Shishu-hatya — the aiding and abetting of abortion.

So you will now be wondering how is this possible that the Shruti (in Sanskrit means "that which is heard") maha mantra has been turned around by Gaudiya Vaishnava movements.

There are many references to the maha-mantra in various places in Puranic shastras. The maha-mantra caused some consternation amongst caste-conscious brahmanas as Gaudiya Vaishnava's were encouraging shudras (labourers), women and even Muslims and other meat eaters (even cow killers) Vedic mantras to unqualified persons (such as those of lower castes) which by Vedic standards is prohibited.

Shree Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu who appeared in West Bengal, India in 1486 CE, (who is none other than the devotee avatar of Lord Shree Krishna – The Supreme Personality of Godhead) being so respectful to all living beings certainly didn't want to offend the brahmana community. Cows and Brahmins are most dear to the Supreme

Lord. Not only were they upholders of Vedic law or teachings, it was the brahmanas who were those who lived by those teachings. Therefore those who are known as brahmanas (a.k.a brahmins) are those who know Brahman (the effulgence of the Supreme Lord). Such devote persons were considered to be the embodiment of the Vedic literature's, much like walking encyclopedias, able to reveal or teach the Vedic conclusions at a moments notice on any given subject. To be able to do this effectively they lived impeccable lives, were constantly absorbed in those studies and did so from birth. True brahmanas are clearly described in Bhagavad Gita chapter 18 verse 42 "Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, and religiousness-these are the qualities by which the brahmanas work", Lord Krishna said to Shree Arjuna.

It was not an easy path to becoming a brahmana in previous times. It was not just the matter of wearing a brahmin thread, or undergoing some ritual to make one a brahmana. No it took years of study, years of dedication and austerity to be a genuine brahmana. Those studies were not like those of mundane academia today while living a totally different life-style, no they lived as the embodiment of the teachings.

Such persons, being highly skilled, and rightly respected as such wanted to keep the purity of the Veda (Sruti) and its related mantras intact and out of harms way. Specific mantras were treated with secret codes, so that only by first approaching one who had the key to the code could someone recite the mantra and gain its fruit. Without being too side-tracked here, we see an example where the full effect of mantra and tantra (ritual symbology) didn't have the required effect due to not receiving them from parampara (disciplic succession from guru to guru) in the case of Adolf Hitler. He studied the Vedas for 12 years before becoming Chancellor in Germany, but he wasn't initiated into receiving the correct mantra and symbolic formulae (the swastika). As a result he misplaced them and it greatly assisted in his meglomani and the downfall of his "Aryan" ideology.

On a more sattvik note; Once the Acharya Ramanuja was given a secret mantra by his guru, who told him that revealing it would be detrimental to his spiritual advancement. But Ramanuja loudly chanted the potent mantra and taught it to the people in general. When his guru asked him why he had done this, Ramanuja said that if the mantra was beneficial, then he wished to give it to everyone, even at the risk of going to hell. This mood is reflected in Lord Caitanya and His sankirtana movement: "Not considering who asked for it and who did not, and who is fit and who is unfit to receive it, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service" (Caitanya Caritamrta Adi Lila 9.29.36).

Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the most merciful form of Godhead personified and appeared in the mood of a devotee with the express purpose of giving His beloved Krishna to everyone without discrimination, took to changing the beginning point of the mahamantra so that without the required Vedic "Omkara" at the beginning it was formally no longer a Vedic or Sruti mantra and could be chanted by anyone.

yad aksharam veda-vido vadanti

"Those knowers of the Vedas recite Om (akshara)."

karma brahmodbhavam viddhi

brahmakshara-samudbhavam

tasmat sarva-gatam brahma

nityam yajne pratisthitam

"Regulated activities are prescribed in the Vedas, and the Vedas are directly manifested from akshara, the sacred syllable Om. Consequently the all-pervading Transcendence (pranava or the syllable 'Om') is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice."

pranava sarva vedeshu

"Within all the Vedas, I am the symbol Om."

Caitanya Mahaprabhu established the pranava (a Sanskrit word which means both controller of life force {prana} and life-giver {infuser of prana}) as the maha-vakya (great saying or words of wisdom) of the Vedas, for within it exist all Vedic hymns (and shabda {speech}). The world itself is a manifestation of this syllable. It is the sound representation of the Absolute Truth. This is explained below in the Srimad Bhagavatam Maha Purana 9<sup>th</sup> Canto Chapter 14 verse 48.

eka eva puraa vedah  
pranavah sarva-vaanmayah  
devo naaraayano naanya  
eko 'gnir varna eva ca

## TRANSLATION

In the Satya-yuga, the first millennium, all the Vedic mantras were included in one mantra—praanava, the root of all Vedic mantras. In other words, the Atharva Veda alone was the source of all Vedic knowledge. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Narayana was the only worshipable Deity; there was no recommendation for worship of the deities. Fire was one only, and the only order of life in human society was known as hamsa.

