

Revealed Truth



His Divine Grace
Swāmī B. S. Govinda

Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh

Revealed Truth

The essence of revelation can be summarised in one word: *om*, which means, “Yes! What you are searching for does exist!”

Who am I? Who is the Lord? What is our relationship? What is true fulfilment? The fundamental need of every soul is to find the answers to these questions.

Revealed Truth explains how the ancient seers of the Vedic culture realised these truths and preserved their practices in writing. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the culmination of such scriptures. Its author, Śrīla Vyāsadev, has compared the Vedas to a wish-fulfilling tree, and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* to the tree’s fruit. It was spoken by Śrīla Śukadev Goswāmī, who is likened to a parrot that has pecked and released the fruit’s nectar.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam’s beauty has been shown to the world in unprecedented depth by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. He taught that every soul is by nature a servant of the Lord, devotion to the Lord is the soul’s natural calling, and love for the Lord is the soul’s true fulfilment. By reading *Revealed Truth* one will develop a comprehensive understanding of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s teachings and be able to put the essence of revealed truth into practice.

The author, Swāmī B. S. Govinda, illuminates Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s paramount ideal of divine love with heart-touching clarity and sweetness. Drawing upon the teachings of the Āchāryas in Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s succession, as well as his own experience and realisation, Swāmī B. S. Govinda captivates readers with wisdom and joy that will ensure their spiritual journey is crowned with success.

Join the devotees beneath the tree of divine revelation and nourish your soul with its nectar.



*Revealed
Truth*



All glory to Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāᅅga

Revealed Truth

A compilation of discourses
illuminating the essence of
Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings

by

His Divine Grace
Swāmī B. S. Govinda

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Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj and his dear disciple Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj.

Dedication

Offered to the lotus hands of Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj
on the occasion of Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj's divine appearance day, 30 December 2012.

Preface

I begin by offering my obeisance to the lotus feet of my Divine Master, Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, praying that this offering may satisfy his heart and that by his grace I may make it with all the chastity, sincerity, love, and affection that he desires from his disciples. Next I offer my obeisance to all the aspiring servitors of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's lotus feet, as it is by their mercy that I am so fortunate as to have a connection with His Divine Grace and the opportunity to make this offering. Finally, I offer my obeisances to all the readers who open their hearts to the divine teachings presented in this book.

I would like to explain the origin of this compilation. Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj has travelled the world twenty-four times over the last eighteen years preaching the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Thākura, and Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj. A relatively boundless mine of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's recorded discourses now exists. *Revealed Truth* is an attempt to excavate, prepare, and array a collection of gems from this mine.

Considering that both content and organisation are elements of revelation, in *Revealed Truth* content from Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's lectures has been structured according to one of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's favoured models of presentation: the *Dāśa-mūla-tattva*, Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Thākura's consolidation of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's siddhānta into ten fundamental principles. Śrīman Mahāprabhu delineated the whole of revealed knowledge using three foundational concepts: sambandha, abhidheya, and prayojan. He summarised these as Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, and Kṛṣṇa-prema. More specifically, sambandha-jñān means understanding Kṛṣṇa, His energies, and their relationships; abhidheya means the practice of

pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa; and prayojan means the ultimate necessity of every soul: love for Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura summarises Śrīman Mahāprabhu's teachings on sambandha, abhidheya, and prayojan in the introductory verse of his *Dāśamūla-tattva*, in effect, encapsulating the whole of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava siddhānta in a single verse. *Revealed Truth* presents Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's lectures as an exposition of this verse and the ten principles it summarises.

The aim of *Revealed Truth* is not to publish particular discourses of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, as has been done in previous publications, but to expound prominent themes within the compass of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's preaching by weaving together content from numerous lectures with the hope of making the profundity of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's realisations and teachings clearly accessible. To further this end, *Revealed Truth's* typographic scheme arrays images, captions, verse translations, and scriptural references beside the text to augment its themes. All translation has been done with reference to commentaries by Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and other Āchāryas in the Rūpānuga sampradāya.

I encourage readers to approach this book with a faithful heart and prayerful mood. As terminology, concepts, and moods are being presented, I request readers to move through the text with confidence that any term or concept that is not immediately explained will be addressed later on. Furthermore, I enthusiastically entreat readers to seek out the association of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's disciples to further their understanding and appreciation of the content presented herein.

As I introduce *Revealed Truth* I feel compelled to honour the devotees who helped with this project. It is not possible to mention all the devotees who contributed in various ways, so I pray that everyone with whom I had the fortune to collaborate with on this project will consider that here and now I am expressing my heart's appreciation for their assistance. I must mention,

however, the late Śrīpād Bhakti Premik Siddhāntī Mahārāj, who left the world just prior to the completion of this work. It was my hope to bring joy to his heart by presenting him *Revealed Truth* during his last days, as it was Śrīpād Siddhāntī Mahārāj who requested me to compile this book, enthusiastically supported its conceptual structure, and supplied me with a portion of its material.

In closing I wish to state my objective that this book serve as an enlightening source of inspiration for everyone to practise pure devotion.

guru-mukha padma vākya chittete kariyā aikya
āra nā kariha mane āśā

(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.2)

“Make the teachings from Śrī Gurudev’s lotus mouth one with your heart. Do not desire anything else (and all of your desires will be fulfilled, *ye prasāde pūre sarva āśā*).”

Arjuna expresses such earnest attachment for the words of his Guru, Śrī Govinda Himself, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

deśa-kālārtha-yuktāni hṛt-tāpopaśamāni cha
haranti smarataś chittaṁ govindābhihitāni me

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.15.27)

“Śrī Govinda’s words are imbued with novel import throughout all of time and space, and extinguish the fire of worldly existence—the fire of separation—that burns in my heart. Remembering them captivates my soul.”

By reading *Revealed Truth* with attachment for our beloved Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj like that of Arjuna for Śrī Govinda, sincere souls will be able to extract the maximum from the discourses compiled herein and feel the wave of revelation flowing from Śrīla Gurudev’s heart into theirs.

Śrī Gaura-jana-kiṅkar,
Kamal Kṛṣṇa Dās
8 March 2010,
Kolkata, India



Om Viṣṇupād
Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj



Om Viṣṇupād
Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj



Om Viṣṇupād
Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj



Bhagavān
Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur



Om Viṣṇupād
Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur

Daśa-Mūla-Tattva

The Ten Fundamental Principles

āmnāyaḥ prāha tattvaṁ harim iha paramaṁ sarva-śaktim rasābhim
tad-bhinnāmsāmś cha jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāmś cha bhāvāt
bhedābheda-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanam śuddha-bhaktim
sādhyam tat-pṛitim evety upadiśati janān gaurachandraḥ svayam saḥ

(Daśa-mūla-tattva-niryāsa)

iha—In this world; **āmnāyaḥ**—the knowledge revealed through Guru-paramparā; **prāha**—states; **tattvaṁ**—the Truth; **harim paramam**—Śrī Hari is supreme; **sarva-śaktim**—He possesses all potencies; **rasābhim**—He is an ocean of rasa. **jīvān cha**—Also, the souls; **tad bhinnāmsān**—are His separated parts. **prakṛti-kavalitān**—They are covered by māyā; **tad vimuktān cha**—or liberated from māyā; **bhāvāt**—by desire. **sakalam api**—Yet everything—the entire spiritual and material creation; **bhedābheda-prakāśam**—is a different and nondifferent manifestation; **hareḥ**—of Śrī Hari. **śuddha-bhaktim**—Pure devotion; **sādhanam**—is the way; **tat pṛitim**—love for Śrī Hari; **eva sādhyam**—is the only goal. **iti**—This; **saḥ**—He; **gaurachandraḥ**—Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu; **svayam**—Himself; **upadiśati**—teaches; **janān**—the souls.

“Śrī Gaurachandra personally teaches the souls that (1) revealed knowledge establishes the Truth: (2) Hari is supreme, (3) He is omnipotent, (4) He is an ocean of rasa, (5) the souls are His separated parts, (6) they are either covered by material energy, (7) or liberated from material energy by devotion, (8) everything is a manifestation distinct and non-distinct from Hari, (9) pure devotion is the way, and (10) love for Hari is the goal.”

Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj:

“Within this one verse, which conveys the gist of the *Dāśa-mūla-tattva*, Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur has given us everything. He has given us the whole conception of Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you can read and memorise this verse, then everything will be within you: the full conception of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur, Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, and Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh. Everything, the gist of all revealed knowledge (*āmnāya*), is within this one verse.

“But don’t try to understand this verse by yourself. Hear it from an expert. Everywhere throughout all the scriptures this advice is given: ‘You must hear from an expert.’ So hear this verse from an expert who knows its meaning. If you hear from him with full faith, you will understand properly what is what, and you will get everything.”

SECTION ONE

Revelation

Daśa-mūla-tattva

Truth One:

āmnāyaḥ prāha tattvaṁ

Revealed knowledge establishes the Truth.

CHAPTER ONE

Āmnāya

Āmnāya means knowledge that has descended from the transcendental world into this material world for the benefit of all souls. You can call that knowledge ‘spiritual’ or ‘transcendental’ or ‘divine’. The main idea is that it has descended from above; it has not been formed by anything of this world. We can understand everything about who we are (sambandha), what the goal of our life should be (prayojan), and how we can attain that (abhidheya) through āmnāya.

How āmnāya, revealed knowledge, exists in this world can be understood through the example of the Ganges River. Previously the civilisation of India was called the Gaṅgā-sabhyatā, “The civilisation of the Ganges”. Everyone throughout India has respect for the Ganges and has faith that Mother Ganges comes down to this world from the lotus feet of the Lord in the transcendental world. As the Ganges comes down through the heavens, Lord Śiva takes her on his head, breaks her force, and then allows her to flow gently over the surface of the earth. Everyone understands that the Ganges descends from the Lord’s abode in this way and then flows down from the Himalayas across India to the ocean in the Bay of Bengal, or the

Ganga Sagar, as it is known in India. As the Ganges flows across India many dirty things can be found within her waters, but everyone understands that the Ganges never loses her transcendental nature even when she appears dirty materially. Ganges water is understood to come down from the Lord's lotus feet and to always be fully transcendental. People understand that no matter how dirty her water may appear, the Ganges' waters spiritual nature is never polluted or removed by anything material. So even though the Ganges appears to be polluted, everyone understands that Ganges water is always spiritually purifying and that even the auspicious breeze blowing off the Ganges brings a spiritual mood of devotion to the conditioned souls of this world.

Subtle transmission

Through this example of the Ganges we can understand that when āmnāya descends into this realm it will never lose its transcendental nature, even though it may mix with our material minds, language, and experience. Still, our intelligence cannot conceive of how the Ganges descends from the transcendental realm or how revealed truth appears in this world. To adjust this we can consider that now in the scientific age so many things exist around us that no one could have conceived of in the past. Only now can we conceive that a signal can be broadcast through the ether, picked up by a receiver, and then played on a television or radio in a distant place. Now in the scientific age we understand that transmission can happen through subtle means. We can learn from the work of the scientists that it is not unreasonable to try to connect with the higher transcendental world just because the medium for our connection with the transcendental plane is not physical. The scientists have shown everyone that clear communication is possible through subtle means. So we only need to discover the proper channel of revelation and how we can make ourselves

a proper receiver capable of receiving transmission from the transcendental realm. Then everything will be revealed to us.

Making ourselves proper receivers begins with faith and prayer. When a house is built it is wired so that electricity is available throughout the house. Without electricity a house is dark at night. But when electricity powers the lights within a house, everything can be seen—what is inside the house and what is outside the house. By ourselves, with only our mundane faculties, we are in darkness and cannot imagine the light of divine life. But if we open our hearts and desire that new light appear there, if we pray that our hearts may be clean enough to receive transcendental knowledge, then happily that knowledge will appear within us. As wires carry electricity, so our hearts have the capacity to receive transmissions from the transcendental realm. Faith and prayer from our heart can bring us new life and light from the transcendental world.

Revelation of the Infinite

Our Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, once visited a group called the Arya Samaj in West India. A man from this group challenged him, “You say that Kṛṣṇa is infinite, but you also say you can understand Kṛṣṇa and you have knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. You are finite. So how can Kṛṣṇa be infinite? If the finite can know the infinite, then how can it be infinite?” Śrīla Guru Mahārāj quickly responded, “You are right. It is not possible for the finite to know the infinite by its own power. But if Kṛṣṇa cannot make Himself known to the finite, then He is not infinite. The Infinite must also be able to reveal Himself to the finite, otherwise He is not infinite.” That man could not argue with this and was very happily defeated by Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. There is no question whether Kṛṣṇa can reveal Himself to us.

The Lord is not powerless. He has the capacity to reveal Himself, and He is merciful. By His mercy Kṛṣṇa descends



Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj lecturing at Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, Nabadwīp.

to this world to fulfil our prayers in so many different forms. Sometimes He Himself comes with His full transcendental paraphernalia, sometimes He sends His Avatārs, and sometimes He sends divinely empowered souls. In all these forms He descends to this world to bestow His affection and divine connection upon the fortunate jīva-souls.

Enlightening power

athāpi te deva padāmbuja-dvaya-
prasāda-leśānugṛhīta eva hi
jānāti tattvaṁ bhagavan-mahimno
na chānya eko 'pi chiraṁ vichinvan

(SB: 10.14.29)

“O Lord, one who receives even a trace of the grace of Your lotus feet can know Your glory. Without Your grace no one can know You, even after searching for a long time.”

When transcendental knowledge appears in our hearts by the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa, we will develop the capacity to understand our eternal relationship with Him. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said, “Seeing a light bulb shining indicates it is connected to a power source.” When we will see and understand things clearly in our heart we will know we are connected with a source of divine power. It is only necessary for us to give that divine light clear entrance and a clean position in our heart. We are not in control of the flow of revelation, but if we are faithful, submissive, and surrendered, then we can attract revelation’s flow and feel its presence in our hearts. And when the descending flow of transcendental knowledge wants to reveal itself in our hearts it must reveal itself; we will not be able to check it actually.

Still, from our present position, we are not able to understand everything.

nāyam ātmā pravachanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām

(Kaṭha-upaniṣad: 1.2.23)

Our ordinary mental power, intelligence, and learning do not give us entrance into transcendental reality. Only when the Lord reveals Himself in our hearts can we understand Him. This means we can come to know Him only by surrendering to His enlightening power. And whenever we feel the presence

of that type of perfect light-connection in our life we must be happy and think that we are proceeding rightly towards our transcendental destiny. As that happens we will begin to understand everything. But until that happens we can't really understand anything. So, once we have adjusted ourselves to be faithful receivers of the Lord's revelation, we need to connect with Him through the proper channel in which His enlightening power flows. Once we have prepared ourselves we must try to connect with the Lord and His āmnāya through the proper channel, then everything will be revealed in our hearts. It is sure that through the proper connection with the proper channel, āmnāya will appear in our hearts. We only need to proceed in our spiritual life with faith, with chastity and sincerity, with love and affection, and try to receive transcendental knowledge through the proper channel.

Vedic culture

The proper channel means a connection with a Vedic source. It means Vedic culture, Vedic scriptures, and Vedic saints. Vedic culture means āmnāya-paramparā, the descending flow of transcendental knowledge through heart-to-heart transmission. Through the channel of āmnāya-paramparā transcendental knowledge descends from above and flows through this world like the Ganges River. Sometimes people think Vedic culture started when Vedic scriptures were written but this is not the truth. Actually, Vedic culture manifested during the creation of the universe.

At the beginning of creation, Brahmā, the first created being within the universe, awoke and found that everything was dark. He could not see anything. Eventually he heard a sound, "Tapa!" In this form of divya-saraswatī, transcendental sound vibration, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa initiated Brahmā. Kṛṣṇa Himself acted as the first Guru of everyone in this mundane world by giving consciousness of Himself to Brahmā, the creator. *Tapa* means 'meditate'. Brahmā meditated and Lord

īśvarera kṛpā-leśa haya ta' yāhāre
sei ta' īśvara-tattva jānibāre pāre
(Cc: *Madhya*, 6.83)

"One who receives even a trace of the Lord's grace can understand the Lord."

Kṛṣṇa appeared in his heart. After this Brahmā could see and also understand what his work was to be. Then he began creating everything within the universe. Later Brahmā gave the consciousness he received from Kṛṣṇa to Nārada Ṛṣi, and Nārada Ṛṣi gave it to Vedavyās. Vedavyās then distributed that transcendental knowledge to everyone. In this way transcendental knowledge came down into this world at the very beginning of creation and then began to spread from heart to heart.

Transcendental research

This process of revelation is called *Guru-paramparā*, or *āmnāya-paramparā*, and it is the proper channel to approach the Lord. By hearing from a higher source, from a qualified Guru, serving him, and meditating on his instructions, transcendental knowledge is revealed to a sincere seeker. This is the meaning of ‘proper channel’ and this was the process in the previous ages of the Vedic culture.

There was no writing or scripture involved originally: only hearing, serving, and learning from Śrī Gurudev. Someone who could receive transcendental knowledge in this way and also reveal new light about the transcendental world to others was known as a ṛṣi. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained that *ṛṣi* means a ‘research scholar’. This is a very nice expression. It means that someone will only become well-known as a ṛṣi if they have great research capacity, if they are able to reveal new light from the transcendental world that is essential for everyone’s spiritual and material lives.

Vedic scripture

The discoveries of the great ṛṣis who received light from the transcendental world were later organised and compiled into scriptures by Vedavyās. *Vyās*, or *Vedavyās*, is a title which means *Veda-vistāra-kārī*, one who spreads Veda by putting it into suitable written form. *Veda* means the consciousness given by

āmnāya, revealed knowledge that is essential in the lives of everyone. A Vedavyās is actually a Śaktyāveś-avatār, an incarnation of the Lord in the form of an empowered jīva-soul who has the capacity to spread āmnāya.

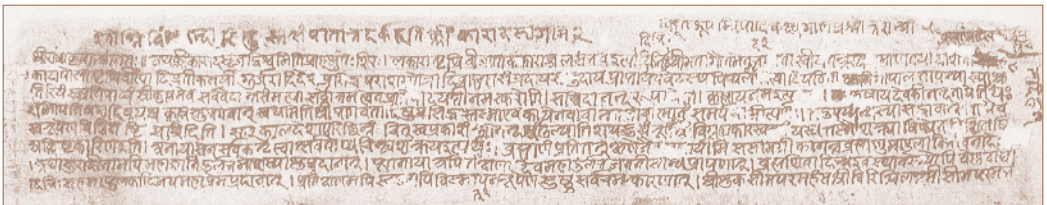
Hinduism, Vedic culture, and Indian culture come from the rulings of Vedavyās. All religious groups within India, mostly Hindu groups, still follow Vedavyās’ teachings and the *Manu-saṁhitā*, the laws of mankind. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyan was the name of the ṛṣi who performed the service of compiling the scriptures in the recent age and became known as *Vedavyās*.

The discoveries of the ṛṣis were very broad. The ṛṣis understood everything about all aspects of life, both material and spiritual. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyan Vedavyās collected all of their research and mixed it with material examples so that the conditioned souls could understand it. Then he divided and presented their research in different scriptures to be taught to students within the schools of Vedic culture. In this way he composed the four Vedas—the *Ṛg-veda*, *Sāma-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, and *Atharva-veda*—the *Āyurveda* scripture, and the fifth Veda, the *Mahābhārata*.

Garga Ṛṣi’s praṇām mantra for Vedavyās:

vadana-kamala-niryadyasya
 īyūṣam ādyam
 pibati jana-varo ‘yam
 pātu so ‘yam giraṁ me
 badara-vana-vihāraḥ
 satyavatyāḥ kumāraḥ
 praṇata-durita-hāraḥ
 sārṅga-dhanv-avatāraḥ
 (Gs: 1.1.2)

“May Satyavati’s son, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyan Vedavyās, the Avatār of Viṣṇu who removes the surrendered souls’ sorrow and enjoys Pastimes in the forest of Badari, he from whose lotus mouth the sādhus drink the original nectar, guide my words.”



These scriptures are so vast; they are huge books. The *Mahābhārata* alone has over 100,000 verses in it. We have heard that there is also another part of the *Mahābhārata* found only in heaven that has even more verses. But even within the 100,000 verses of our *Mahābhārata* here, there are so many stories; we cannot even conceive how many stories. They are all very sweet, hopeful stories, but sometimes they are mixed with some alloy, some themes which are not purely devotional. Still, they are all related to religion and always give us remembrance of the

An example of the handwriting of Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī Prabhu, who wrote more than 400,000 verses explaining the Vedic scriptures.

fundamental questions of life: “Who are you? Why are you suffering in the illusory environment? What is the cause of everything?” All the scriptures are always giving us this consciousness. Questions about who we are and what the goal of our life should be are the fundamental basis of all religious thought.

Scriptural gist

The *Mahābhārata* presents everything to us, but, along with the other Vedas, it is so vast. We could not finish reading all of the Vedic scriptures even within an entire lifetime. Also, the knowledge given in the Vedas is widely differentiated; there are sections that describe all the different aspects of life. If we try to learn everything just by reading the Vedas ourselves, we become lost in a jungle of knowledge. Considering that this would happen, Vedavyās felt his work was not sufficient. He then composed the 108 Upaniṣads.

The Vedas are very big. The Upaniṣads are much shorter. They present all the ideals found in the Vedas in a much shorter form. But the Upaniṣads are still so many, so Vedavyās finally composed the *Vedānta-darśana*.

Within the *Vedānta-darśana* is present the gist of all revealed knowledge and all the previous scriptures. When Vedavyās wanted to give the substance of the whole of Vedic literature in a very short way, he presented the *Vedānta-darśana*. Within the *Vedānta-darśana* there are only very short sūtras, codes, but there is so much light and so much knowledge within each and every one of them.

Clarifying the essence

Vedavyās wanted to present everything in the sūtras of his *Vedānta-darśana*. He did this, but the sūtras contain so much condensed knowledge that they are very difficult to properly understand. Only a very highly qualified person can properly

An archetypal verse from
the Upaniṣads:

tad ejati tan naijati
tad dūre tad v antike
tad antar asya sarvasya
tad u sarvasyāsya bāhyatah
(Īw: 5)

“The Lord moves, and He
does not move. He is far,
and He is near. He is within
everything, and He is
outside of everything.”

understand the condensed knowledge of the *Vedānta-darśana*. General persons are not able to understand it. We have seen that now there are also many wrong interpretations of the *Vedānta-darśana* being presented that were not intended by Vedavyās. These wrong interpretations create confusion and many mistaken theories which lead towards *māyāvād*, illusionism, and *nāstikavād*, atheism.

Vedavyās wanted that everyone would understand the gist of the Vedas through his writings, especially the *Vedānta-darśana*, and when he saw that this was not happening, he felt unsatisfied. He thought, “I have given so much knowledge to rescue the conditioned souls. I have given so many things for their benefit. Why am I not feeling peace in my heart? Why am I not fully satisfied? Why is my work unsatisfactory? I cannot understand.”



Nārada Goswāmī and Vedavyās in the Himalayan foothills on the bank of the Sarasvatī River.

As Vedavyās was thinking in this way his Gurudev, Nārada Goswāmī, came to visit him by the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Vedavyās was very happy to see Nārada Goswāmī. He received him and worshipped him. Then Vedavyās asked him, “Prabhu, why am I unhappy? You know everything, and you can understand why I am unhappy. Please explain this to me.” Nārada Goswāmī said, “Yes, I can explain everything; it is for this purpose that I have come to visit you.”

Then Nārada Goswāmī chastised Vedavyās: “What you have given the conditioned souls is actually not sufficient.

jugupsitaṁ dharma-kṛte 'nuśāsataḥ
svabhāva-raktasya mahān vyatikramaḥ
yad-vākyato dharma itī taraḥ sthito
na manyate tasya nivāraṇaṁ janaḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.5.15)

“*Jugupsitaṁ dharma-kṛte 'nuśāsataḥ*: you have explained religion in khichuri form; everything is mixed together. That is tasteful to the conditioned souls, and they will no doubt enjoy with that. But you have left a puzzle for anyone who wants to transcend this mundane world. They will be frustrated when they try to find the clear path to the spiritual world. The conditioned souls are always active, and they need to know which path is best for them to follow and what their destination should be. Should they follow the path of karma-yoga, the path of action? Jñāna-yoga, the path of knowledge? Aṣṭāṅga-yoga, the path of meditation? Karma-miśra-bhakti, the path of devotion mixed with action? Jñāna-miśra-bhakti, the path of devotion mixed with knowledge? This has not been clearly explained.

“What should be their ideal conception? Brahma conception, the conception of the nondifferentiated Absolute? Paramātmā conception, the conception of the Supreme Soul? Bhāgavat conception, the conception of the Supreme Personality of Godhead? You have not explained these things clearly, and you have not explained what is Supreme. It is necessary for you to clarify this to complete your work and truly benefit the conditioned souls.

“The conditioned souls can't conceive that their greatest benefit will come to them through service and dedication to the Lord. They only understand exploitation. When they see the bad reactions they receive in the plane of exploitation they seek relief in the plane of renunciation. But there they lose everything; the jīva-souls cannot find the fulfilment of their existence in impersonal liberation. Only in the plane of dedication and service to the Lord is everything existing beautifully in harmony with the jīva-souls' true nature. You have not explained this to the conditioned souls.”

Religion for the enlightened

Nārad Goswāmī continued, “You have already given medicine for rogīs, sick men, in the Vedas, Upaniṣads, and so on, but you have not explained what is nourishing to strong and healthy men. Your duty is to provide nourishment for everyone. You have given the medicine needed to release the conditioned souls from their suffering. You have given them the clue to find relief. But you have not given any nourishment to the healthy persons, liberated souls, who know they are transcendental, have goodwill, and want further nourishment. You are the supreme authority on religion; no one can change, or argue with, your conclusions. But what you have done is wrong and you must correct it.

“You have said, ‘*Raso vai Saḥ*: the Supreme is rasa.’ That is very good. But what is that rasa actually? There are so many forms of ecstasy. What is the supreme form of ecstasy? If a jīva-soul enters the emporium of ecstasy, how will he know what he wants and what is best for him? You have not clearly given that knowledge to the jīva-souls. So what have you actually distributed?

“You began the *Vedānta-darśana* with, ‘*Athāto Brahma jijñāsā*: now search for the Supreme.’ But who will understand that this actually means, ‘Search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Reality the Beautiful’? Who will understand that Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s divine form coupled with Rādhārāṇī is the emporium of all ecstasy (*raso vai Saḥ*)?”

yad vai tat sukṛtam raso vai saḥ
“He who is perfect (Brahma) is
the embodiment of rasa (Kṛṣṇa).”

The divine play in seed form

In this way, according to the conception of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, Nārad Goswāmī chastised Vedavyās. Then Vedavyās folded his palms and asked Nārad Goswāmī, “Prabhu, what should I do now?”

Nārad Goswāmī said, “Try to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the jīva-souls by describing and distributing Kṛṣṇa-līlā, the divine Pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa-līlā is not only the property

The Bhāgavat-chatuḥ-ślokī
mantram (SB: 2.9.33–36):

aham evāsam evāgre
nānyad yat sad asat param
paścād aham yad etach cha
yo 'vaśiṣyeta so 'smy aham

“Prior to creation, only I
existed. Nothing else—gross,
subtle, or primordial—
existed. After creation, only I
exist, and after the annihila-
tion only I remain.”

ṛte 'rtham yat pratīyeta
na pratīyeta chātmani
tad vidyād ātmano māyām
yathābhāso yathā tamaḥ

“Know that which seems to
exist without Me or does
not seem to exist within Me
to be My energy, comparable
to a reflection or darkness.”

of the mundane world; it is the property of Goloka Vṛndāvan, the highest realm of the spiritual world. I will give you in four short notes the seed form of that divine play, the gist form of that knowledge. You are qualified; you have the capacity to meditate. Plant these seeds in your heart and meditate, and they will reveal their full form to you. With proper vision you will see everything cleanly and clearly. Then you can express that through your writing and distribute it all over the world. You will be fully satisfied and happy with that.”

Nārad Goswāmī properly and authentically gave the Bhāgavat-chatuḥ-ślokī mantram to Vedavyās, that is, transcendental light and knowledge of ananya-bhakti, exclusive devotion. Vedavyās meditated and saw Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself in his heart along with all of His potencies. Then, with inspiration from the chatuḥ-ślokī mantram, plus the twelve verses of chastisement from Nārad Goswāmī, and the idea to write a commentary on his *Vedānta-darśana*, Vedavyās composed his final work, his supreme scripture—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

The supreme conclusion

Within *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* four sittings are described in which the *Bhāgavat's* message—the message which Nārad Goswāmī received from Brahmā and Brahmā received from Kṛṣṇa Himself at the beginning of creation— was transmitted. The first sitting was the meeting of Nārad Goswāmī and Vedavyās. The next sitting was the meeting of Vedavyās and his son Śukadev Goswāmī. The third sitting happened at Sukratala, where Śukadev Goswāmī spoke to Mahārāj Parīkṣit. The fourth sitting happened at Naimiṣāraṇya, where a disciple of Śukadev Goswāmī, Sūta Goswāmī, spoke to 60,000 ṛṣis who were assembled for a fire sacrifice. After these four sittings Vedavyās collected everything that was expressed, gradually composed *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and then gave it to the world.

In this way Vedavyās wrote his own commentary on the *Vedānta-darśana* and clearly explained everything about revealed knowledge for everyone. With full satisfaction in his heart he presented his introduction to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in a simple way: “This *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is my last will and testament. It contains the highest knowledge—pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness—and any jīva-soul who can follow its directives will attain the supreme goal of life. They will attain a liberated position, get entrance into the transcendental service world, and happily play with the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa in full love, affection, and ecstasy.”

Vedavyās also concluded *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with full satisfaction:

sarva-vedānta-sāraṁ hi śrīmad-bhāgavatam iṣyate
tad-rasāmṛta-tṛptasya nānyatra syād ratiḥ kvachit

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 12.13.15)

“*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* contains the gist of all the Vedas, the *Vedānta-darśana*, and the Upaniṣads. Anyone who once reads *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* will never become attracted to any other scripture; one will only continue without interruption to drink the transcendental nectar of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.”

śrīmad-bhāgavatam purāṇam amalāṁ yad vaiṣṇavānāṁ priyaṁ

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 12.13.18)

“There was something wrong with what I presented previously, but here in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* there is nothing wrong; everything is clean and clear. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is *purāṇam amalāṁ*, the spotless Purāṇa, and, *yad Vaiṣṇavānāṁ priyaṁ*, all the Vaiṣṇavas have accepted it very dearly within their hearts.”

In this way we can understand,

artho 'yaṁ brahma-sūtrāṇāṁ bhāratārtha-vinirṇayaḥ
gāyatrī-bhāṣya-rūpo 'sau vedārtha-paribṛṁhitaḥ

(*Garuḍa-purāṇa*)

yathā mahānti bhūtāni
bhūteṣūchchāveṣṇu anu
praviṣṭāny apraviṣṭāni
tathā teṣu na teṣu aham

“As the material elements exist within all beings, large and small, yet also exist outside of them, so I exist both inside and outside of all beings.”

etāvad eva jijñāsyam
tattva-jijñāsunātmanaḥ
anvaya-vyatirekābhyāṁ
yat syāt sarvatra sarvadā

“One who seeks the Absolute should directly and indirectly search for Me, who exist everywhere and always.”

“Śrīmad Bhāgavatam presents full knowledge of the sūtras of the *Vedānta-darśana*. It is the natural commentary on the *Vedānta-darśana*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the gāyatrī-mantram; all knowledge, everything, is presented in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.”

If you can follow the conception of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* you will understand the gist of all revealed truth, all āmnāya.

Heart-to-Heart Transmission

Question: We hear that all truth is present in the scriptures, specifically *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, but how do we know when we are supposed to take the expressions in the scriptures literally or figuratively? How do we understand what the scriptures are really trying to say?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: How will we understand anything about the scriptures? We must first enter into a school. When we are admitted into a school we are given appropriate lessons for our level by our teacher. When I am studying in a school I pass through class one to class two, then to class three, and so on. In each class what I am taught is not exactly the same. Each higher class does not present everything in the same way as the previous classes do. But whatever I learn in each class is appropriate and beneficial for me at my level.

The Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and other scriptures are an ocean, and they contain so many verses which have many different meanings. Ultimately, they are all guiding us towards the same goal—Kṛṣṇa-bhakti—but we are not always able to understand that. Sometimes it is very

difficult to see that actually. Many different practising processes are explained in the various scriptures: karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, aṣṭāṅga-yoga, bhakti-yoga, and others. If we want to understand the real advice of all the scriptures, if we want to understand where the scriptures' knowledge is trying to take our consciousness, then it is first necessary to faithfully study the scriptural lessons that are appropriate for us in a school, under the guidance of a proper teacher. That is the best process.

We must be very conscious about reading the scriptures. The scriptures are not the easiest thing to understand. *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* explains how a student should approach a teacher to learn spiritual knowledge:

**tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ**

(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 4.34)

Here it is explained that a student must be a little qualified to approach a teacher. *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* says, “First be surrendered, then enquire and serve. Your Guru will want to hear your questions and bestow his mercy upon you if you are really surrendered to him, you are humble, and you have real hankering.” First approach Gurudev through surrender; then serve him. Surrender alone is not sufficient. Surrendered service to Gurudev is the main thing that will give the sincere seeker the proper result in his search for transcendental knowledge. Someone may acquire general knowledge in other ways, but without praṇipāt, surrender; paripraśna, sincere enquiry; and sevā, service, transcendental knowledge will not reveal itself in the heart.

When a student is a little qualified in this way and finds a Guru who is a qualified teacher, the student must surrender to him, ask him questions, and serve him. Everything will be revealed in the heart of the qualified sincere seeker by the qualified Guru when the disciple is enriched with these three qualities of surrender, enquiry, and service—enriched with a



*Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj*

mood of devotion. When that mood is present, everything will be set right: the Guru’s heart will be melted by that student’s sincere approach, and the Guru will be ready to teach the student. By this process the student will understand, through the melted heart of his Guru, the essence of all the scriptures—everything that is to be found within the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and the other scriptures. This is how we should try to learn the scriptures.

Spiritual experts

We can see that the scriptures themselves always advise us about the position and necessity of the proper teacher, the sādhu. In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī advises us:

yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Antya-līlā, 5.131*)

“Go to the Vaiṣṇava, the devotee, and hear from him the meaning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*; only read *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the association of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

Without the Vaiṣṇava we cannot understand the meaning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and we will undoubtedly proceed in the wrong direction. It is necessary to hear the explanation of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, or any scripture, from some expert. Only when we hear from an expert can we understand the real meaning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Our knowledge is very limited. Nobody can say, “I am full with all knowledge.” Even Śrīla Guru Mahārāj told us, “I am a student. You consider yourselves masters? I consider myself to be a student, and all of you to be students. Nobody is a master.”

It was Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s conception that we are all students. Therefore we must try to understand what our lessons are from a proper teacher. Through one who understands the essence of the lessons we are to learn, we can easily understand what our lessons are. It is very difficult to understand otherwise.

yāha, bhāgavata paḍa
vaiṣṇavera sthāne
ekānta āśraya kara
chaitanya-charaṇe
chaitanyera bhakta-gaṇera
nitya kara ‘saṅga’
tabe ta’ jānibā siddhānta-
samudra-taraṅga

(Cc: *Antya*, 5.131–2)

“Go and study *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with the Vaiṣṇavas. Sincerely take shelter of Śrī Chaitanya’s feet and always associate with His devotees. Then you will understand the waves in the ocean of Truth.”

We may make wrong interpretations, not understanding the real meaning of the scriptures, and we may be deceived. It is necessary to hear the meaning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from a proper interpreter and servitor of Kṛṣṇa like Śrīla Guru Mahārāj.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam itself has given two formulas for understanding *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. One prescribes reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and the other prohibits reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. If someone suddenly opens *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and follows what comes in front of them, then they will proceed in the wrong way. It is necessary to harmonise the whole of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*'s conception. And who can harmonise it? Only one who knows the fundamental basis and full meaning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

There are so many things written in the scriptures, and they are no doubt very good things. But because we have limited knowledge we can also easily misunderstand the words of the scriptures. We must discuss the scriptures with a sādhu to clarify that we are understanding the scriptures properly.

satām prasaṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ
taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 3.25.25)

The Lord Himself explains in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: “Discussions about Me heard in the association of My pure devotees nourish your ears and hearts; they fill your souls with ecstasy. Only when someone proceeds in their spiritual life under the guidance of My devotees will they naturally develop proper faith, attachment, and devotion.”

What is written in books and what is heard directly from the sādhu are two completely different things! What we may read or hear outside the association of the sādhu is not *hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ*: nectarean words which nourish our hearts and fill us with ecstasy. Only when we hear from the sādhu are we



ohe prabhu dayāmaya,
tomāra charaṇa-dvaya,
śruti-śiropari śobhā pāya
guru-jana-śire punaḥ,
śobhā pāya śata guṇa,
dekhi āmāra parāṇa juḍāya
(Gītā-mālā: 1.1.1)

“O merciful Lord! Seeing Your feet become more beautiful atop the heads of the scriptures and a hundred times more beautiful atop the head of my Guru soothes my heart.”

receiving something in the proper channel, receiving something descending down from Goloka Vṛndāvan through the hearts of our paramparā’s Gurus which is perfect and necessary for our spiritual life. Only when we hear in the proper channel from the sādhu is there a transmission of the power which reveals the essence of the scriptures’ words in our hearts. We are given real entrance into what we hear in the scriptures by the sādhu.

Following the great souls

Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj was a wise man. He was very qualified and had studied so many scriptures: the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, and so on. He also received much advice from various ṛṣis and munis. But after studying so many things he was puzzled and could not find a settled position. “Everything is good; everything is bad. It is good; it is bad. It is good; it is bad. It is good; it is bad.” Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj could not conclude what was the proper way to get relief from the illusory environment and become established in a clean position. Lastly he could only conclude that anyone who tries to discover what religion is simply by reading the scriptures will become crazy.

Reasoning is inconclusive; the scriptures are variegated; one whose conception is not distinctive cannot become a ṛṣi. True dharma is thus secretly concealed. Therefore, the way of the great souls is the path.

**tarko 'pratiṣṭhaḥ śrutayo vibhinnā
nāsāv ṛṣir yasya matam na bhinnam
dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhāyām
mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ**

(Mahābhārata: Vana-parva, 313.117)

Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj said, “We cannot take the advice of the Vedas directly. Our store of knowledge is very limited, and the knowledge given in the Vedas is very vast. The Vedas explain pratyakṣa-jñān [sensory knowledge], parokṣa-jñān [collective knowledge], aparokṣa-jñān [subtle knowledge], and adhokṣaja-jñān [transcendental knowledge]. Also, the ṛṣis who describe Vedic knowledge present many different interpretations of it and are not always perfect. Parāśar Ṛṣi presented one conception; Vaśiṣṭha Ṛṣi presented another; Chyavan Ṛṣi presented another; and so on. There are so many ṛṣis, and they presented many different conceptions. Thus the jīva-souls become confused; they do not find the truth with only the scriptures, the differing opinions of the ṛṣis, and their own minds. To find the proper conception we must follow the path of the Mahājans, the great souls, in whose hearts the truth is living.”

**svayambhūr nāradaḥ śambhuḥ kumāraḥ kapilo manuḥ
prahlādo janako bhīṣmo balir vaiyāsakir vayam**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 6.3.20)

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Vedavyās indicated that Brahmā, Nārada Ṛṣi, Śiva, the four kumāras—Sanaka, Sanātan, Sananda, and Sanat—Kapiladev, Manu, Prahlād Mahārāj, Janaka Rāja, Bhīṣmadev, Bali Mahārāj, Śukadev Goswāmī, and Yamarāj are all Mahājans. These particular twelve Mahājans are described throughout the scriptures and are so glorious. Their primary qualification is that they are devotees of the Lord. Actually, all great devotees of the Lord should be considered Mahājans.

Once many of these twelve Mahājans who are listed in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* were discussing a verse from *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* about the position of the Lord’s devotees, but they could not come to a proper conclusion about it.

In the meantime they saw Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur going by, and they called him over, “O Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākur! You know the proper meaning of this verse. Please come and join us.” Then Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur explained the verse to them, and they were very happy.

Devotees like Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur are the greatest Mahājans, and anyone who follows their guidance will be supremely benefitted.

lābhas teṣāṁ jayaṣ teṣāṁ kutaḥ teṣāṁ parābhavaḥ
yeṣāṁ-īndīvara-śyāmo hṛdaya-stho janārdanaḥ

(Pāṇḍava-gītā)

“Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is living in an effulgent way within the hearts of His dear devotees, and His Pastimes are always going on there very gloriously. Such devotees are truly great souls, Mahājans, and are always happy and successful.”