PURPORT By Srila A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

In Satya-yuga there was only one Veda, not four. Later, before the beginning of Kali-yuga, this one Veda, the Atharva Veda, was divided into four—Sama, Yajur, Rg and Atharva—for the facility of human society. In Satya-yuga the only mantra was omkara (om tat sat). The same name omkara is manifest in the mantra Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Unless one is a brahmana, one cannot utter omkara and get the desired result. But in Kali-yuga almost everyone is a Shudra, unfit for pronouncing the pranava, **OMKARA**. Therefore the Shastras have recommended the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. Omkara is a mantra, or maha-mantra, and Hare Krsna is also a maha-mantra. The purpose of pronouncing omkara is to address the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vaasudeva (om namo bhagavate vaasudevaya). And the purpose of chanting the Hare Krsna mantra is the same. Hare: “O energy of the Lord!” Krsna: “O Lord Krsna!” Hare: “O energy of the Lord!” Rama: “O Supreme Lord, O supreme enjoyer!” The only worshipable Lord is Hari, who is the goal of the Vedas (vedaish ca sarvair aham eva vedyah [Bhagavad Gita 15.15]). By worshiping the devas, one worships the different parts of the Lord, just as one might water the branches and twigs of a tree. But worshiping Narayana, the all-inclusive Supreme Personality of Godhead, is like pouring water on the root of the tree, thus supplying water to the trunk, branches, twigs, leaves and so on. In Satya-yuga people knew how to fulfill the necessities of life simply by worshiping Lord Narayana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The same purpose can be served in this age of Kali by the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra, as recommended in the Srimad Bhagavatam. “Keertanaa eva krsnanasya mukta-sangah param vrajet” - simply by chanting the Hare Krsna mantra, one becomes free from the bondage of material existence and thus becomes eligible to return home, back to Godhead.

So from the above information provided, the maha-mantra was reversed to overcome such possible objections from the caste brahmin community who saw the Vedas as their exclusive right and other mantras as being in-accessible to anyone. So as so often happens when the Lord is involved many things are performed at once; here He pacified to some degree the brahmins and at the same time made the maha-mantra available to one and all. Some still to this day say that because of it being taken away of the Veda, and having no prefix of Om that it is not effective, however, as we can practically realize by the thousands of lives it has changed around the world that such slight changes, especially by the most authorized person as Caitanya Mahaprabhu in no way affect its benefit.

As the names Krishna and Rama are considered non-different from the Lord Himself, there is no loss of the benefit of chanting these names in this slightly altered form.

Srila Prabhupada was asked once to which Rama is the Maha mantra referring to. Srila Prabhupada said that there are three main Rama's in Vedic literatures.

1) Lord Balarama (Lord Krsna's elder brother).



2) Lord Ramachandra of the Ramayana.



3) Lord Parashurama – the warrior Avatar of the Supreme Lord. Parashu meaning axe which was the Lord's main weapon of choice.



Srila Prabhupada then told his disciple that which Lord Rama the he is most comfortable and close to he can refer to that Lord Rama.

Lets have a step-by-step breakdown of the Maha-Mantra now.

Hare means the energy of the Lord or Mother Hara (Srimati Radharani). "In the beginning of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra we first address the internal energy of Lord Krsna, Hare. Hence we say Radha-Krsna, Sita-Raam, Lakshmi-Narayana and so forth. Without saying the internal energy of the Lord first we cannot reach the Lord without the blessings of His female shakti (energy). Thus the Maha-Mantra truly means,

**"O Radharani (Hara), O internal energy of God!  
O Hare! O energy of Lord Krishna,  
please engage me in Your service!"**

When we address someone in this way, he usually says, "Yes, what do you want?" The answer is, "Please engage me in Your service."

So HARE refers to Mother Hara or Srimati Radharani.

Rama can refer to either Lord's BALARAMA, RAMACHANDRA or PARASHURAMA.

Krishna (Krsna) refers the Supreme Lord Krsna.

Srila Prabhupada:- "So what to speak of this divinely spiritual maha-mantra, which delivers on from material existence, the original guru, Lord Brahma, has said, "Kali-santaranadi srutite", ("the srutis section of the Vedas have declared this mantra to be the best means of deliverance in the age of Kali'). Having all heard this from Brahma, the sons and disciples of Brahma, beginning with Narada Muni, all accepted the maha-mantra and having once meditated on it attained perfection". In the "Kali-Santarana Upanishad" it is stated, "The sixteen names of the maha-mantra destroy all the inauspiciousness of the age of Kali. This is the conclusion of all the Vedas. Also in the "Agni-Purana" it is written, "Whoever chants this maha-mantra, even neglectfully, will attain the supreme goal of life. Of this there is no doubt".

Shree Caitanya Mahaprabhu's Sikshastakam verse 2 states "O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names like Krishna and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by chanting Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them".

Even those who mock chanted the maha-mantra gained benefit, so what to speak of the mantra re-organised by the lotus mouth of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Who is just like



Sukadeva Goswami (the speaker of the Srimad Bhagavatam), as ripened fruit becomes more relishable when first touched by the beak of a parrot, or Suka, so this Holy name of the Lord has become further surcharged by the Lord's divine organizing of it in a way that appears more readily acceptable to the masses - thus His congregational chanting is empowered by Him.