All directions should lead us towards Lord Kṛṣṇa and the real Mahājans, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotees. We must follow a proper devotee whose activity is top to bottom dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa’s service. His practice and lifestyle will be the perfect example of religious life for us, and his guidance will give us the proper understanding of the scriptures. Discussing the scriptures with qualified Vaiṣṇavas—pure devotees, sādhus—is always the best thing for practitioners. Practitioners know something, no doubt, but they do not know everything. When they discuss scriptural matters, with love and affection, with a qualified sādhu, then they must be benefitted by that—realisation of the proper meaning, feeling, and everything, will come to them.

Religion of the heart

When Kṛṣṇa wants to reveal transcendental knowledge in your heart through His devotee, it must be revealed. Even you won’t be able to check it. So we need connection with Kṛṣṇa’s devotees. Thus the actual question is: how can we recognise a genuine devotee, a true religious person? To whom does Kṛṣṇa reveal Himself?



Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur

The first verse to explain this, which explains the theme of our book *Religion of the Heart*, must be:

vidvadbhiḥ sevitaḥ sadbhir nityam adveṣa-rāgibhiḥ
hṛdayenābhyanujñāto yo dharmas taṁ nibhodhata

(*Manu-saṁhitā*: 2.1)

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj once gave a lecture in the library of Dhanbad before a gathering of many highly qualified paṇḍits and wealthy persons. He started his lecture with this verse. He explained that people think religion is found in books and that those books are written in particular languages, but that religion does not actually come from books or languages: religion is communicated through the transcendental language of heart transaction.

All religion presented in scriptures is first revealed in the hearts of ṛṣis, munis, and sādhus. After it appears in their hearts it is transmitted forward from heart to heart, and it later may take the form of books. So what can we say about religion? How much can we understand it? It is a matter of the heart. How can we feel the beauty and understand the glory of religion if our hearts are presently as filthy as a dustbin? Because our hearts are impure we must try to understand religion from a clean-hearted sādhu.

sādhūnām sama-chittānām
sutarām mat-kṛtātmanām
darśanān no bhaved bandhaḥ
pumso 'kṣṇoḥ savitur yathā
(*SB*: 10.10.41)

“As there is no darkness when
one’s eyes see the sun, so
there is no bondage when
one sees the equipoised
sādhus whose hearts are ex-
clusively dedicated to Me.”

Qualities of a sādhu

What are the qualities of a sādhu? *Vidvadbhiḥ sevitaḥ sadbhir*: a perfect sādhu cleanly and clearly understands the Vedas, the Vedānta, and the essence of their directives (*vidvadbhiḥ*). He always serves their purpose (*sevitaḥ*). He has no deficiency in simplicity, cleanliness, or proper behaviour (*sadbhir*). He has control of his six senses, and he has regard for everyone. His only sadness is the suffering of others.

Vedavyās, the author of all the Vedic scriptures, was a true sādhu. He saw so many other sādhus and was also praised by so many sādhus. He knew everything about revealed knowledge.

But more so than knowledge and even behaviour, what did he say was the best quality of a sādhu? *Nirmatsarāṇām satām* (SB: 1.1.2): the sādhu’s heart is completely clean and clear; there is not even a tiny dirty thing within it. This means that the sādhu is never envious of others (*nityam adveṣa-rāgibhiḥ*). He has no enviousness or anger and holds full love and affection within his heart for everyone. A sādhu with these qualities who is fully attached to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a real Mahājan, a real leader of humanity, and is always rightly engaged in religious service.

kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma, ataeva ‘śānta’
 bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kāmī—sakali ‘aśānta’
 (Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 19.149)

One who is interested in the mundane—selfish enjoyment, liberation, or supernatural power—is not a sādhu. One who has no desire for selfish enjoyment, who wants to give rather than take, who is always engaged twenty-four hours a day in serving the desires of the divine Lord, he is a sādhu. He alone is a truly peaceful, perfect gentleman. Real religion is the beauty that appears within the heart of such a sādhu, the transcendental feeling revealed in such a sādhu’s heart through his life of service. Whatever advice and instruction such a sādhu expresses is true religious instruction and can never be harmful to anyone. If we will receive a heart transmission from that type of sādhu and follow his guidance, we must feel the benefit of a truly religious life and come to understand the universal religion of all souls (jaiva-dharma). If anyone will proceed according to the guidance of a pure sādhu, then from that launching pad they will happily fly into the sky of virtue and reach the peak of religion. There is no party spirit or sectarian interest in such pure religion.

Universal religion

After Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s lecture, in which he made many of

tulayāma lavenāpi na
 svargaṁ nāpunar-bhavam
 bhagavat-saṅgi-saṅgasya
 martyānām kim utāśiṣaḥ
 (SB: 1.18.13)

“There is no comparison between even a moment of association with the Lord’s associates, and heaven or liberation. So what is to be said of mortal benedictions?”

these points about true religion, one very well-to-do man in the audience spoke: “In the past we have heard about Vaiṣṇava-dharma, and we considered that Vaiṣṇava-dharma was a branch of Hindu dharma. But I am so satisfied with what I have heard from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj that I now understand that all religious property is present within Vaiṣṇava-dharma. I now know that Vaiṣṇava-dharma is one; it is the true universal religion, and all other dharmas are subparts of Vaiṣṇava-dharma. I feel now that the universal Vaiṣṇava-dharma is the best thing for all jīva-souls.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s style was always very broad and perfect. He was always conscious about what he was doing, and he always presented everything according to the scriptures politely with clear logic. Some sannyāsīs and brahmachārīs would present our Param Gurudev’s conception, Śrīla Sarasvatī Thākura’s conception, in a hammering way, but Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was completely different from them. I am fortunate that I have heard many things from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. I have seen that so many people received divine light from him, and that this light became the light of their life.

The law of love and affection

My life in Śrī Chaitanya Sārasvat Maṭh with Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was always very restricted. I would not do anything without the permission of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. At least I can say for myself that I never did anything that Śrīla Guru Mahārāj did not give me permission to do. When the property of Śrī Chaitanya Sārasvat Maṭh was in a critical position I had to go to Kalna every day for two months to defend the Maṭh in court. Each day I would travel from the Maṭh to the court in Kalna and return home, but I would not go anywhere else along the way.

One day Śrīla Guru Mahārāj asked me, “Have you seen the temple of Gaurī Dās Paṇḍit in Kalna?” I said that I had lived near the temple all my life, but that I had never once seen the temple. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said, “Next time you go to Kalna

offer your daṇḍavat praṇām to Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu there.” It was only then that I ever visited that temple. Also, I never visited Mahāprabhu’s sannyās place in Katwa for twenty-eight years until I received the service-order of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj.

Our life was very restricted under Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, but we actually never felt any restriction. We always felt everything to be the natural love and affection of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. We felt that our service life was guided by Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and we could simply, and happily follow his orders. That was the natural law of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh: everyone would follow the rules automatically with love and affection.

It is always best when people will follow religious rules and regulations naturally with love and affection, with respect and honour. This was the standard we followed in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh from the beginning, and we never felt the necessity for anything else. In that environment I heard from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj for many years and learned something about the essence of the scriptures, the essence of religion, through him.

*Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj speaking
the sannyās mantra to
Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.*



CHAPTER THREE

The Lotus Feet of Śrī Gurudev

Śrīla Narottam Dās Ṭhākur has explained perfectly the position of Śrī Gurudev in one of his songs.

śrī-guru-charaṇa-padma, kevala bhakati-sadma,
vando muñi sāvadhāna mate

(*Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.1*)

“The lotus feet of Gurudev are the one and only abode of pure devotion.”

We must always be serious in our practice of spiritual life and serious about the glorification of the lotus feet of Gurudev. We do not actually know properly the position and glory of our Gurudev’s lotus feet, so we must always be careful in glorifying Gurudev (*vando muñi sāvadhāna mate*). We do not want to make any offence to Gurudev when we glorify him because offences to Gurudev are great obstacles in our spiritual life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself has explained Gurudev’s position to us for our benefit in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

āchāryaṁ māṁ vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhichit

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.17.27*)

“Carefully remember and consider Gurudev to be Me. Never think he is an ordinary man with a mundane form. As Gurudev, I Myself take on a human form to rescue the conditioned souls and give them a connection with the transcendental abode. You must consider Gurudev to be a nondifferent form of Myself.”

Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur also explained in an even more clear way the position of Gurudev:

sākṣād dharitvena samasta-śāstrair
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya
vande guroḥ śrī-charaṇāravindam

(Śrī Gurvaṣṭakam: 7)



“It is written in all the scriptures that Bhagavān Himself manifests in a human form in front of me as Gurudev.”

When Gurudev gives initiation, Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself, that is, Gurudev is revealed to be Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself through the heart of Gurudev in His transcendental sound vibration form, Śrī Hari-nām. Kṛṣṇa descends through the preceptorial line of Gurus (paramparā) into the heart of the disciple through the heart of Gurudev. In that way Gurudev acts as Kṛṣṇa Himself. Still, Gurudev also has his own personal identity as a servitor of the Lord. He never thinks, “I am Kṛṣṇa”, but always thinks, “I am the servitor of the servitor of

the servitor of Kṛṣṇa". In this way Gurudev is Kṛṣṇa's dearmost devotee (*kintu Prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*).

Gurudev is a servant of Kṛṣṇa, but a disciple must still always consider that Kṛṣṇa is revealing Himself in human form in front of him as Gurudev. The disciple sees Gurudev as a human but knows that Gurudev is not actually human. Gurudev's actual form is transcendental: he is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself. Because this conception of Gurudev is very important and we must be very careful to never lose faith in Gurudev, Narottam Ṭhākur sang: "*Vando muñi sāvadhāna mate: be careful to not improperly glorify Gurudev in any way.*"

When Kṛṣṇa takes form as Gurudev, He is so merciful to the conditioned souls. There is no doubt about that.

yāhāra prasāde bhāi, e bhava tariyā yāi,
kṛṣṇa-prāpti haya yāhā haite

(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.1)

When Gurudev is worshipped as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, and sincere seekers try to understand the service of Kṛṣṇa through Gurudev, Kṛṣṇa is more happy than when He is approached directly. When He is approached through Gurudev, Kṛṣṇa gives much more help to the sincere seekers; He inspires them in their hearts: "Yes, what you are doing is right. Proceed on."

The vital conception is that Kṛṣṇa distributes Himself and no one else can do that. Only when Kṛṣṇa Himself shows His greatly merciful nature and takes the form of Gurudev can transcendental knowledge be spread to someone's heart, and only then will someone understand Gurudev's position.

The chosen one

guru-mukha-padma-vākya, chittete kariyā aikya,
āra nā kariha mane āśā

(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.2)

If any sincere seeker can follow the advice of Gurudev he must receive Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Kṛṣṇa Himself has given us 200 per cent assurance of that. We must have full faith in the transcendental

By Śrī Guru's grace the soul crosses over this world and reaches Kṛṣṇa. Make the teachings from the lotus mouth of Śrī Guru one with your heart; do not desire anything else. (Pbc: 1.1-2)

knowledge that is revealed through Gurudev. It is actually not necessary to follow any advice from any other quarter. It is only necessary to wholeheartedly follow with full faith the teachings, orders, and service responsibilities which come from Gurudev.

śrī guru-charaṇe rati, sei se uttama-gati,
ye prasāde pūre sarva āśā

(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.2)

If you are determined to follow the order of Gurudev properly with chastity and sincerity, then you will get everything through his service (*ye prasāde pūre sarva āśā*).

Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura gave us this most clear conception: “Gurudev is a teacher and Gurudev is a servitor.” Gurudev is actually Kṛṣṇa’s supreme servitor (*kintu Prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*). He shows us his form in this way. You will receive full spiritual benefit when you see what Gurudev is doing and how he is satisfying the Lord. You will be most benefitted when you see that he is giving you service for the satisfaction of his divine Lord. When you see Gurudev in this way you will receive all hope and facility to satisfy the Lord.

Transcendental vision

chakṣu-dāna dilā yei, janme janme prabhu sei,
divya-jñāna hṛde prokāśita

(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.3)

Proper transcendental vision comes to us through Gurudev. Everything in this world is mundane, but the transcendental plane can be revealed anywhere and everywhere within this material world. That’s what makes the transcendental plane transcendent. For example, when a flower falls from a tree we do not care so much for that flower. It may have fallen on the road, and we may smash it as we walk by without caring. But when a flower is offered to the lotus feet of the Deity, or offered to a respectable Vaiṣṇava or Gurudev, then we no longer ignore or disrespect that flower. We take it on our head and give

Attachment to Śrī Guru’s feet is the best path. By his mercy all desires are fulfilled. He who gave me the gift of eyes, who revealed divine knowledge in my heart, is my lord birth after birth. (Pbc: 1.2–3)

it proper honour. Why? Not because we see anything different about the flower but because our knowledge tells us that it has been offered to the Lord, and whenever anything is offered to the Lord it takes on a transcendental form. This is transcendental vision. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura said,

**ye-dina gṛhe, bhajana dekhi,
gṛhete goloka bhāya**

(Śaraṇāgati: 31.6)

“When I see my whole family satisfying the Lord through their activities; when I see their practices like chanting the Holy Name, worshipping the Deity, and offering foods to the Deity; when I see all of the activity in my family is God-centric, then I feel: ‘My family is not mundane and does not live in a mundane environment: it actually has a transcendental form.’”



This sort of transcendental knowledge comes to us through Gurudev, and if we carefully try to observe the environment with that knowledge, then we will be able to see everything transcendently. If we are a proper practitioner then transcendental feelings must come into our heart. When transcendental knowledge reveals itself in our heart, our vision of the environment automatically changes and we see that what appears to be mundane can actually expand into something spiritual. Our children become spiritual children, and the flowers in our garden become spiritual flowers; everything and everyone we see becomes transcendental when we see them related with the Lord.

Through transcendental vision we will see that Kṛṣṇa lives in the heart of everyone. We will see that He lives not only within the hearts of humans but within the hearts of all species, all 8,400,000 species in this world. Through our transcendental knowledge our vision changes. Then, whenever we meet anyone, we first courteously say, “Namaskār Sir”. We offer honour in this way to everyone. And who are we honouring? We see that the Lord lives inside everyone’s heart, so we are honouring the Lord: we offer our respect to Him and to the person in whose heart He resides. This type of transcendental knowledge and the mood it brings to our heart of giving honour to others is actually natural for everyone, even though we so often forget it.

I have seen it in many Western countries also. Today when we let someone pass before us they happily said, “Thank you. Happy Christmas.” The person’s heart was melted by our activity, and she expressed her happiness through her blessing. If it was only mundane courtesy that is also very good. When that courtesy will have transcendental feelings behind it, when that courtesy comes from the vision that, “The Lord is living everywhere, and the Lord’s mercy is spread everywhere”, then it will create even more happiness for her, for us, and for everyone.

Anyone who can see the environment in this way must have transcendental knowledge, and that type of transcendental

knowledge is revealed in our heart through Gurudev. Gurudev is not a man actually. He shows himself in that way, but as an instrument of the Lord, he has a transcendental form.

True love

Gurudev distributes the full love, beauty, charm, and ecstasy that is existing within Kṛṣṇa.

prema-bhakti yāhā haite, avidyā vināśa yāte,
vede gāya yāhāra charita

(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.3)

*Śrī Guru gives pure devotion
and destroys ignorance.
The Vedas sing of his character.*

Kṛṣṇa is very near and dear to us as the enjoyer of the universe. Kṛṣṇa happily enjoys everything we offer to Him, and He also Himself tries to satisfy us: He takes service from us and gives us more and more loving inspiration to continue serving Him. As our loving inspiration increases we feel more and more attachment, love, and ecstasy for Him. This comes to us through service. So our service, our love for Him, our satisfaction, and His satisfaction all continuously increase. This is called prema-bhakti, ecstatic loving devotion.

In the mundane world people use the word *love* very freely for many different purposes, but *love* really means ‘satisfying our beloved’. Full attachment, with affection and the mood of trying to satisfy, is the real meaning of *love*.

We see in this mundane world that some people are very happy to feed others. If guests come to their home, with or without an invitation, they cook with great satisfaction, and give affectionate nourishment and enjoyable food to their guests. When they are feeding their guests they actually feel more satisfaction than their guests because of their mood of service and giving. That is the sparking light of transcendental love and affection, which will take full form when we use it to satisfy our divine Lord. When love for our Lord comes into our hearts in a very overflowed way and increases continuously it is called Kṛṣṇa-prema.

Destroyer of illusion

prema-bhakti yāhā haite, avidyā vināśa yāte,
vede gāya yāhāra charita

When Kṛṣṇa-prema reveals itself in our heart, automatically our mundane knowledge, all mundanity actually, disappears, just as darkness disappears from a room when a bulb is lit. *Avidyā vināśa yāte*: automatically all of our mundane feelings disappear when Kṛṣṇa-prema is revealed in our heart. *Vede gāya yāhāra charita*: everywhere all the scriptures—the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, and so on—glorify Gurudev as the giver of that type of transcendental knowledge.

(Having become indifferent to the material world), one in search of the ultimate good should surrender to a Guru who is equipoised and adept in both the scriptures and the divine.

tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare cha niṣṇātām brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.3.21)

All the scriptures advise us: “A teacher is necessary. Without a teacher you cannot understand anything. When the proper teacher comes in front of you, you must surrender to him and honour him. *Guru* means a bearer and messenger of transcendental knowledge. Guru can be and must be honoured as your Lord Himself. This is because a genuine Guru is established with full knowledge on the spiritual platform and directly represents the Lord.”

tatra bhāgavatān dharmān
śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ
amāyānuvṛtṭyā yais
tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ
(SB: 11.3.22)

“Considering Śrī Guru to be one’s beloved Lord, one should sincerely and submissively learn from him Bhāgavat-dharma: that by which Śrī Hari, He who gives Himself (to His devotee), is satisfied.”

By ‘knowledge’ we do not mean knowledge gathered from books and scriptures. That type of knowledge is not sufficient. A genuine Guru has feelings in his heart that have been revealed by his Guru which come from the Lord Himself. A genuine Guru who has such real revealed knowledge in his heart can preach, and his students learn the proper thing.

gu-śabdāḥ tv andhakārasya ru-śabdāḥ tan-nivāraṇaḥ
andhakāra-nirodhitvād gurur ity abhidhīyate

(Skanda-purāṇa)

“*Guru* means ‘gu’-‘ru’: one who can destroy, *ru*, the darkness of ignorance, *gu*, which is present in the mundane world and in

our hearts, by giving us knowledge that has descended from the spiritual world.”

om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
chakṣur unmilitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

We pray to Gurudev with this praṇām mantram every day. *Ajñāna* means illusion, the illusory environment that covers our whole existence. Under the influence of illusion we think we are our body and become attached to our house and so many temporary things. Everything material is really a passing show, but in illusion we think it will remain with us forever. Gurudev removes the darkness of this mundane illusion by opening our transcendental eyes and giving us transcendental vision—transcendental knowledge.

Gurus: genuine and generic

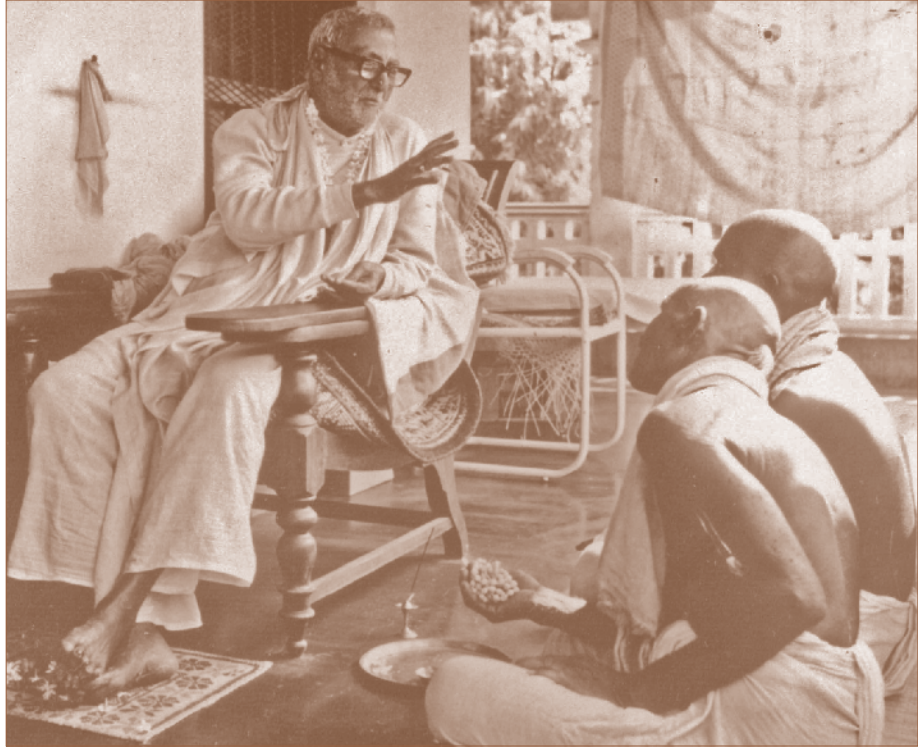
It is necessary for a Guru to be genuine. Not everyone has that quality or qualification. Now in this world everyone can see that there are many self-made gurus, bogus gurus, and so on. I do not know who is bogus and who is not. It is not my business to criticise others, and I do not know who everyone is. I can only comment about the general character of a guru. The scriptures say:

guravo bahavaḥ santi śiṣya-vittāpahārakāḥ
durlabho sad-gurur devi śiṣya-santāpa-hāraḥ

(*Purāṇa-vākya*)

“There will always be many gurus who can expertly give their followers some mundane nourishment, take their wealth, and then leave them. But a real Guru destroys the dark mundane feelings of ignorance within everyone and makes everyone’s hearts temples of the Lord. A true Guru who has this capacity, and who never tries to do anything other than this, is very rare in the mundane world.” This is the character and activity of a genuine Guru, and that is the type of Guru glorified in the scriptures.

*I offer my obeisance unto Śrī Guru,
who opened my eyes, which
were blinded by the darkness
of ignorance, with the
salve of divine knowledge.*



Once we saw a very poor man come to take initiation from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. He apologised: “O Mahārāj, I have no money. I can only give you a donation of a few rupees.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said, “What are you thinking? I do not want any money from you. It is only a courtesy that you give some money. If you do not have much money and cannot contribute enough money to equal the value of Hari-nām mālā [chanting beads] I am giving you, I still must give them to you if you are a sincere seeker. Don’t worry about that. What I need is your faith, sincerity, and chastity. You must promise me that you will serve Kṛṣṇa and through your mood of service try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. I want you to make this promise in front of me, and that is all I want from you.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained everything to the poor man in this way. That is the real mood of distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the real behaviour of a genuine Guru.

Saviour of the fallen

We are conditioned souls, and when we think about our conditioned position we may think we are hopeless. But we can pray to Gurudev, “You have full power and you are kind to the fallen souls. Please give your merciful attention to me and make me a good servitor of yourself, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.”

śrī-guru karuṇā-sindhu, adhama janāra bandhu,
(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.4)

*Śrī Guru is an ocean of mercy
and the friend of the fallen.*

Gurudev is very merciful to the conditioned souls, and his attention specially goes to those who are most fallen. Gurudev is like an affectionate father. If a father has five sons but one of his sons feels some deficiency because he is unqualified or unhappy, then the father gives special attention and nourishment to that son so that he may be promoted.

Connection with transcendence

Finally Śrīla Narottam Ṭhākura mentions his Gurudev’s name,

lokanātha lokera jīvana
(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.4)

“Lokanāth Prabhu is my Gurudev. He is my life and soul, my everything, and these are the glories of his mercy.”

hā hā prabhu kara dayā, deha more pada-chhāyā,
tuyā pade laila śaraṇa
(Śrī Prema-bhakti-chandrikā: 1.4)

Then Narottam Ṭhākura prays, “O Gurudev, I want your full attention. Please be merciful to me. Again and again I am taking shelter at your lotus feet. I do not know if I am properly surrendering to you, but please give your full attention to me. Only through your divine grace will I be connected with Lord Kṛṣṇa, receive transcendental knowledge, and be engaged in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s service. Please be merciful to me.”



*Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh's logo,
designed personally by
Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.*

True shelter

On the logo of our Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh you can see the sun, some water, and a lotus. These are symbolic. The lotus represents the jīva-soul, the servitor of Kṛṣṇa; the sun represents Kṛṣṇa; and the water represents Gurudev. When a lotus lives in the protection of water, it blooms and the sun's rays give life to the lotus, but when a lotus is taken out of water and kept in a dry place, the sun burns it. The logo of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh means that when we live under the protection of Gurudev, Kṛṣṇa will always be merciful to us, but that without the shelter of Gurudev we have no hope.

harau ruṣṭe gurus-trātā gurau ruṣṭe na kaśchana

(Āditya-purāṇa)

If Kṛṣṇa becomes angry with us, our Gurudev can save us from Kṛṣṇa's anger; he can give us some nourishment and life. But if our Gurudev becomes angry with us, nothing can save us, not even Kṛṣṇa can help us. Gurudev's mercy is even more beneficial and essential than Kṛṣṇa's mercy. This is the essential point. Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur said,

**yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi
dhyāyam stuvamś tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam
vande guroḥ śrī-charaṇāravindam**

(Śrī Gurvaṣṭakam: 8)

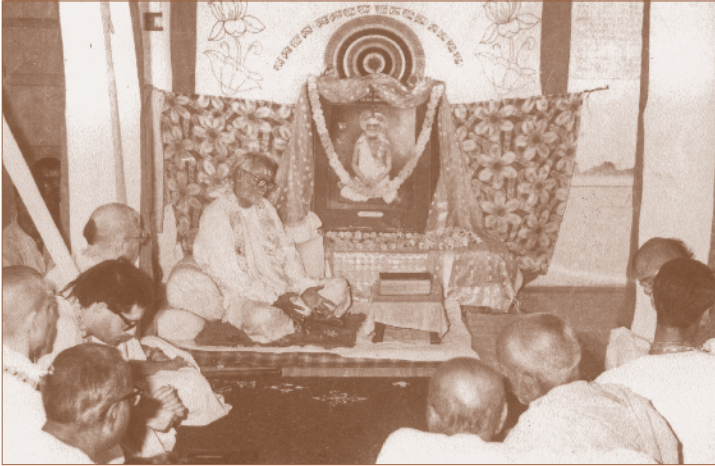
We must consider that Kṛṣṇa's mercy appears to us in the form of our Gurudev's mercy. This means that when our Gurudev is happy with us Kṛṣṇa must also be happy with us, and when Kṛṣṇa is happy with us our Gurudev will be happy with us. This is our Gurudev's position, and in this way we will always see that all auspicious and beneficial wealth comes to us through Gurudev. Gurudev is our true shelter.

*I offer my obeisance unto
the lotus feet of Śrī Guru, praising
and meditating upon His glory at
the three junctions of the day. By
his grace, one gains the
Lord's grace. Without his grace,
one has no shelter anywhere.*

The supreme servitor

Guru-paramparā, the preceptorial lineage of Gurus, is like a telescopic system. Within a telescope there are many lenses, and when they are properly adjusted one by one we can see through them things we do not have the power to see with our own vision. The Gurus in our paramparā are like lenses in a telescope. There is power within each of the lenses which deepens our vision and shows us how to satisfy Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In the line of the Śrī Rūpānuga sampradāya, our vision and devotion is going up through our Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, and Prabhupād Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, to Śrī



Rūpa Mañjarī and from there to Rādhārāṇī. Śrīla Prabhupād Saraswatī Ṭhākura taught that we will think of our Gurudev at the highest level as Rādhārāṇī Herself; we will think that our Gurudev is a nondifferent form of Rādhārāṇī. Gurudev has different forms. Sometimes we will see that Gurudev is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, but more exclusively we see that he is the supreme servitor of Kṛṣṇa—Rādhārāṇī.

“I got everything!”



Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī,
the prayojan-tattova Āchārya
of the Rūpānuga sampradāya.

Gurudev’s full mercy and gift, which he bestows through his different forms, has been described by Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī in his super praṇām mantram, which we always use to pray to our Gurudev:

nāma-śreṣṭham manum api śachī-putram atra svarūpaṁ
rūpaṁ tasyāgrajam uru-purīm māthurīm goṣṭhavāṭim
rādhā-kuṇḍaṁ giri-varam aho rādhikā-mādhavāsām
prāpto yasya prathita-kṛpayā śrī-gurum taṁ nato ’smi

(Śrī Mukta-charitam: 2)

Nāma-śreṣṭham: Dās Goswāmī expresses that Gurudev mercifully gave him the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra, the supreme mantram within the mundane and transcendental worlds. The mahāmantra can rescue anyone from any position. It can rescue everyone within all the universes. *Hare Kṛṣṇa* actually means Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Gracefully Gurudev gives us the chance to call Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa into our heart and pray that They will mercifully appear there.

Manum api Śachī-putram: by the causeless mercy of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, who is the nondifferent form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra came down to the mundane world. Dās Goswāmī also received the mercy of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu through Gurudev.

Atra Svarūpam: then Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī says that not only has he received the mercy of Mahāprabhu and the Holy Name, but that Mahāprabhu has mercifully handed him to His dearest associate and nondifferent form, Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar. Dās Goswāmī expresses here that he has also received Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar’s mercy through Gurudev.

Rūpaṁ tasyāgrajam: then by the grace of Gurudev, Dās Goswāmī received the mercy and association of Mahāprabhu’s dearest disciples, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī.

Uru-purīm Māthurīm goṣṭhavāṭīm: then by the mercy of Gurudev, Dās Goswāmī was given entrance into Mathurā–Vṛndāvan Dhām, where Kṛṣṇa is always engaged in His Pastimes with the gopas and gopīs.

Rādhā-kuṇḍam: by the mercy of Gurudev, Dās Goswāmī was given shelter at Rādhā Kuṇḍa, where the supreme opportunity for service to Rādhā-Govinda exists.

Giri-varam: by the mercy of Gurudev, Dās Goswāmī received from Mahāprabhu a Govardhan-sīlā, a nondifferent form of Kṛṣṇa, to worship, as well as shelter at the lotus feet of Govardhan Hill near Rādhā Kuṇḍa in Vṛndāvan Dhām.

Aho Rādhikā-Mādhavāsām: and by the mercy of Gurudev, Dās Goswāmī received all hope for the service of Rādhā-Mādhava. This means Rādhārāṇī Herself in the form of Gurudev gave mercy to Dās Goswāmī, because without the special mercy of Rādhārāṇī no one can enter where the Divine Couple are playing.

Prāpto yasya prathita-kṛpayā: lastly in his praṇām mantram to Gurudev Dās Goswāmī says that he has been given *everything* by Gurudev. *Śrī Gururū Tam nato 'smi:* so he bows down to Gurudev's lotus feet in full surrender.

Dās Goswāmī expressed his heart through this verse. Dās Goswāmī is very humble, but he is clearly confessing in his prayer, “I have received this, this, this, this, and everything, by the grace of Gurudev. I have received the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī, Mahāprabhu, Their associates, Their abode—everything.”

“When will I receive your mercy?”

Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī was a very dear associate of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, and he was also very dear to all the devotees of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar, who was a nondifferent form of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, was his personal guardian. So Dās Goswāmī had no deficiency;

vaikuṅṭhāj janito varā madhu-purī
tatrāpi rāsotsavād
vṛndāraṇyam udāra-pāṇi-ramaṇāt
tatrāpi govardhanaḥ
rādhā-kuṇḍam ihāpi gokula-pateḥ
premāmṛtāplāvanāt
kuryād asya virājato giri-taṭe
sevām vivekī na kaḥ
(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta: 9)

“Above Vaikuṅṭha is Mathurā, where Kṛṣṇa took birth. Above Mathurā is Vṛndāvan, where Kṛṣṇa enjoys the rāsa festival. Above Vṛndāvan is Govardhan, where Kṛṣṇa plays amorously. Above Govardhan is Rādhā Kuṇḍa, where the nectar of love overflows. What wise soul would not serve Rādhā Kuṇḍa beside Govardhan Hill?”

he was unlimitedly fortunate by the grace of Gurudev. But after living with Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar, Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī came to Vṛndāvan to stay with Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu.

Dās Goswāmī thought he would leave his body after the disappearance of his Lord, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, and his master, Svarūp Dāmodar. But when he found Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī in Vṛndāvan, he got new life. While living in Vṛndāvan, Dās Goswāmī followed many very extreme practising processes in his devotional life. Living under the shelter of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu, he would pray to Rādhārāṇī as his Gurudev in a very exclusive way, in a mood of *iṣṭa-lābha vine*, unfulfilled desire.

āśā-bharair amṛta-sindhu-mayaiḥ kathañchit
kālo mayāti-gamitaḥ kila sāmpratam hi
tvañ chet kṛpām mayi vidhāsyasi naiva kiṁ me
prāṇair vrajena cha varoru bakāriṇāpi

(*Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*: 102)

“O Rādhārāṇī, I worship the Kṛṣṇa who lives with You, plays with You, is joyful with You, and tastes ecstasy with You. I worship that Kṛṣṇa, Your Kṛṣṇa. You are the nectarean ocean of Kṛṣṇa-līlā, and for that I have so much hope. I want to taste a little bit of that nectar, and with great hope I have passed such a long time here in Rādhā Kuṇḍa, praying for Your mercy and hoping I will receive Your connection. You are my Mistress, and I have been waiting on the bank of Your kuṇḍa, Rādhā Kuṇḍa, for such a long time, hoping that You will bestow Your mercy upon me. I have spent so long waiting, and now I am going to die. I have passed eighty years here in Vṛndāvan, and I am living only to receive Your mercy.

“O Rādhārāṇī! Please bestow Your mercy upon me. I need Your mercy, and my only hope is that one day You will bestow it upon me. I have passed year after year not receiving Your mercy, but still I am hopeful I will receive it one day. I am living only

for that, and that is my only desire. I will leave my body soon but I pray, ‘O Rādhārāṇī, please bestow Your mercy upon me.’

“When will You be merciful to me? O Rādhārāṇī! Without Your mercy I do not want Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. I do not want to meet or serve Kṛṣṇa without You. Only when Kṛṣṇa is with You is Kṛṣṇa so glorious to me. Without Your mercy Kṛṣṇa’s mercy is useless to me. I only want to serve You and see that my service goes to Kṛṣṇa through You. That is my desire. Kṛṣṇa is not a factor for me; You are my life and goal. Your service is my only desire and expectation, nothing else. I have passed eighty years praying for Your service and still I am keeping my hope that I will receive Your mercy.

“If I do not receive Your mercy then I consider Kṛṣṇa’s mercy useless and undesirable. I do not want Kṛṣṇa to bestow His mercy upon me in an independent way. What will I do with Him? I do not want anything directly from Kṛṣṇa. Your lotus feet are my only shelter. I only want Your service.”

rādhā-saṅge yadā bhāti tadā ‘madana-mohanaḥ’
anyathā viśva-moho ‘pi svayaṁ ‘madana-mohitaḥ’

(Śrī Govinda-līlāmṛta: 13.32)

“O Rādhārāṇī, when Kṛṣṇa lives with You, He is fully satisfied and His mood is greatly merciful. When Kṛṣṇa lives with You, He is Madan Mohan: He is liberated from any attraction by Cupid, and Cupid is stunned to see Kṛṣṇa’s beauty. But Kṛṣṇa’s beauty and attractive power come only from You. Without You, Kṛṣṇa’s beauty cannot attract His exclusive devotees. And more than that, without You, Kṛṣṇa Himself is attracted by Cupid.”

“O my Goddess, if You do not accept me, if You are not merciful to me, then what will Kṛṣṇa be for me? His position will not be Madan Mohan: He will be like Bakāri, the killer of Pūtanā and other demons. What will I do with Kṛṣṇa in His form of a demon-killer? I want to exclusively worship the Kṛṣṇa who is holding hands with You, and I want only to worship Him through You. So I need Your mercy. Without Your mercy

everything is useless to me. When will You bestow Your mercy upon me, O Rādhārāṇī? Your mercy is my only hope.”

Devastated by love

In this attentive and exclusive mood of devotion Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī prayed to Rādhārāṇī, trying to draw Her grace to him. In this prayer Dās Goswāmī expresses our highest vision of Gurudev.

Dās Goswāmī lived on the banks of Rādhā Kuṇḍa for some time with this mood of extreme hope and hankering. But when Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu disappeared, Dās Goswāmī became deeply disturbed and felt he could not tolerate the environment of Vṛndāvan.

śūnyāyate mahā-goṣṭham girīndro 'jagarāyate
vyāghra-tuṅḍāyate kuṇḍam jīvātu-rahitasya me

(Śrī Prārthanāśraya-chaturdaśaka: 11)

Dās Goswāmī felt, “My life has left my body. Now Rādhā Kuṇḍa is not the joyful place of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. *Vyāghra-tuṅḍāyate kuṇḍam*: I now see Rādhā Kuṇḍa as the open mouth of a tiger coming to eat me. *Girīndro 'jagarāyate*: I now see Girirāj Govardhan like a python coming to attack me. *Śūnyāyate mahā-goṣṭham*: now the whole of Vraja Bhūmi, where the cows, gopas, and gopīs play, appears void and empty to me. I do not see anyone, and everything seems to have been demolished. Everything appears to me in this way because I have lost my heart, my jīvātu [my very life], Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu.”

Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī expressed his feelings of hope to receive the mercy of Rādhārāṇī and his feelings of separation from his Gurudev Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī through his verses *āśā-bharair amṛta-sindhu-mayaiḥ kathañchit* and *śūnyāyate mahā-goṣṭham*. Dās Goswāmī was an exclusive follower in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and Rādhārāṇī, and in this way his feelings went from deep to deeper. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj used the philosophical phrase, “Dive deep into Reality”. It is necessary

for us to touch that reality, at least from a distance. Then we can understand everything. All of it comes through *Guru-śuśrūṣayā* (SB: 10.80.34), the service of Gurudev. All property will gradually come to us in that way. That is our line, our process, our method.

Infinite mercy

Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī is in one way saying, “I have been given everything by my Gurudev.” He openly said this in his beautiful verse *Nāma-śreṣṭhān manum api Śachī-putram atra Svarūpam*. But he also expressed his extreme hankering and hope to attain more mercy from Gurudev, that is, Rādhārāṇī and Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī. This is the nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. These two types of feelings are always present in the devotees’ hearts. In one way they are saying, “I have been given everything”, and in another way they are saying, “I have nothing; I am in need.”

If anyone receives mercy from Gurudev, they will never feel it to be insufficient. Yet, they will also feel that Gurudev’s mercy is unlimitedly attractive and infinite. So the more they taste it, the more they will desire to taste more of it. Because their hankering becomes greater and greater in that way, they feel, “I am empty. I have not received anything.” The feeling of the devotee is, “*Tad dūre tad v antike* (Īu: 5): it is so far, and it is so near.”

By hope we feel we are so near to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, but by action we may feel we live so far from Their abode and Pastimes. The harmonising conclusion about this situation has been given by Śrī Chaitanyadev: *achintya-bhedābheda*. Inconceivably, both moods are present in the hearts of the devotees: “It is so near to us, and in another way it is so far.”

Through the extreme example of Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī we can understand that if we open the door of our hearts to Gurudev, we will find his mercy is waiting for us right behind the door. If only we open our hearts, Gurudev’s mercy will enter us. We will discover our fortune and find that our

nāham ijjā-prajātibhyām
tapasopaśamena vā
tuṣyeyam sarva-bhūtātmā
guru-śuśrūṣayā yathā
(SB: 10.80.34)

[Kṛṣṇa:] “I, the Soul of all beings, am not satisfied by fire sacrifices, raising children, austerities, or self-control (by adherence to the duties of a brahmachāri, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha, or sannyāsi) as much as I am by service to Śrī Guru.”

ādadānas tṛṇaṁ dantair
idaṁ yāche punaḥ punaḥ
śrīmad rūpa-padāmbhoja-
dhūliḥ syāṁ janma-janmani
(Śrīla Dās Goswāmī)

“Taking a blade of grass
between my teeth, I pray
again and again, “May I be a
particle of dust at Śrī Rūpa’s
lotus feet birth after birth.”

Guru-paramparā, beginning with Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu, has a spoonful of nectar ready for us. When we receive that, we will feel unable to ever fully glorify Gurudev. We will feel his infinite mercy.