In a Srila Narayan Maharaja, May 25, 2000 lecture, Maharaj said the following:- "O Nama Prabhu, You have all kinds of power and opulence, and You are so full of mercy. There is no fixed time for taking the Holy Name or not taking it." Can you chant only after taking bath? No, there are no such rules. Can you take the Name while bathing? Yes, you can take it. Whether you have taken bath or not, washed your mouth or not, you can chant, 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare, Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.' Even if you are passing stool and urine - Hare Krishna Hare Krishna - you can chant in your mind. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu did it.

If anyone takes the Name of Rama, then Shree Hanuman must go there, with thousands and lakhs of bodies. He can go everywhere, at the same time. There was once a person who never had time to chant the Name. Narada Muni went and told him, "Why don't you chant the Name, you silly, bogus person?" He answered, "I have no time, I am always busy." Narada Muni then asked him, "Are you always busy, even at the time of passing stool and urine?" That person said, "Oh, no, not at that time." Narada Muni told him, "Then at that you should chant." He replied, "That I can do."

When he went to pass stool, and he was chanting, "Hare Rama Hare Rama", Shree Hanuman came at once. He was upset and thought, "This bogus person is impure, passing urine and stool." And he gave him a kick. Shree Hanuman is so powerful that even if he would kick Ravana, Ravana would fall over. Even Kumbhakarna and Meghnath would not be able to bear his kick. However, when he kicked this person who was chanting Hare Krishna, it was though nothing had been done. Then Shree Hanuman thought, "This is very wonderful! What happened? I have never seen anything like this. Although he is passing stool and urine and chanting, there is no difficulty or problem." He was in amazement. Then, in the evening, when he returned to Lord Rama and knocked on the door, he heard Lord Rama lamenting. Shree Hanuman entered and asked, "Prabhu, why are you moaning?" Lord Ramacandra told Shree Hanuman that he had done this to Him. Shree Hanuman asked, "O Prabhu, how could I have done this?" Lord Ramacandra said, "You know that nama and nami are both the same. When that person was passing stool and chanting, 'Rama Rama Rama', I went there in his heart. I was in his body. You kicked him, that kick came to My back, and now it has been broken. That is why I am moaning." Shree Hanuman then told Lord Ramacandra, "From today I will not ever do this."

Shree Caitanya Mahaprabhu once went to pass stool, and Gopala-guru was carrying water. Mahaprabhu caught hold of His tongue very tightly, and Gopal-guru, like a boy,



asked, "Prabhu, why are you doing like so?" Mahaprabhu told him that His tongue was out of control. "When I am going to pass stool, this chanting of 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna' will not stop. I want to stop, but it never stops. So I am doing like this." Gopala-guru told Mahaprabhu, "If anyone is going to die, and stool and urine are coming uncontrollably, should he not chant? I think it is better to chant." Mahaprabhu said, "Oh, you are not only Gopala. You are Gopala-guru." He left His tongue and began to chant.

Anyone can do this. Here Mahaprabhu is telling that there are no rules and regulations. It is not that you should only chant in a certain way. It is not that you cannot chant sitting on a bed or walking. You can remember the Name, you can chant it, you can sing it - in any way you can do it. You can pray, "But I am so wretched that I can't chant - even though you have given so much facility. Prabhu, I cannot control my senses. You should be merciful and help me." In this way we should chant.

In the 1740 edition of the Kali-santarana Upanishad Srila Sridhara Deva Gosvami Maharaja has stated as follows: "The real importance of the Name is not to be found merely in the arrangement of its syllables, but in the deep meaning within that divine sound. "It is said that because it comes from the Upanishads, the maha mantra is a Vedic mantra, and therefore, because the general populace may not have any entrance into Vedic mantras, Shree Caitanya Mahaprabhu readjusted this mantra by reversing the order of the words. In that way, it is said, the concern that it is a Vedic mantra is thereby canceled, and so Shree Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave it to all without breaching the injunctions of the Vedas. But our faith is that the mentioning of 'Hare Rama' first is only superficial. It concerns the idea that since the Raam avatara appeared first and the Krsna avatara afterwards, the Name of Rama, 'Hare Rama,' should come first in the maha-mantra.' "A deeper reading will consider that when two similar things are connected together, the priority will be ordered not on the basis of historical precedent, but in consideration of the most highly developed conception. The Holy Name of Krsna is higher than the Holy Name of Rama. This is mentioned in the Brahma Rahasya: three Names of Rama equal one Name of Krsna.'

Kindly let me state here categorically, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead performs an act, it should **NEVER** be questioned. Yes, this will not go down well with many so called "new-aged" "I want the truth" people out there, but honestly what right does one have to question the Lord in what He does? He is God, He can do what ever He pleases and He is not accountable to no being. The Lord has a reason for everything He does, and who gives one the right to question our Dear Lord. His Lilas (pastimes) are beyond human comprehension but I have humbly tried to explain above (with my miniscule intelligence) as to why our dear Lord acted in this regard.

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Narottam das, Sri Nandanandana dasa, Jaya Dasa & Arjun Nandlal

E-mail [info@dipika.org.za](mailto:info@dipika.org.za)

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