SECTION TWO

*The
Supreme
Personality
of Godhead*

Daśa-mūla-tattva

Truths Two, Three, and Four

harim iha paramaṁ sarva-śaktiṁ rasābdhiṁ

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supreme.

He is the possessor of all potencies.

He is the ocean of all divine ecstasy.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Supreme Controller

Question (in a public gathering): I have heard that Swami Ramakrishna taught that people should first worship demigods like Mother Kālī and then worship Lord Kṛṣṇa. Is worshipping Kṛṣṇa and worshipping other demigods the same thing? Is there a difference between worshipping different Deities or forms of the Lord?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Your questions are simple and their answers are also simple. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* it is said,

yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām

(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 9.25)

“Those who worship the devatās, demigods, go to the domain of the demigods. Those who worship the pitṛs, forefathers, go to the place of the forefathers. Those who worship the bhūtas, ghosts, go to the plane of the ghosts. And those who worship Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, go to Kṛṣṇaloka, the transcendental abode of Kṛṣṇa.”

This is the advice of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. Ramakrishna told people that all of these forms of worship and all of these

destinations are the same. This is not true, and they are not the same. All diseases are not the same; all happiness is not the same; all sadness is not the same; each of our fingers are not the same; all people are not the same. No two things are exactly the same. How can all forms of worship and all destinations be the same? They are never the same.

The teaching of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is that you have free choice and you decide what you want. You choose your destination. You have to properly realise what your needs are and then proceed in the appropriate direction. By worshipping demigods you can attain *kanak*, *kāminī*, and *pratiṣṭhā*: temporary wealth, enjoyment, and fame in this world. These are not the essential needs of our hearts. To always be searching in one direction or another in pursuit of material desires is not good, and it will not give anyone a fulfilling result. If you are willing to satisfy anyone, regardless of who they are, to fulfil your material desires, then your nature is like that of a prostitute. But if your mood is that you want to satisfy your Lord exclusively, then your nature is like that of a chaste servitor. The question about whether worshipping the Lord and the demigods is the same is actually a matter of chastity and prostitution.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam has advised us that by pleasing our Master we will automatically please everyone and attain everything we need.

yathā taror mūla-niṣechanena
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ
prāṇopahārāch cha yathendriyāṇām
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam achyutejyā

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 4.31.14)

“If you pour water on the root of a tree, the whole tree is nourished. If you offer your devotion and service to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all demigods, all goddesses, and the whole world are satisfied. You can fulfil all your duties and desires by worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is what is truly necessary for everyone.”

Relative destiny

When I was young I used to go out every day collecting money for the service of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. During this time I was living with Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj at Sitakanta Banerjee Lane in Kolkata. He was working on his translation of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* then, and every day he would teach me something from *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, or give me some advice, and then I would go out. I would tell the people I met the things I heard from Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj. Some days I would get a very good response and come home in a dancing mood. But some days I would not collect anything. And on some days people would even try to beat me. During that time I met many devotees of Mother Kālī and would often end up debating with them. The worshippers of Mother Kālī pray to her for selfish purposes: “O Mother Kālī, *dhanam dehi janam dehi rūpam dehi yaśo dehi*, and so on: give me wealth, give me manpower, give me beauty, give me fame, and so on. *Dehi dehi dehi*, give me, give me, give me....”

Mother Kālī is actually a param Vaiṣṇavī, a perfect chaste servitor of her Master, the Lord. And she can also give Viṣṇu-bhakti to the conditioned souls. But the conditioned souls are foolish and cannot understand what is good for them. They do not understand that they must die someday and will be forced to leave everything they may gain in their life through their worship. Pursuing material desires, even through worship, is never in the actual interest of anyone.

One day I told some of the devotees of Mother Kālī who wanted to debate with me, “Vivekānanda is a guṇḍā [dacoit] and Ramakrishna is a mūrkhā pūjārī [ignorant priest].” They became very angry with me and tried to beat me. Many of Mother Kālī’s devotees especially would always want to fight with me.

After this I asked Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj, “What should I say to worshippers of Mother Kālī?”

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj’s preaching style was always very hard, and he told me jokingly, “Ask them why they are worshipping Mother Kālī. If they are faithful devotees of Mother Kālī what



Mother Kālī

will they ultimately attain? Tell them they should know that if they worship Mother Kālī, they will go to Mother Kālī's domain. That will be their destiny. What Mother Kālī eats, they will eat. What Mother Kālī does, they will do. Where Mother Kālī lives, they will live. Their final destiny will be to become an associate of Mother Kālī.

“So you should ask them, ‘Where does Mother Kālī live? Mother Kālī lives in a cremation ground. Who are Mother Kālī's associates? *Dākinīs* and *yogīnīs*, that is, many varieties of witches and ghosts. What does Mother Kālī eat in her domain? The meat and blood of her dead sons. What is Mother Kālī's mood? Mother Kālī has no shyness; she stands naked showing her tongue to her sons. She attracts her sons to come to her and then she takes their heads, cuts their necks, and puts their skulls on her garland. Have you seen the garland of the skulls of the demons she kills around her neck? This is Mother Kālī's nature, and if you worship her you will go to her abode, *Kāliloka*. *Ye yathā Mām prapadyante tāms tathaiva bhajāmy Aham* (*Bg*: 4.11). If you feel you need to go to Mother Kālī's abode you can go there to stay with her, and lastly she will cut off your head and add it to her garland. If this is your desire then we have no objection.”

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj joked in this way. Then he said, “But just see our *Kṛṣṇa*! *Kṛṣṇa* lives in *Vṛndāvan Dhām*. There *Kṛṣṇa* has so many girlfriends and so much butter, ghee, cheese, milk, *sandēs*, *rasagullas*, fruits, sweets, *luchis*, *purīs*, *laḍḍus*, *kachorīs*, and so on. We can eat all of these things there with Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. There the forests and gardens are beautifully decorated and so many cows can be found everywhere. We will be associates of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* and play with Him and the cowherd boys near the *Yamunā River*. *Kṛṣṇa* is so beautiful: He attracts everyone with the beauty of His divine form.

“You can do as you like. You have free choice: the meat and witches of Mother Kālī or the sweetness of *Kṛṣṇa*. You decide for yourself.” In this way Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj jokingly

explained to me what I could say to the devotees of Mother Kālī and gave me very good nourishment.

The Lord's supreme power

It is necessary to understand the positions of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the demigods. There is a story in the Upaniṣads which clearly explains the supreme position of the Lord as the master of the demigods.

Once the demigods were very proud of their universal powers and they thought, "We do everything." The Lord was aware of this and wanted to give them some proper consciousness. He took the form of an old man and appeared before the demigods. He first asked Agnidev, "Who are you, sir? Where are you going?"

Agnidev said, "I am Agnidev, the master of fire."

The Lord asked him, "What can you do?"

Agnidev said, "I can burn whole universes."

Then the Lord tested him, "If you have such power, can you please show it to me by burning this grass here before us?"

Agnidev tried with his full energy but, by the Lord's will, he was unable to burn the grass. Finally he left.

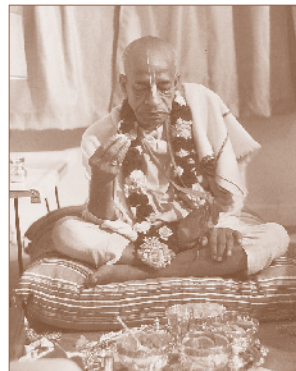
Then Vāyu came along and the Lord asked him, "What is your power? What can you do?"

Vāyu said, "I can blow anything and everything away with my power."

The Lord asked him, "Can you move this grass here before us?" He tried but, by the will of the Lord, he was unable to move the grass.

In this way many demigods came before the Lord but were unable to demonstrate their power.

Finally Devarāj Indra, the king of all the demigods, heard about what was happening and himself came to see the old man. The Lord then disappeared and sent Mahāmāyā to appear before Indra.



*Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta
Swāmī Prabhupād honouring
Kṛṣṇa-prasād.*

Indra asked her, “Who was that old man?”

Mahāmāyā said, “You demigods think you have so much power and can do anything, but without the power of the Supreme Personality of Godhead you cannot do anything. He is that Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

When Mahāmāyā revealed the identity of the old man to Indra, he and all the demigods understood their actual position and from far away they all bowed down to the Lord.

The pride of Lord Indra

Devarāj Indra was often very proud. This is natural. “The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power”—these things can easily make anyone proud. Once, Kṛṣṇa wanted to control Indra’s mentality and demolish his pride. Kṛṣṇa wanted to do this because He liked Indra. He didn’t want to punish Indra but rather give him proper knowledge. When the time came for the yearly worship of Indra, Kṛṣṇa inspired Nanda Mahārāj and the Vraja-vāsīs, “Why are you worshipping Indra? It is really Girirāj Govardhan who provides us with our food. Girirāj Govardhan gives us everything we need the whole year round. We are all living together happily at the feet of Girirāj Govardhan. We should offer pūjā to Girirāj Govardhan. Why should we worship Indra?”

Kṛṣṇa spoke to the Vraja-vāsīs in a very gentle and sober way, and they believed Him. Already Kṛṣṇa had performed so many miracles in Vṛndāvan and all the Vraja-vāsīs knew that Kṛṣṇa was not an ordinary boy, they knew He had extraordinary power. They were also proud of Kṛṣṇa’s power and felt that whatever Kṛṣṇa told them must be truthful. So they followed His advice. Even though Kṛṣṇa was only a seven-year-old boy at the time, all the Vraja-vāsīs chose to follow Him. It was no problem for them. The Vraja-vāsīs said, “We will follow Your advice.”

Then the Vraja-vāsīs left aside the worship of Indra, made a big festival, and began worshipping Girirāj Govardhan. Kṛṣṇa participated in the festival with the Vraja-vāsīs but also showed

them that when they offered everything to Girirāj Govardhan, Girirāj Govardhan accepted their offerings. Kṛṣṇa took the form of Govardhan under His control and showed everyone that Govardhan was eating all of their offerings. In this way all the Vraja-vāsīs were very much obliged and happily offered everything to Girirāj Govardhan.

When Indra heard of the big festival the Vraja-vāsīs held for Girirāj Govardhan, he could not tolerate being left aside and became very angry. He decided to demolish Vraja Dhām. He ordered all his subordinates, Chandra, Vāyu, Varuṇ, and so on to assist him and sent everything he had—his weapons, powerful clouds, and thunderbolts—to demolish Vraja Dhām. For seven days his clouds and thunderbolts struck down upon Vraja Dhām. The Vraja-vāsīs became very disturbed. They came to Kṛṣṇa and prayed, “What shall we do, Kṛṣṇa? We are suffering a very bad reaction because we did not worship Devarāj Indra. You are our shelter. Give us Your protection.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “No problem. Girirāj Govardhan is very merciful. He accepted your offerings, your honour, your everything, so Girirāj Govardhan must save you. By accepting your offerings He has given you assurance He will provide for you. Pray to Girirāj Govardhan and He will save you. I will also pray to Govardhan.”

Then Kṛṣṇa said to Girirāj Govardhan, “O Govardhan, please save them. I am taking You...” Kṛṣṇa picked up Girirāj Govardhan with the small finger of His left hand just as a small child picks up a mushroom (*utpāṭyaika-kareṇa śailam abalo līlochchilīndhram yathā*).

Kṛṣṇa told all the Vraja-vāsīs, “Come beneath Girirāj Govardhan.” The Vraja-vāsīs entered beneath Govardhan Hill with all of their wealth, cows, and the various living entities of Vraja Dhām.

Indra tried to punish the Vraja-vāsīs for seven days. He sent many clouds and completely flooded Vraja Dhām. After this, Indra thought all the Vraja-vāsīs had been driven out of



Śrī Gopāl, the Deity of Kṛṣṇa lifting Govardhan Hill who was established by Kṛṣṇa's grandson Vajranabha and later unearthed by Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī.

Vraja Dhām by the flood and died somewhere. When he finally stopped the storms, Kṛṣṇa told the Vraja-vāsīs, “Now you can go outside. The sky is clear and everything is over.”

When Indra saw the Vraja-vāsīs, their cows, and all the living entities of Vraja Dhām come out from beneath Girirāj Govardhan, he was surprised and understood who Kṛṣṇa really was. Indra understood that Kṛṣṇa was not an ordinary boy but the Lord Himself, who had come to perform His divine Pastimes in this world. Indra also understood that he had made a great offence to Kṛṣṇa. Indra came before Kṛṣṇa, paid his daṇḍavat praṇām, and surrendered. He apologised and praised Kṛṣṇa so much, “O Lord, I am foolish. I could not understand Your glories or Your divine Pastimes. Please forgive my offences. Please be merciful to me.”

Kṛṣṇa smiled and said, “It is okay. It is no problem. I forgive your offences.”

Indra said, “I want to worship You with Surabhi’s milk. Surabhi has the power to give unlimited amounts of milk, and I want to perform an abhiṣek for You with her milk.”

Then Indra performed an abhiṣek pūjā for Kṛṣṇa with Surabhi’s milk and said, “You are so merciful to the cows, and to the whole world, so from today on we will worship You with the name ‘Govinda’. He who gives joy to the hearts of the cows, calves, and cowherd boys must be known as ‘Govinda’.” In this way Indra gave Kṛṣṇa the name Govinda and Kṛṣṇa forgave Indra’s offences.

The bewilderment of Lord Brahmā

It is Kṛṣṇa’s nature to be merciful. Kṛṣṇa also forgave Lord Brahmā many times. Once Brahmā stole a group of cows and cowherd boys from the banks of the Yamunā in Vṛndāvan and hid them in a cave. Later Brahmā noticed that Vṛndāvan was still full of cows and cowherd boys. Brahmā went to check on the cows and cowherd boys he hid in the cave and saw that they were still there. Then again he saw in Vṛndāvan all the same



In Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām, Girirāj Govardhan’s Temple sits above Śrī Govinda Kuṇḍa, the lake that formed when Indra bathed Kṛṣṇa with Surabhi’s milk.

cows and cowherd boys playing with Kṛṣṇa near the Yamunā. He was surprised, “I stole these cows and cowherd boys. I just saw them all within the cave where I hid them, but here in Vṛndāvan everything is intact and they are still playing with Kṛṣṇa near the Yamunā. What is this?” Brahmā was puzzled and finally surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. He folded his hands, offered prayers to Kṛṣṇa, and lastly said:

jānanta eva jānantu kiṁ bahūktyā na me prabho
manaso vapuṣo vācho vaibhavaṁ tava gocharaḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 10.14.38)

“O Kṛṣṇa, if anyone says, ‘I know Your glories. I know You’, he can say so, but I cannot say that. So many times I have seen Your glories, but I still have not come to their end. I cannot properly or fully understand You. I feel it is impossible for me or anyone to understand Your unlimited glories.”

It is described in *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* that Brahmā was initiated by Kṛṣṇa. But Brahmā has a very difficult life, and many times he forgot Kṛṣṇa’s position and glories. Kṛṣṇa taught Brahmā many times, but again and again disturbance would come to Brahmā and he would forget Kṛṣṇa’s glories. Later he would regain his proper consciousness by Kṛṣṇa’s grace. Thus Brahmā prays to Kṛṣṇa that he can never understand Kṛṣṇa without Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.

The madness of Lord Śiva

Not only are conditioned souls and the demigods, headed by Indra and Brahmā, bewildered by Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes, but also liberated souls are puzzled by them. Lord Śiva is not a conditioned soul; he is a liberated soul. Lord Śiva is Maheśvar Devāḍidev: the leader of all the demigods, who is worshipped by all the demigods. Whenever there is a great difficulty or obstacle creating trouble within the universe that no one can solve, it comes to Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva has the power to correct anything.

We can understand that this is Lord Śiva’s position when

we hear the story of the devas and asuras churning the ocean. After making a compromise with Lord Viṣṇu the devas and asuras came together to churn the ocean. They all worked together to churn the ocean, expecting to produce nectar, but many different things were produced. Airāvata, the king of the elephants, was produced. Uchchaiṣravā, a horse as beautifully white as the moon, was produced. Surabhi, the heavenly cow, was produced. Even Lakṣmī Devī, the Goddess of Fortune, was produced. So many things were produced and then distributed. Lakṣmī Devī went to Nārāyaṇ, Surabhi was taken by Indra, and so on.

As the devas and asuras continued churning the ocean, poison was produced, and everyone was disturbed. No one could destroy or control the poison. When the devas and asuras were confused about what to do with the poison, Viṣṇu said, “Go to Lord Śiva. He is meditating on Mount Kailash.”

Then all the demigods went to Lord Śiva and prayed, “Prabhu, save us! Poison has been produced from the ocean.”

Lord Śiva said, “No problem”. Then he came down from Mount Kailash and drank all the poison. This is Lord Śiva’s nature: he can digest poison that can kill all the other devas. He has such power. Lord Śiva saved the devas in this way by drinking the poison and holding it in his throat. The poison was blue and appeared like a beautiful blue ornament on Lord Śiva’s neck. For this, Lord Śiva became gloriously known as *Nīlakaṇṭha*, “He who has a bluish neck.”

This is Lord Śiva’s position and power. He has a very detached nature, and he is worshipped by all devas. But that Lord Śiva, who is a liberated soul beyond all material illusion, is also bewildered by Kṛṣṇa.

When nectar was produced from the churning of the ocean, the asuras stole it. Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared in the form of Mohinī Mūrti, an attractive young woman, to trick the asuras into returning the nectar to the devas.

Lord Śiva had seen many of the Lord’s forms, but when he

heard that the Lord had appeared as Mohinī Mūrti before the asuras, he went to the Lord and requested, “I was not present when You distributed ecstasy and appeared in the form of Mohinī Mūrti. Please show me this form of Yours.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “You want to see that form of Mine?”

Parvatī Devī was with Lord Śiva at this time. She smiled, “Oh? The Mohinī Mūrti?” When Kṛṣṇa showed His Mohinī Mūrti form, Lord Śiva forgot his position, lost his senses, and ran madly after Mohinī Mūrti. He was completely attracted by Mohinī Mūrti’s beauty.

Afterwards, when Lord Śiva’s mood finally finished, he came back to his senses and Mohinī Mūrti disappeared. Then he saw that he was again standing with Parvatī Devī next to him. When Lord Śiva saw Parvatī Devī he smiled, and Parvatī Devī also smiled. They both have no shyness actually. Lord Śiva told Parvatī Devī, “Have you seen what just happened? I am a liberated soul. Not only that, I can make liberated souls. By my word I can liberate souls. If I say so, anyone can receive liberation; I have this type of power. So now you have seen Lord Kṛṣṇa’s supreme power. I myself have become enchanted by His power and run madly after His attractive form.”

There is a great difference between the worship of the demigods and the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This must be so because all the demigods themselves worship Kṛṣṇa.

The all-powerful Lord Kṛṣṇa

Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is the Creator of all creation and the controller of all power (*Harim iha paramam sarva-śaktim*). As the Creator of all creation, He cannot be powerless. He must be all-powerful. Especially now, in the age of the scientists, we can easily see examples of Kṛṣṇa’s miraculous power and its manifestations everywhere throughout creation. When we are enlightened with transcendental knowledge by Kṛṣṇa’s grace, we will see Kṛṣṇa’s power existing everywhere in every direction within this mundane



Robert Oppenheimer

world. There will be no place where we will not see His power.

The invention of the atomic bomb shows us how much power is present inside every atom of Kṛṣṇa's creation. The scientists have shown that when the charged electrons and protons within an atom are separated, a tremendous explosion occurs. We heard that one of the scientists who helped invent the atomic bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, read *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. When he saw the first test explosion of an atomic bomb he remembered this verse:

**divi sūrya-sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsaś tasya mahātmanaḥ**

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 11.12)

He remarked, "What I am seeing now before me appears like thousands of suns in full bloom. Seeing such light must be similar to seeing the effulgence of the viśvarūp, the universal form of Kṛṣṇa."

Through the example of the atomic bomb we can understand how much power is present within every atom of creation. All of that power is controlled by Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is so powerful. Even the smallest fragments of His creation contain so much power. But Kṛṣṇa is actually more powerful than we can conceive. We cannot even conceive of the full extent of His power. We cannot actually prove how powerful Kṛṣṇa is through our experience of the mundane world. If I say, "His power is so great!" How much can I actually understand? I may say, "His power is as great as the sky!" The sky may be the biggest thing I can see, but how big is the sky? Beyond what we can see to be the sky is the mahākāś, the outer space of this universe. That is far greater than the sky we can see. But the mahākāś includes only the space found within this particular universe. The scriptures teach us that there are millions of universes existing side by side within the Virajā, the river that divides the material and spiritual worlds. And the whole of the material nature existing within the Virajā is only one vibhūti,

one part, of the majesty and creation of the infinite kingdom of Lord Kṛṣṇa. There is no end to how much more exists beyond the sky we see with our eyes. So we cannot understand how great Kṛṣṇa's power is with only our mundane experience. It is achintya, inconceivable.

The supreme controller

When all of Kṛṣṇa's power is considered at once, we cannot conceive of it. We are finite, and His power is infinite. But everything about Kṛṣṇa's supreme position and power is expressed in the first verse of *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*:

**īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam**

(*Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*: 5.1)

In this verse Kṛṣṇa is called the Parameśvar [Supreme Lord]. If we do not know what an īśvar [lord] is, we will not be able to understand Kṛṣṇa's position as Parameśvar, the supreme īśvar. Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur explained the word *īśvar*: *kartum akartum anyathā kartum samarthaḥ*: one who can do anything, can undo anything, and can change anything into anything else is an īśvar. All the different forms of the Lord are īśvaras: Nārāyaṇ, Viṣṇu, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Vāman, Rāmachandra, and so on. Lord Śiva is also an īśvar. We can understand that Kṛṣṇa is above them all, because He is described not only as an īśvar, but as the parama-īśvar, the supreme īśvar. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supreme Controller; everything is under His control, including all the īśvaras. Kṛṣṇa is most powerful. He is all-in-all, and He has all rights reserved over everything. He can do anything, everything, something, and nothing at any time. All power is within Him.

Kṛṣṇa is the one Reality, for Itself and by Itself. His position, activities, character, and all else exist exclusively for His satisfaction. Kṛṣṇa's qualification as Parameśvar, the Supreme

The embodiment of spiritual energy, consciousness, and ecstasy, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Lord of all Lords. He has no origin, He is the origin of all, and He is the cause of all causes.

Controller, is first. His position as *sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*, the cause of all causes, is last. Everyone is always searching for the cause of everything, the central source of all activity. The answer is Kṛṣṇa: Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everything, everything transcendental and mundane. But Kṛṣṇa's position as the Supreme Controller is more important for us to understand. We will really begin to understand creation, existence, power, and eternity when we understand that Kṛṣṇa—Reality the Beautiful—is the Supreme Controller.

Beauty is power

*He has neither a material body
nor material senses. There is
nothing equal to or greater than
Him. His divine energy
is naturally divided into three
aspects: knowledge, strength,
and action.*

na tasya kāryam karam cha vidyate
na tat samaś chābhyadhikaś cha dṛṣyate
parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śruyate
svābhāviki jñāna-bala-kriyā cha

(Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad: 6.8)

The Upaniṣads explain that Kṛṣṇa is the Parameśvar and that no one is equal to Him. As the Parameśvar, Kṛṣṇa can do anything and everything effortlessly through His divine power. This means that creation and everything else happen naturally through Kṛṣṇa's power and Kṛṣṇa is always in full control of everything, but that Kṛṣṇa Himself does not actually have to do anything.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as Saśakti-śaktimān: the Supreme Powerful accompanied by His power. *God* means the Lord with His power. The Lord creates the universe with His power, and through His power everything everywhere takes place by His will. It is effortless for Him. But even more significant than creation, the Lord's divine beauty and divine play are manifest through His power. The most important expressions of Kṛṣṇa's power are His attractive beauty and sweet Pastimes, not His capacity to create the mundane world. *Sarva-śaktim rasābdhim*: Kṛṣṇa's qualities of being all-attractive, beautiful, and loving (*rasābdhim*) are greater than His qualification of being

all-powerful (*sarva-śaktim*). The highest form of power (*sarva-śaktim*) is beauty (*rasa*). Kṛṣṇa's quality of being all-powerful actually means that He is all-attractive—infinately beautiful.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj used to say, “Beauty is the controlling principle. Beauty is controlling everything.” Through Śrīla Guru Mahārāj we can understand that Kṛṣṇa's very nature as ‘Kṛṣṇa’, which means ‘all-attractive’, automatically shows us that He is most powerful. We can also understand that the great examples of Kṛṣṇa's power within His creation are clues about how intensely attractive and beautiful Kṛṣṇa Himself is. This is why it is most important to understand that Kṛṣṇa is the Parameśvar, the Supreme Controller. Such understanding gives us consciousness about the divine significance of beauty everywhere, about how, why, and in which way creation is existing and moving under the influence of beauty. Kṛṣṇa's nature as the all-powerful Supreme Controller is actually understood only by experiencing His beauty. Through His beauty one will best and most fully experience His infinite power. This is the Kṛṣṇa conception of divinity.

The Emporium of All Rasa

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu has explained scientifically the supreme position of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He explains that the jīva-souls, who are finite parts and parcels of Kṛṣṇa, share fifty qualities (guṇas) with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is infinite and the jīva-souls are finite. The jīva-souls share fifty qualities with Kṛṣṇa in a finite way, that is, fifty of Kṛṣṇa’s qualities can be found within them to the extent that Kṛṣṇa empowers them.

The demigods like Śiva, Indra, Chandra, Vāyu, Varuṇ, and so on share fifty-five qualities with Kṛṣṇa. Nārāyaṇ and Kṛṣṇa’s various Avatārs share sixty qualities with Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa has four special, extremely wonderful qualities that He alone possesses—qualities that Lord Nārāyaṇ, Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Rāma, and so on do not possess. Because of these exceptional qualities, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme worshipping Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says,

ete chāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 1.3.28)

“There are infinite forms and expansions of the Lord, but Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead,

the original and topmost form of the Lord. Everything comes from Him.”

Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī explained that the word *Bhagavān* means *bhajanīya-guṇa-viśiṣṭa*: He who has the most worshippable and attractive qualities. Because Kṛṣṇa has the most transcendental qualities, more than the demigods and all other forms of the Lord, He is supreme. Kṛṣṇa’s Name, Form, Fame, and Pastimes are all supreme.

The Infinite

Kṛṣṇa is the supreme, original form of the Lord, but for Pastimes and creation Kṛṣṇa appears in a variety of forms.

om̐ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udachyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate

(*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-upaniṣad*: 5.1.1)

“Kṛṣṇa is infinite. He has infinite forms, and His infinite forms are all infinite. If you subtract anything from the infinite it is still infinite. Kṛṣṇa’s infinite character is always naturally full, and all of Kṛṣṇa’s expansions are also full. And still Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the most worshippable, original Lord.”

The spiritual world where Kṛṣṇa lives eternally is called *Vaikuṅṭhaloka* or *Paravyoma Dhām*. There, infinite eternally manifest forms of Kṛṣṇa live within Their own abode. We cannot conceive of this with our mundane intelligence. The Lord lives in the spiritual world in infinite different forms, each with His own paraphernalia, associates, and abode. All these forms of the Lord are known as *Viṣṇu-tattva*. Lord *Nārāyaṇ* is an expansion of Kṛṣṇa who lives with His consort *Lakṣmī Devī* in *Vaikuṅṭhaloka* and enjoys unlimited power and opulence as He is gloriously worshipped by His associates with great majesty eternally.

Vaikuṅṭha means *vigata kuṅṭha yasmād*: *Vaikuṅṭhaloka* has the power to appear anywhere; it is infinite and can immediately

take a position within the finite realm by the Lord's will. Nārāyaṇ has many Avatārs. Mahāviṣṇu, the maintainer of the whole material creation, is an Avatār of Nārāyaṇ; Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the maintainer of this universe, is an Avatār of Nārāyaṇ; and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the maintainer of every jīva-soul, is an Avatār of Nārāyaṇ. These Puruṣ-avatārs expand down from Nārāyaṇ to maintain the material creation.

The Lord's purpose

There are also other types of Avatārs that come down from Nārāyaṇ. There are the Lilā-avatārs: Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Vāman, Nṛsiṅha, and so on. These forms of the Lord appear within the material universe but also have eternal abodes in Vaikuṅṭhaloka. There are also Yuga-avatārs, forms of the Lord who distribute the dharma of an age; and Śaktyāveś-avatārs, empowered jīva-souls who fulfil the Lord's will. There are so many different types of Avatārs that come down to this material world from Lord Nārāyaṇ.

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
 abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham
 paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya cha duṣkṛtām
 dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 4.7-8)

“Whenever irreligion takes the place of religion and religion becomes disturbed, suppressed, or polluted, different forms of the Lord appear to rescue the conditioned jīva-souls and give nourishment to the sādhus. The Lord's Avatārs come to make peace in the world, re-establish the religion of the soul, and perform Their play for Their own purpose.”

The Lord does not only appear once in this world. He appears many, many times to fulfil His various purposes. Sometimes persons learn something about one form of the Lord and through that think they know everything about the Lord. The idea may come to them, “I am a Kṛṣṇa-bhakta. I do

not want to see the face of a Nṛsiṃhadev-bhakta. I do not want to see the face of a Rāma-bhakta.” This is not the proper understanding. It is a lack of real knowledge actually.

Really it is very good to praise other religions. By having respect for other religions we can make a proper comparative study of theism. That is very good. It is very good to know why we practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There are so many demigods and so many forms of the Lord. We respect the son of God, his Father in Heaven, and everything. But why do we worship Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead? It is necessary to understand this.

The Lord of the Vedic culture

Lord Rāmachandra is a very famous Avatār of the Lord who appeared in the Tretā-yuga to re-establish the Vedic religion within the mundane world. Everywhere, everyone knows of Lord Rāmachandra’s great character. All over India everyone is very enthusiastic to chant, “Jaya Rāma!” His character is described in gist-form in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* by Vedavyās, and in the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is described in a grand way. There are so many stories about Lord Rāmachandra’s great character, but the vital point of all of them is that He is Maryādā Puruṣottam: He appeared to establish the Vedic religion, and His Pastimes were guided by the regulations of Vedic religion. All of His actions and His character were perfectly organised and moral. He set the example of the perfect practice of vidhi, the rules and regulations of the Vedic religion. His speciality was that He accepted only one wife (*eka-patnī-vrata-dharo*). Through His character and example Lord Rāmachandra re-established the Vedic dharma.

eka-patnī-vrata-dharo
rājārṣi-charitaḥ śuciḥ
sva-dharmaṁ gṛha-medhīyaṁ
śikṣayan svayam ācharat
(SB: 9.10.54)

“Rāmachandra, who had the pure character of a saintly king and adhered to the vow of having only one wife, taught the dharma of a householder by practising it Himself.”

The Lord of love and play

Lord Rāmachandra’s character is so great, but it is completely different from Lord Kṛṣṇa’s character. Lord Rāmachandra is known as Maryādā Puruṣottam, and Kṛṣṇa is known as Līlā Puruṣottam. Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes focus on love and play; for that

reason Kṛṣṇa is known as Līlā Puruṣottam. When the Lord appears as Rāmachandra He follows the rules of the Vedas perfectly, to the extreme. That is the character of Maryādā Puruṣottam. But when Kṛṣṇa appears to taste the love of His devotees, He sometimes does not follow the restrictions of the Vedic religion at all. Still, both Rāmachandra and Kṛṣṇa are Puruṣottam, forms of the Supreme Lord.

We must understand that Kṛṣṇa is always the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He never loses His supreme position. Even if He does not follow the Vedic religion that He Himself establishes in the world in His other Avatārs, He is still the Supreme Lord. We can understand this through the example of Bhīṣmadev. Bhīṣmadev had perfect moral character. It is beyond even doubt that Bhīṣmadev could make any Vedic moral transgression. He was respected by everyone in the Vedic society as a Mahājan, a great, exemplary soul. Everyone everywhere knew of him and respected him. In large assemblies of kings, brāhmaṇs, and dignitaries, everyone would give first honour to Bhīṣmadev. Everyone considered Bhīṣmadev to have the highest dignity. But that Bhīṣmadev gives full honour and obeisance to Kṛṣṇa.

Once when Kṛṣṇa came to an assembly of many great persons in which Bhīṣmadev was the guest of honour, Bhīṣmadev stood and said, “When Kṛṣṇa is present here, He must receive first honour from everyone. He is more worshippable than anyone.” Then Bhīṣmadev offered a flower to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet in front of everyone. At that time Kṛṣṇa had so many wives, so many girlfriends, and so many things. Through Bhīṣmadev’s example everyone accepted that Kṛṣṇa is *Lord* Kṛṣṇa and He can do anything and everything.

Vidhi-mārg and rāga-mārg

There is a great difference between the worship of Nārāyaṇ and His Avatārs, and the worship of Kṛṣṇa. There are so many religious teachings in the world. It is very rare to get Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Vedic religion's main teaching is that you must be pious; you must follow the rules and regulations (vidhi) of the Vedas for proper social and religious life. The Vedic religion teaches that if your character and behaviour is very clean then you can worship and satisfy the Lord. Respect is ninety per cent of Vedic worship. Vedic religion enables you to respectfully worship the Lord in His form as Rāma, Nṛsimha, Nārāyaṇ, or otherwise. Through mantram and many instruments of worship you can offer your devotion from a distance to the Lord according to the proper rules and regulations.

The worship of Kṛṣṇa is very different from the formal worship of Vedic religion. To worship Kṛṣṇa you must offer pure love, affection, and the hankering of your transcendental soul. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu taught this process and mood of worship, which is known as rāga-mārg. The speciality of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's religion is love and affection. That is the only property used for worship in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Through attachment to Kṛṣṇa, love and affection for Him develop. Love and affection are most attractive to Kṛṣṇa, and as one's love and affection for Him grow more and more, Kṛṣṇa becomes more and more satisfied. If someone has love and affection for Kṛṣṇa, then anything and everything they do will be satisfying to Him. Any soul with that type of transcendental property is most fortunate. Persons who prefer vidhi-mārg like to worship Lord Rāmachandra, or Lord Nārāyaṇ, or other Avatārs of the Lord, but persons who prefer the mood of love and affection for the Lord, rāga-mārg, must be attracted to Kṛṣṇa.

In this way we can understand Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead—Reality the Beautiful. Everything we desire we can find fully within Kṛṣṇa. We want charm, beauty, love, affection, and ecstasy; we want success in our lives. All of these are fully present and alive within Kṛṣṇa consciousness. All ecstatic activity is found in full in the Kṛṣṇa conception. If we will try to search for a reason to serve and worship

Kṛṣṇa, then the answer will come that everything we need is fully manifested in an effulgent way in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness we will find everything that we need, so we must worship Kṛṣṇa.

What do we really need? We do not need awe or reverence; we need happiness. We need joy. We need beauty. We need love. We are searching for these qualities; birth after birth we are trying to search for these essential things. We need eternal existence, harmony, and the nectar of love, beauty, charm, and sweetness. If we search for these things, we will find that all of them are fully present in the Kṛṣṇa conception. In no other God consciousness and in no other God conception are they fully present. The Rāmachandra conception, the Nārāyaṇ conception, the Baladev conception, all the other Avatārs of Kṛṣṇa—none of Them can give us the same rasa, the same ecstatic relationship with the Lord.



The emporium of all ecstasy

Why do I say, “No other”? There is a reason. If you search within the Kṛṣṇa conception, you will find the sonhood of Godhead—the supreme worshippable Lord manifest in a lovingly playful, youthful form surrounded by all five possible relationships (rasas) with the jīva-souls: śānta [attachment],

yeṣāṁ śrīśa-prasādo ‘pi
mano hartuṁ na śaknuyāt
siddhāntatas tv abhede ‘pi
śrīśa-kṛṣṇa-svarūpayoḥ
rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇa-
rūpam eṣā rasa-sthitiḥ

(Brs: 1.2.59)

“Nārāyaṇ’s grace cannot capture the hearts of Kṛṣṇa’s devotees. Although Nārāyaṇ and Kṛṣṇa are theologically nondifferent, according to rasa, Kṛṣṇa is superior. Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy is established by rasa.”

dāsyā [servitorship], sakhyā [friendship], vātsalyā [affectionate guardianship], and madhura [intimate love]. In other conceptions you may find relationships with God like the fatherhood of Godhead or servitorship to Godhead. We see that there are many other types of relationships with God. But according to rasa-vichār, the science of divine relationships, the sonhood of Godhead is the best.

The Supreme Lord's position is that He is the supreme controller of everything. But if that Supreme Lord can also be controlled by love and affection, that is an even more glorious position. Why? A father bears the burden of maintaining his children. If a father has no guardian, he has to maintain himself and also bear the burden of maintaining his children. A master must maintain his servants. A friend must care for his friends. But a son can have everything; he can have all types of relationships. When a son has a guardian then he can even do wrong and still be protected. If the Absolute Lord performs His Pastimes in a youthful form, He can enjoy all possible relationships. He can have a father or guardian, and under their care He can simply play and enjoy. When the Lord assumes the form of a son, His Pastimes become the Sweet Absolute.

Kṛṣṇa is known as Vrajendra Nandan, the son of the king of Vṛndāvan. Kṛṣṇa has a father and guardian, so He Himself can play; He can be worry-free. That is the most worshipping Sweet Absolute Reality—where Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is always playfully situated in the centre of everything.

When the Lord has the youthful form of a son, then all relationships are possible with Him. He can have a father, a mother, brothers, servants, friends, and girlfriends; He can have everything. As a son, Kṛṣṇa can be served from every corner in all different types of loving, affectionate relationships (rasas), and He can give ecstasy and joy to the heart of everyone. That is full-fledged theism, and only in such a conception is all beauty, charm, and ecstasy beautifully playing. Kṛṣṇa is

dadhi-mathana-ninādais
tyakta-nidraḥ prabhāte
nibhṛta-padam agāraṁ
ballavīnām praviṣṭaḥ
mukha-kamala-samīrair
āśu nirvāpya dīpān
kavalita-navanītaḥ pātu
mām bāla-kṛṣṇaḥ

(Padyāvalī: 143)

“Awakened in the morning by the sound of butter being churned, Bāla Kṛṣṇa soundlessly enters the homes of the gopīs, quickly blows out their lamps with His lotus mouth, and devours their fresh butter. May He protect me.”

the most beautiful and extremely merciful. So much charm, love, and harmony are existing within the ecstatic Lord of the Kṛṣṇa conception.

So many different ecstatic feelings all merge together within Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The jīva-souls feel unlimited happiness through that. It is inconceivable but still it comes to them, and the process is a very sweet process. Śānta, dāsyā, sakhya, vātsalya, and madhura rasas are the five kinds of relationships with Kṛṣṇa. All are ecstatic; all are filled with loveliness, happiness, sweetness, beauty, and everything. To describe these Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī use the word *chamatkāra* [astonishing]. Because all rasas are manifest in full with only the divine form of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is described as the Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti: emporium of all rasa.

Kṛṣṇa's super-excellent qualities

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī has explained the four special, extremely wonderful qualities that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāj, alone possesses—the qualities that Lord Nārāyaṇ, Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Rāma, and so on do not possess. These are the qualities that distinguish Kṛṣṇa as Svayam Bhagavān, the most worshippable Personality of Godhead.

sarvādbhuta-chamatkāra-līlā-kallola-vāridhiḥ
atulya-madhura-prema-maṇḍita-priya-maṇḍalaḥ
tri-jagan-mānasākarṣi-muralī-kala-kūjitaḥ
asamānordhva-rūpa-śrī-vismāpita-charācharaḥ

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Dakṣiṇa-vibhāga, 141–2)

Sarvādbhuta-chamatkāra-līlā-kallola-vāridhiḥ: the first quality is that the Pastimes of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa are like an ocean filled with dancing waves that stun and astonish everyone.

Atulya-madhura-prema-maṇḍita-priya-maṇḍalaḥ: the second quality is that in His Pastimes Kṛṣṇa is always surrounded by His associates, the super sweet, sweet gopīs, gopa-bālakas, and other residents of Vṛndāvan Dhām, whose hearts and

souls have full, unequalled dedication to Him in five kinds of relationships led by madhura-rasa.

Tri-jagan-mānasākarṣi-muralī-kālā-kūjitaḥ: the third quality is that Kṛṣṇa attracts the minds of everyone within the transcendental and mundane universes and enters the hearts of His devotees with the melodious vibration of His flute. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained that om and gāyatrī come from Kṛṣṇa’s flute song and when He plays the flute Kṛṣṇa sings the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (*Rādhā-padam dhīmahi*).

Asamānordhva-rūpa-śrī-vismāpita-charācharaḥ: the fourth quality is that the personal beauty (śrī, saundarya) of Kṛṣṇa’s divine form is beyond compare. All moving and nonmoving living entities are astonished and faint to behold the beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s divine form.

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu described Kṛṣṇa’s four super-excellent qualities in this way. Among these four topmost qualities of Kṛṣṇa the final quality of His supremely attractive form is the highest. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī said, *bhūṣaṇera bhūṣaṇa aṅga*. This means that nothing is more beautiful than Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental form: Kṛṣṇa’s form beautifies even the ornaments He wears—Kṛṣṇa’s divine form is the ornament on His ornaments.

We hear definitively that even Kṛṣṇa Himself is maddened by the beauty of His form. When Kṛṣṇa stands in front of a mirror, He forgets Himself and attempts to embrace His image in the mirror. He becomes mugdha, melted and astonished, to see His divine form. Kṛṣṇa showed this to be true by His appearance as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all beauty, and He Himself becomes mad to see His beauty. That is the incomparable quality and qualification of Kṛṣṇa. No one can compare with the beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s divine form or the love and charm flowing throughout His Pastimes.

Irreversible vision

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu also expressed His own vision of Kṛṣṇa’s divine form:

yan martya-līlāpayikaṁ svayoga-
māyā-balaṁ darśayatā grhītam
vismāpanaṁ svasya cha saubhagardheḥ
paraṁ padaṁ bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇāṅgam

(SB: 3.2.12)

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed the power of His divine energy and assumed His form suited for human-like Pastimes, which astonishes even Him, which is the ultimate abode of fortune (the ultimate expression of beauty, wealth, power, fame, knowledge, and detachment), and which is the ornament of His ornaments.”

smerām bhaṅgī-traya-parichitām sāchi-vistīrṇa-dṛṣṭīm
vaṁśī-nyastādhara-kīśalayām ujjvalām chandrakeṇa
govindākhyām hari-tanum itaḥ keśi-tīrthopakaṇṭhe
mā prekṣiṣṭhās tava yadi sakhe bandhu-saṅge 'sti raṅgaḥ

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Pūrva-vibhāga, 2.239)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura explained this verse: “If you have any attachment to staying within your circle of friends and enjoying mundane life, do not go to Keshi Ghat to see Śrī Govinda’s divine form, which is the reservoir of all beauty. If you see His divine form attractively bent in three places, His stunning eyes, and His face glowing in the moonshine as He plays His flute, you will become completely enchanted and you will not be able to leave. You will never be able to return to the so-called pleasures of material life. It may be better for you not to go there.”

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu expressed his vision of Kṛṣṇa in this verse. It is his own vision. When we hear this verse we can feel something, maybe 0.1 per cent of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī’s divine realisation. We cannot actually conceive of it. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu can express it and we can simply try to harmonise with his feelings.

The divinity of the human form

Lord Brahmā also saw the divine form of Kṛṣṇa and expressed his vision with His verse:

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.1)

In this first verse of *Brahma-saṁhitā* we see the real form of Lord Kṛṣṇa expressed. This verse describes Kṛṣṇa’s aprākṛta form, His supramundane form, in which He plays with the cows, cowherd boys, and gopīs in His eternal abode of Vṛndāvan in five kinds of relationships. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī also described this form:



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govindaḥ,
the Deity of Govinda unearthed
by Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī who
was established in Vṛndāvan by
Kṛṣṇa’s grandson Vajranabha.

The best of all of Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes
are His human-like Pastimes.
His human-like form is His original
form. His cowherd-boy dress,
flute-playing, adolescence,
and superb dancing perfectly suit
His human-like Pastimes.
Please hear of Kṛṣṇa's charm-
ing form. One drop of its beauty
floods the whole of the three
worlds and attracts every living
entity within them.

evaṁ sva-chitte svata eva siddha
ātmā priyo 'rtho bhagavān anantaḥ
taṁ nirvṛto niyatārtho bhajeta
saṁsāra-hetūparamaś cha yatra
(SB: 2.2.6)

“Joyfully and resolutely serve
the Soul who is self-manifest
within the heart, the beloved,
absolute, worshipping, all-
pervading Lord. Doing so
eradicates the cause of
one's entanglement in worldly
existence (ignorance).”

kṛṣṇera yateka khelā, sarvottama nara-līlā,
nara-vapu tāhāra svarūpa
gopa-veśa, veṇu-kara, nava-kiśora, naṭa-vara,
nara-līlāra haya anurūpa

kṛṣṇera madhura rūpa, śuna, sanātana
ye rūpera eka kaṇa, ḍubāya saba tribhuvana,
sarva prāṇī kare ākarṣaṇa

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 21.101-102)

Kṛṣṇa's original form is like that of a human, like that of our own relative. The human form is the Lord's original form and is the Sweet Absolute. When this is understood, then we can harmonise everything with that Reality. Without this realisation it is very difficult to harmonise so much of our worldly experience. The Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa can harmonise everything. *Evaṁ sva-chitte svata eva siddha* (SB: 2.2.6): when Kṛṣṇa's transcendental Pastimes reveal themselves in our hearts we will understand everything perfectly.

The rising of the divine sun

Kṛṣṇa appeared in His human-like form here in this mundane world like the other Avatārs, but Kṛṣṇa's divine human-like form, Reality the Beautiful, is eternally present in the spiritual realm of Goloka Vṛndāvan. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna:

janma karma cha me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 4.9)

“Arjuna, My birth and death in this world are not like the birth and death of ordinary human persons. I show Myself to be like them when I appear, but actually I existed before I appeared in this world and continue to exist after I disappear. My form and appearance are divyam [divine].”

Divyam means *aprākṛtam*. *Aprākṛtam* means that Lord Kṛṣṇa's divine form appears like an ordinary man's form, but it is actually not made of anything mundane. Kṛṣṇa's form is a transcendental form which is perfect, positive, and eternally existent in Goloka Vṛndāvan, the highest plane within Vaikuṅṭhaloka. Anyone who understands Lord Kṛṣṇa's divine form and appearance in this way will be liberated from birth and death. It is necessary to properly understand that His appearance and disappearance are not like the birth and death of mankind. They are like the rising and setting of the sun. The sun does not die when it crosses the horizon. It simply disappears from our vision temporarily and then reappears later. Anyone who understands Kṛṣṇa's divine appearance and disappearance in this way is liberated and attains the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental world.

Kṛṣṇa gave this knowledge to the world in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. We must honour and worship everything about Lord Kṛṣṇa as transcendental. There is nothing mundane about His Name, Form, Qualities, Pastimes, and Associates. The scriptures have cautioned us about this.

viṣṇau sarveśvareṣe tad-itara-sama-dhīr yasya vā nārakī saḥ
(*Padma-purāṇa*)

“If we think Sarveśvar Viṣṇu, the Lord of everything, is an ordinary person, then our understanding will be imperfect and that will take us to a hellish condition.”

By the grace of the scriptures, our Gurus, and the sādhus, we must think: “The birth and death of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not like that of an ordinary human. They are transcendental. Kṛṣṇa's form is transcendental and eternal. *Īśvaraḥ Paramaḥ Kṛṣṇaḥ Sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He is the Creator of all creation, and He has an eternal divine form.”



Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī writing in
Śrī Vṛndāvan Dhām.

The sonhood of Godhead

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhū has explained step by step how the play of Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Sweet Absolute is supreme according to rasa-vichār, the science of spiritual relationships.

vaikuṅṭhāj janito varā madhu-purī tatrāpi rāsotsavād
vṛndāraṇyam udāra-pāṇi-ramaṇāt tatrāpi govardhanaḥ
rādhā-kuṇḍam ihāpi gokula-pateḥ premāmṛtāplāvanāt
kuryād asya virājato giri-taṭe sevām vivekī na kaḥ

(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta: 9)

This verse is very famous. It is very small, but it fully describes the position and gist of all the Pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Vaikuṅṭha, the abode of Lord Nārāyaṇ, is infinite. In His opulent Pastimes in Vaikuṅṭhaloka, Lord Nārāyaṇ eternally exists as the worshippable Deity, and all His servitors serve Him there forever, from a respectful distance.

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhū explains that in Vaikuṅṭha there is no *janita*, birth, of the Lord. This means that Lord Nārāyaṇ has no mother or father. Thus Madhupurī—Mathurā Vṛndāvan—is superior to Vaikuṅṭhaloka because there the Lord manifests His transcendental Pastimes of birth and childhood. When the Lord takes birth and plays as a boy, His Pastimes are more exalted and transcendently glorious. Why? Because the full range of relationships are possible with Him.

Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes manifest the full range of relationships: śānta [attachment], dāsya [servitorship], sakhya [friendship], vātsalya [affectionate guardianship], and madhura [intimate love]. Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes also include birth, so His Pastimes are more elevated than those of Lord Nārāyaṇ. But Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes have something more than Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes. That is parakīya-rasa, paramour love. Paramour love is found only within Lord Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes.

Lord Rāmachandra's nature and character is to always follow the Vedic religion. In Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes the full range of rasas are present, but their movement is controlled by

the rulings of the Vedas. In Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes the full freedom of rasa does not show itself in an effulgent way. Up to dāsyā-rasa Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes are so nice. Dāsyā-rasa is firm and full in Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes. Sakhya-rasa, vātsalya-rasa, and madhura-rasa are suppressed in His Pastimes. Sītā Devī is Rāmachandra's wife, but Her mood is, "I am a servant of Rāmachandra." The tendency of all of Rāmachandra's associates—His wife Sītā Devī, His father Daśarath, His mother Kauśalyā, and so on—is to consider themselves servants of Rāmachandra.

This means that the madhura-rasa in Lord Rāmachandra's Pastimes moves only according to the respectful mood taught in the Vedas. Lord Rāmachandra set the example of Vedic dharma and accepted only one wife. His quality is that He has only one consort. Thus there is no opportunity for the jīva-souls to become consorts of Lord Rāmachandra. He will not accept anyone else but Sītā Devī as His wife. But the Lord is so beautiful and attractive that we hanker to see His beauty and naturally feel that we want to be His consort. As Rāmachandra, the Lord will not accept us in that way; but as Kṛṣṇa, the Lord will. Kṛṣṇa is the form in which the Lord will accept us not only as His wives but as His paramour lovers. Kṛṣṇa has 16,108 wives, and, more than that, He has millions of girlfriends.

Kṛṣṇa is the emporium of all rasa; the full range of relationships are possible with Him. In Vṛndāvan, Kṛṣṇa takes birth. He accepts service in vātsalya-rasa and *tatrāpi rāsotsavād*: He sports in the paramour love of madhura-rasa in the rāsa-līlā, His dancing Pastimes with His girlfriends. And when Kṛṣṇa performs the rāsa-līlā, He does not enjoy paramour love with only a small group: Kṛṣṇa plays with millions of gopīs in this way. Kṛṣṇa has that capacity.

Kṛṣṇa is Supreme and everything is under His control, but as Vrajendra Nandan, in the play of the sonhood of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa is worry-free and simply enjoys unlimitedly. That is the full-fledged theism found in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In His



Śrī Rādhā Raman, the Deity of Kṛṣṇa who lovingly self-manifested Himself for Śrīla Gopāl Bhaṭṭā Goswāmī.

supreme divine form of Kṛṣṇa the Lord shows His supreme nature through His capacity to enjoy.

rāya kahe,—kṛṣṇa haya ‘dhīra-lalita’
nirantara kāma-kṛīḍā—yāhāra charita

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.187)

This is a wonderful expression found within the Rāmānanda-saṁvād of Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta. There Rāmānanda Rāy says that Kṛṣṇa’s nature is dhīra-lalita, which means He is always in the beautiful ecstatic mood of śṛṅgāra-rasa [madhura-rasa], and He has no job other than enjoying with the gopīs. *Nirantara*, without ever stopping, Kṛṣṇa playfully enjoys, spreads His Pastimes, and accepts the service of His beloved devotees.

Inconceivable sweetness

This is the divine conception of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, and He taught that it is the gist of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kāchid upāsanaṁ vraja-vadhū-vargenā va kalpitā
śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalam premā pumartho mahān
śrī-chaitanya-mahāprabhor matam idam tatrādarah naḥ paraḥ

(Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura)

“The worshippable, desirable goal of our life is the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His divine form of Vrajendra Nandan Kṛṣṇa, who is manifest in His abode of Vṛndāvan. All beauty, all charm, everything opulent, tasteful, and ecstatic is present within Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvan-līlā. Everything is there in Vṛndāvan: Vrajeśa Tanay Kṛṣṇa and His full love-play. Service there, in the mood of the Vraja-vadhūs, Kṛṣṇa’s beloved girlfriends, is the supreme service, and that is our life’s goal, that type of ecstatic love for Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

All beauty, ecstasy, and everything is present within the Kṛṣṇa conception. Only Kṛṣṇa can be our heart and soul. The full-fledged conception of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is found in that

Vrajendra Nandan Kṛṣṇa conception, the sonhood of Godhead. A great devotee, Guṇarāj Khān, wrote a book named *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vijay*. It begins:

“nanda-nandana kṛṣṇa—mora prāṇa-nātha”
ei vākye vikāinu tāra vaṁśera hāta

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 15.100*)

“Nanda Nandan Kṛṣṇa is my heart and soul.” Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev was deeply attracted to this conception, and after hearing Guṇarāj Khān’s expression, Mahāprabhu was so charmed that He said, “I consider Myself a slave of a dog from the house of Guṇarāj Khān.”

Raghupati Upādhyāya also described the sonhood of Godhead to Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu:

śrutim apare smṛtim itare bhāratam
anye bhajantu bhava-bhītāḥ
aham iha nandaṁ vande
yasyālinde param brahma

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 19.96*)

“Those who are very fearful of this mundane environment can be that way. They can worship the śruti, smṛti, *Mahābhārata*, Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, and so on. I do not want to go that way. I do not see that as my necessity. I feel that all I need is Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. I know that Kṛṣṇa plays in the courtyard of His father Nanda Mahārāj, so I feel I will receive Kṛṣṇa’s mercy through Nanda Mahārāj. I feel that I need only to take the dust of Nanda Mahārāj’s lotus feet on my head. By doing that I will surely receive Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.”

In his verse, Raghupati Upādhyāya describes Kṛṣṇa as Parambrahma, the Supreme Absolute. Everyone already knows Kṛṣṇa is Parambrahma: *Brahma-saṁhitā* said it; *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* said it; and Kṛṣṇa Himself said it everywhere in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. But who can conceive that that Kṛṣṇa, who is Parambrahma, plays in the courtyard of His father Nanda Mahārāj? Who can conceive that Mother Yaśomati

chastises Kṛṣṇa with a stick? That is the inconceivable beauty of the Sweet Absolute Reality of the Kṛṣṇa conception—the sonhood of Godhead.

The ocean of rasa

Raghupati Upādhyāya later charmed Mahāprabhu with another verse. Kṛṣṇa does not have only one kind of divine form; He has three, one for each of the environments where He engages in His Pastimes (Dvārakā, Mathurā, and Vṛndāvan). The quality and qualification of Vṛndāvan Kṛṣṇa, the youthful, playful Kṛṣṇa, is supreme. Raghupati Upādhyāya said:

śyāmam eva param̐ rūpaṁ purī madhu-purī varā
vayaḥ kaiśorakaṁ dhyeyam ādya eva paro rasaḥ

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 19.106)

“The divine form of Śyāmasundar Kṛṣṇa is the Lord’s supreme form; Mathurā Vṛndāvan is the Lord’s supreme abode; Kṛṣṇa’s youthful form is the supreme form of worship, and ādi-rasa, madhura-rasa, is the supreme rasa.”

The divine youthful form of Kṛṣṇa is the source of all rasa. All rasa comes from Him like Mana Sarovar, the lake in which the Ganges and all other sacred rivers are present. Kṛṣṇa is known as *rasābdhi*, the ocean of rasa, the ocean of nectar. The jīva-souls are so fortunate because they are tiny and can swim in the nectarean ocean of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes.

Rasa has five principle styles—śānta, dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya, madhura—and seven kinds of secondary styles—hāsya [laughter], adbhuta [wonder], vīra [valour], karuṇa [sorrow], raudra [anger], bibhatsa [disgust], and bhay [fear]. In Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes all of these rasas swim together like baby fish happily playing together and kissing.

The origin of paramour love

When time and fortune favourably come to us, we can enquire about rasa and our research will lead us to madhura-rasa. There

kaṁ prati kathayitum iśe
samprati ko vā pratītim āyātu
go-pati-tanayā-kuñje
gopa-vadhūṭi-ṅgaṁ brahma

(Cc: Madhya, 19.98)

“Who can I tell, and who will
believe, that the Absolute
hunts the wives of cowherd
men in the groves along
the banks of the Yamunā?”

Here Raghupati Upādhyāya
suggests to Śrīman
Mahāprabhu that by His
appearance the glory
of madhura-rasa will be
revealed to the world.

are so many rasas but all rasas are present inside madhura-rasa. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavīrāj Goswāmī explained:

ākāśādi guṇa yena para para bhūte
eka-dui-tina-chāri krame pañcha pṛthivīte

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā 19.233)

“As sky, air, fire, and water are present within earth, so all rasas—śānta, dāsyā, sakhyā, and vātsalya—are present within madhura-rasa.”

Madhura-rasa is the supreme ecstasy. It is sarva-rasa-samāhāra: the combined form of all rasas. We have heard that Kṛṣṇa is the Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti—the emporium of all rasa—the concentrated form of all rasa, but, more than this general idea, we can understand that because all rasas are fully present within madhura-rasa, Kṛṣṇa being described as the Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti means that He is Śṛṅgāra-rasa mūrtimān: the concentrated form of madhura-rasa in paramour love.

All the scriptures have said this also, and that is a miracle! Vedavyās began the *Vedānta-darśana* with the sūtras, “*Athāto Brahma jijñāsā*: search for Brahma”, and “*Janmādy asya Yataḥ*: He—Pūrṇabrahma Kṛṣṇa—is the source of everything”. Then he wrote, “*Ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt*: He, Kṛṣṇa, is ānandamaya, the Sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ: the embodiment of truth, consciousness, and ecstasy.” So the *Vedānta-darśana* begins by telling us, “Lord Kṛṣṇa is ānandamaya: He is the reservoir of all ecstasy, and we can find our full nourishment in Him.” Then Vedavyās said, *raso vai Saḥ*: “He is rasa; Kṛṣṇa is rasa”. So Kṛṣṇa is the Creator of all creation (*janmādy asya Yataḥ*), with rasa, with sweetness. In other words, it is Kṛṣṇa the emporium of all rasa who is the Creator of all creation. This means that it is *His* manifestation—Kṛṣṇa the *Sweet Absolute's* manifestation—that is everywhere! It is the play of the Divine Couple, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa that is the origin of everything; it is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's play that is overflowed all over the transcendental and material worlds. This is the real meaning of *janmādy asya Yataḥ*: “That

from which everything comes". It is necessary for us to realise this and connect with it.

The Divine Couple

The play of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Powerful, with His supreme Power, Rādhārāṇī, is eternally going on in Goloka Vṛndāvan, the highest plane within Vaikuṅṭhaloka. Kṛṣṇa and His Power are nondifferent, Saśakti-śaktimān, but Kṛṣṇa divided Himself from His Power for the purpose of līlā, Pastimes. He divided His Power from Himself for His own satisfaction and play. So the phrase 'Supreme Personality of Godhead' means Kṛṣṇa the all-powerful *with* His Power (Rādhārāṇī).

The Powerful and His Power are nondifferent. We cannot differentiate Them just as we cannot differentiate the sun from its heat and light. Kṛṣṇa, the Powerful, is always depending upon His Power. Without His Power, the Powerful does not have His existence; He does not have His play. He is like a dry battery with no charge. We have heard Śuka and Śārī, the parrots of Vṛndāvan, debating:

śuka bali āmāra kṛṣṇa giridhārī chhila
śārī bali āmāra rādhā śakti sañcharila

Śuka said, "My Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhan Hill."

Śārī replied, "It is only because Rādhārāṇī gave Her power to Kṛṣṇa that Kṛṣṇa was powerful enough to lift Govardhan Hill."

In this way we understand the position of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as Saśakti-śaktimān: Kṛṣṇa the Powerful, who depends on His Power, Rādhārāṇī.

The Divine Couple has been described very concisely and conclusively by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī in a full-fledged way in the eighth chapter of the Madhya-līlā of *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*. There the full-fledged theism of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is exposed. The position of Kṛṣṇa and the position of Rādhārāṇī has been fully described for us. There

Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev asked Rāmānanda Rāy many questions, and the supreme conclusion of worship of the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa was revealed. Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar has explained this concisely for us,

rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād
ekātmānāv api bhuvī purā deha-bhedaṁ gatau tau
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 1.5)

“Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are One, but They divided Themselves for Their divine play in madhura-rasa-līlā.”

The clue to the whole of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes is given here.

rādhā-kṛṣṇa eka ātmā, dui deha dhari’
anyonye vilase rasa āsvādana kari’
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.56)

Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar said, “Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa ekātmā: Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are One, that is, Saśakti-śaktimān, but They have divided into two forms for Their own divine play of paramour love.”

If you say that Kṛṣṇa is śaktimān [powerful], then His śakti [power], Rādhārāṇī, is already with Him; otherwise He could not be śaktimān. Various forms of Kṛṣṇa sometimes appear in this mundane world, but if you will understand that the original Divine Form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is the cause of all causes, the Parameśvar, the Creator of all, who Himself has no creator, then you must see that it is Saśakti-śaktimān Kṛṣṇa—Śrī Kṛṣṇa with His śakti Rādhārāṇī—that is behind everything (*janmādy asya Yataḥ*).

The taste of nectar

Like his *Vedānta-darśana*, Vedavyās began Śrīmad Bhāgavatam with the phrase *janmādy asya Yataḥ*. By doing this he showed that Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is a commentary on the *Vedānta-darśana*, though at the same time he also showed that Śrīmad Bhāgavatam starts from the platform of madhura-rasa.



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodar,
the Deities served by Śrīla Jīva
Goswāmī Prabhu

nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.1.3)

If we think of the Vedas as a kalpa-taru, a wish-fulfilling tree, then Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is like their fruit. *Galitaṁ phalam* means Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is like a nicely ripened fruit without skin or seed. Its rasa, nectarean juice, is very sweet and palatable. It contains the gist of all transcendental ecstasy and all the Vedic scriptures. *Pibata Bhāgavatam rasam ālayam*: until death try to taste the *Bhāgavat's* rasa. Again and again it will be tasteful to you. You will always find new taste there—in the Divine Couple's eternal Pastimes.

SECTION THREE

The Soul

Daśa-mūla-tattva

Truths Five, Six, and Seven

tad bhinnāmsāmś cha jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān
tad-vimuktāmś cha bhāvāt

Souls are separated parts of Kṛṣṇa.
Some of them are captivated by māyā.
Some of them are liberated from māyā by devotion.

The Evolution of Consciousness

Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave this consciousness to the world:

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
 kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
 sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaichhe agni-jvālā-chaya
 svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 20.108–9)

Kṛṣṇa is like a chit-sūrya, a great sun made of spiritual energy, and the jīva-souls are like rays of that spiritual sun. Just as the sun and the sun's rays are both different and nondifferent, Kṛṣṇa and the jīva-souls are simultaneously different and nondifferent. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura said, "*Tad bhinnānsāmś cha jīvān*: the jīva-souls are distinct, finite parts of the infinite Lord." In this way the jīva-souls belong to the Lord. They come from the Lord's energy, His marginal potency (taṭasthā-śakti). The jīva-souls naturally have a subservient relationship with the Lord, that is, all jīva-souls are eternal servitors of their Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is their natural identity. This is Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev's primary teaching: the service of Kṛṣṇa is the true dharma of every jīva-soul.

Divine energies

The jīva-souls are one of the Lord's three primary energies.

viṣṇu-śaktiḥ parā proktā kṣetrajñākhyā tathā parā
avidyā-karma-samjñānyā tṛtīyā śaktir iṣyate

(*Viṣṇu-purāṇa*: 6.7.61)

Lord Kṛṣṇa's power has three divisions: His parā-śakti [internal spiritual energy]; His kṣetrajñā-śakti [marginal spiritual energy], which manifests the individual jīva-souls; and His aparā-śakti [material energy]. These three main potencies of Kṛṣṇa are also sometimes known by other names such as the antaraṅga-śakti, taṭasthā-śakti, and bahiraṅga-śakti. All of these energies are activated by Kṛṣṇa's will for His play and satisfaction.

The Divine Couple's transcendental play with Their paraphernalia, that is, all of Kṛṣṇa-līlā, is part of the chit-śakti [spiritual potency]. The jīva-souls come out from the taṭasthā-śakti for Kṛṣṇa's play and satisfaction, as well as the creation of the material world. The material environment and the bewilderment of the conditioned souls come from the māyā-śakti [material energy], which is like the Lord's shadow potency, a reflection of His spiritual energy (chit-śakti).

The jīva-souls are the Lord's marginal potency, taṭasthā-śakti. *Taṭa* means a shore, the area on the bank of a river between water and land. *Taṭasthā-śakti* means the Lord's energy that is situated on the margin between the spiritual and material energy, and can adapt to either environment.

Searching for love

Question: If "not a blade of grass moves without the will of the Lord", then do the jīva-souls have free will?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Kṛṣṇa gives the jīva-souls some free will. Kṛṣṇa wants to see if the jīva-souls will willingly serve His divine lotus feet and dedicate themselves to Him. That is

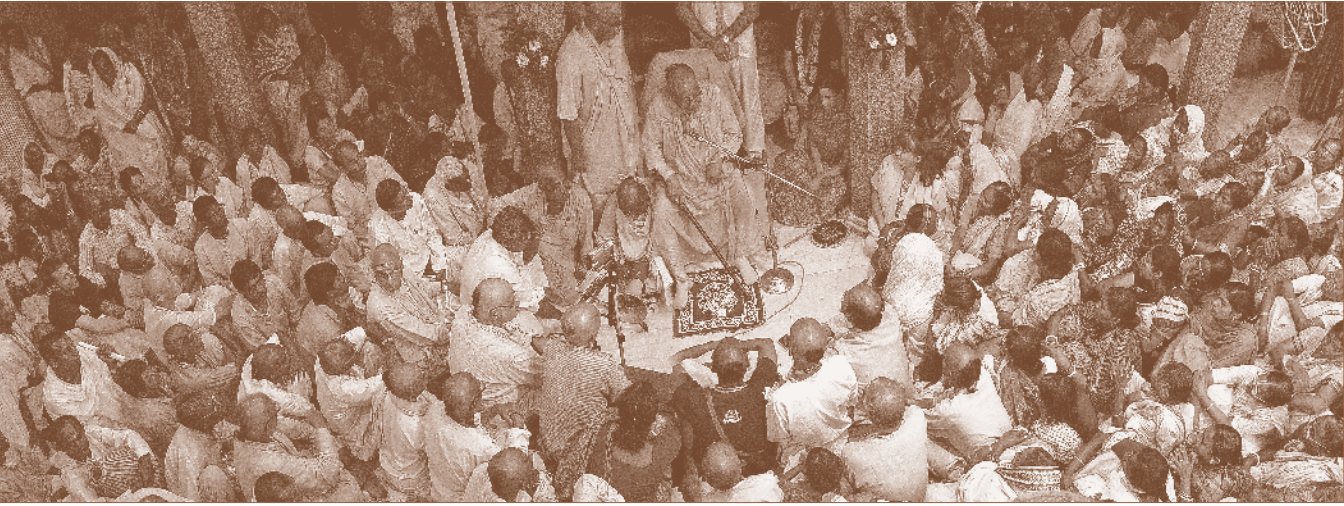
Kṛṣṇa's desire. He gives the jīva-souls free will and does not disturb it. This is because He wants to have a loving relationship with them, and love is not possible without free will. This is why Kṛṣṇa created His neutral śakti, the jīva-śakti: for the expansion of His loving Pastimes.

The jīva-soul's nature (dharma), given by Kṛṣṇa, is to have free will. Free will means consciousness. Consciousness means thinking, feeling, and willing. Every jīva-soul has these three capacities. And they are always active; the jīva-souls can never stop thinking, feeling, and willing. The jīva-souls are always pursuing something; by their nature they are always active and seeking.

The jīva-souls are part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, who is the Sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ: the embodiment of eternity, consciousness, and ecstasy. This means the jīva-soul's nature is also sach-chid-ānanda, eternally existent, conscious, and ecstatic. The jīva-soul's existence is built by Kṛṣṇa's own existence, just as a sun-ray comes from the sun. The jīva-soul's thinking, feeling, and willing, the jīva-soul's conscious nature (chit), is always seeking the jīva-soul's positive nature—ānanda. This means that they are by nature searching for Kṛṣṇa, searching for the ecstasy, love, beauty, and charm that are present within Him.

Divine magnetism

The jīva-souls feel whatever they do. Whenever the jīva-souls feel the presence of beauty they naturally want to dedicate themselves to that, to serve and worship the source of that beauty. This capacity and tendency for dedication is the actual function of the jīva-souls' conscious nature, of their thinking, feeling, and willing. We see that everywhere within all cultures people have a tendency to worship. Even jungle-men worship the sun, moon, and ocean, or the trees, mountains, caves, and so on. All jīva-souls' nature is to worship. It is existing within their consciousness. Pure devotional life, that is, pure attraction



and service to beauty, is the actual nature, the actual dharma, of the jīva-souls.

It is within the nature of all jīva-souls to be attracted by the magnetic power of beauty. When a jīva-soul's whole existence is overcome by the attractive power of beauty, then the jīva-soul manifests its full nature as an eternal servant. The two syllables of the word *Kṛṣṇa* mean *ākaraṣaṇa kare* and *ānanda dāna*: *Kṛṣṇa* attracts the jīva-souls and gives ecstasy to them through His service. *Kṛṣṇa* is like a great attractive magnet and the jīva-souls, His parts and parcels, are like iron filings that are divinely attracted to Him. The jīva-souls are automatically attracted to *Kṛṣṇa* and His Pastimes in the transcendental world, and the jīva-souls feel naturally fulfilled in their relationship with *Kṛṣṇa*, that is, in *Kṛṣṇa*-bhakti. This is the sanātan-dharma, the jaiva-dharma, the eternal religion of all jīva-souls. Really religion is one, "*Dharmo yasyām Mad-ātmakaḥ* (*SB: 11.14.3*): all souls must be attracted to the divine sun, Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*, and serve Him with their full existence." This is the property of all jīva-souls. It is not anything mundane or made by humanity.

kālena naṣṭā pralaye
vāñīyaṁ veda-saṁjñitā
mayādau brahmaṇe proktā
dharmo yasyām mad-ātmakaḥ
(*SB: 11.14.3*)

[*Kṛṣṇa*:] "During the creation I spoke to Brahmā the Vedic teachings, the dharma of devotion to Me, which was lost during the annihilation by the influence of time."

Entering the illusory environment

Question: How do the jīva-souls enter into the material nature?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Whenever jīva-souls manifest within the marginal energy (taṣasthā-śakti), they mostly go to the side of the spiritual energy (chit-śakti). There they find the light of their positive spiritual existence in the company of their all-attractive Lord in the eternal world, Vaikuṅṭhaloka. Some unfortunate souls, however, come to the negative side, the māyā-śakti.

**kṛṣṇa bhulī' sei jīva anādi-bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsāra-duḥkha**

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 20.117)

Sometimes jīva-souls, by their misfortune, jump into māyā [illusion] to attempt to enjoy material existence. When their vision, not seeing Kṛṣṇa, moves to the negative side, they see māyā, and immediately feel, “Oh! There is great beauty! I can master and enjoy that energy.” In this way unfortunate jīva-souls jump into the darkness of the illusory environment.

Māyā means the illusory environment, the Lord’s shadow potency, His dark power, which attracts the sparking light of the jīva-souls. *Māyā Devī* is one of the Lord’s potencies, and by His will she has great attractive power.

**kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha hañā bhoga-vāñchhā kare
nikaṭa-stha māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare**

(Śrī Prema-vivarta: 6.3)

Whenever unfortunate souls want to enjoy separately from their Lord and come under the spell of *Māyā’s* attraction, they jump towards her and she immediately embraces them. She weaves a web around them, binding them as her prisoners. These jīva-souls are immediately covered by the dark power of *Māyā’s* illusory environment and thrown into the waves of birth and death.

The unfortunate group of jīva-souls who are bound by *Māyā Devī* is very small though. Actually, within the total transcendental reality, the māyik jagat, the illusory material universe, is like a very small skin spot. The souls in this world are a very

small, insignificant minority, and they live in the material environment like prisoners. When people break the rules and regulations of society they are sent to prison. Prison is supposed to reform criminals, and this world is like a prison-house for purifying the jīva-souls. But the number of people in prison is always a very small percentage of the total population. Today in India there are at least 90 crores [900 million] of people but only 25 lakhs [2.5 million] of prisoners. It is only a small portion of the jīva-souls who unfortunately want to enjoy māyā and are subjected to the bondage and suffering of material existence.

*Under My direction My material
energy produces this world
of moving and stationary forms.
Thus the world repeatedly
manifests.*

**mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-charācharam
hetunānena kaunteya jagad viparivartate**

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 9.10)

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained that the material universe functions in a cyclic way under the Lord's direction. By the Lord's will, the material energy manifests the matter of the mundane universe and then becomes filled with moving and non-moving life forms, that is, jīva-souls. In His form of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa casts His glance upon māyā. Through His glance He throws His power, His liṅgam [male potency] into prakṛti, the material nature. *Tal-liṅgam Bhagavān Śambhur (Bs: 5.8)*: the personification of that reproductive potency thrown by Viṣṇu is Śambhu, Lord Śiva. When Viṣṇu casts His glance over māyā, the form of Śambhu appears, and it is Śambhu who directly touches māyā, the material energy. Through Śambhu, Viṣṇu's neutral power made up of the jīva-souls enters into the womb of material nature and comes out in a divided way in millions and millions of parts. In this way all the jīva-souls enter into the material world and activate the material energy.

Evolution: material or spiritual?

Question: As a university student, all of my science classes are based on Darwin's theory of evolution that humans evolved from previous species who evolved from inanimate matter.

How can I integrate Darwin's theory of evolution with your teachings?

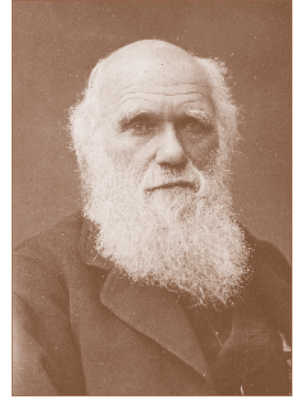
Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: If two ideas are completely different, like negative and positive charges, then it is not possible to harmonise them. If you try to combine negative and positive charges without the support of a neutral position, then a shock is inevitable. There is always a clash between materialistic and spiritual theories, so you will only find harmony when you try to discover what is actually negative and positive.

Mundane educational institutions teach Darwin's theory of evolution, although it has never been proven. Darwin's theory is not a complete explanation of existence because it does not actually explain where movement and consciousness come from. Its conclusions are speculations based upon observations of fossils. Because Darwin's theory is based only upon the observations of the senses, it cannot properly determine the true origin of consciousness—the senses are themselves instruments of consciousness.

Darwin's theory of evolution is completely different from conclusive transcendental knowledge. Transcendental knowledge appears directly in the heart through revelation in the association of sādhus and scriptures. It does not rely on the senses or mind. Only transcendental knowledge is completely authoritative and free from illusion. Only through transcendental knowledge is there the possibility of having complete and satisfying knowledge of all existence—of both matter and spirit.

Organised creation

The scriptures explain that there are 400,000 types of human species, *chatur-lakṣāṇi mānuṣāḥ* (Pp). We can agree that it is possible for some of these types of human species to come about according to the ideas given in Darwin's theory, but we can never agree that all humans came about in that way. The Vedic scriptures explain that creation begins with the appearance of



Charles Darwin

Brahmā, and Brahmā engineers the rest of the universal creation under the order of the Supreme Lord.

One name of Brahmā is Svayambhū, ‘Self-born’. Brahmā is the first created being within the universe, and there is only one Brahmā. There is only one self-born being because Brahmā himself creates all other beings. In the past, and certainly within the five thousand years of modern history, there has never lived another being like Brahmā.

The scientists have now developed their gene theory. Through that they have changed the forms of some species. But if all the various life forms in this world were created by accidental changes in genes, then another being like Brahmā might have been created. Because this has never happened we can understand that creation is not random and species do not appear simply by accident. In other words, consciousness is controlling creation.

Expressions of desire

The Vedas explain that creation happens by the will of the Lord. But they explain that creation does not actually come from the Lord Himself directly; it comes from and through His marginal potency, the *taṣasthā-śakti*. To understand this we can consider that everything we can recognise in this world—humans, trees, fish, animals, insects, rocks, clouds, and so on—is an expression of consciousness. All recognisable forms in this universe are manifestations of *jīva*-souls. The Vedic theory is that the spark of life, the *jīva*-soul, is spiritual and eternal. It is not a creation or formulation of matter. The spiritual *jīva*-souls enter anywhere and everywhere within the dull matter of the material energy and give rise to so many different forms and combinations of material energy, according to their desires. Even though they are covered by material energy in this way, the *jīva*-souls, as sparks of life, particles of spirit, are not themselves material. The *jīva*-souls are spiritual, and, as conscious beings with desires, they express themselves differently within the material

energy. They give rise to all the different material forms and movement found within the universe. The creation of variegation within the material universe is actually produced by the presence, consciousness, and desires of the jīva-souls.

Infinitesimal and infinite

The jīva-soul's existence is very, very tiny. You cannot see it with a microscope.

bālāgra-śata-bhagasya śatadhā kalpitasya cha
bhago jīvaḥ sa vijñeyaḥ sa chānantyāya kalpate

(Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad: 5.9)

“The size of the jīva-soul's form is compared to the tip of a hair that has been divided 100 times and then divided 100 times again.”

It is miraculous that the sparking light of only one jīva-soul has the power to illuminate the entire universe. All atoms within the universe are forms animated by jīva-souls, and we can understand through the scientists' electron-proton theory how much power is present within every atom of creation, that is, within every jīva-soul. Everyone has heard about the power of the atomic bomb; they have heard about how much power is released when the form of only one atom is broken. In that way one can easily understand something about the greatness of the power of every jīva-soul.

To understand how the jīva-souls have such great power we can consider that even a part and parcel of the Infinite is infinite. Anywhere a jīvātmā is present, the Paramātmā [Supersoul] is also present. The Paramātmā lives in the heart of every jīvātmā. In the Upaniṣads it is said:

dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānaṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariṣvasjāte

(Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad: 4.6)

“Two birds, the Paramātmā and the jīvātmā, are perched together like friends on the same branch of a peepul tree.”

The Paramātmā is always with the jīvātmā, and the jīvātmā receives its power and light from the Paramātmā. The jīvātmā's existence is very subtle, but it can wield infinite power because it is directly related with the Infinite reality, the Paramātmā. Whether a jīva-soul lives within an elephant body, a tiger's body, an insect body, or a human body, is not a factor. The jīvātmā can show its light and power anywhere and everywhere. Material space and size are insignificant.

Matter and consciousness

There is another way we can understand the relationship between matter and consciousness. If someone asks, "What came first, consciousness or fossils?", we answer that we cannot discuss fossils if we are not first conscious. Consciousness is original. Fossils come into existence through the presence, and by the influence, of consciousness. Consciousness always comes first, before matter.

This is difficult to understand, and I even heard Śrīla Guru Mahārāj debating this point with other Āchāryas. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would never accept fossils to be original. He would always say that behind fossils is consciousness; otherwise, it would not be possible for them to exist. The knower must exist before the known object. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's conclusion was, "Everything is existing within consciousness, and everything is built by consciousness. Nothing is jaḍa [matter]."

What is matter? Matter is our illusion. Matter is our misconception. One property of consciousness is that it is always moving, it is always active and dynamic. All movement in the universe is produced by the influence of consciousness upon matter. A stone may appear to you to be solid matter, but actually there is movement, and therefore consciousness, within stone. Within one day we cannot understand that it is moving, but after a thousand years or ten thousand years we will see that a stone has changed its form. In this way we can



understand that at all times it is moving. How is it that stone is able to constantly move if there is not conscious existence within it? Our assertion is that everything we perceive is only a manifestation of the movement of consciousness, and that everything exists within consciousness.

The play of spiritual existence

Matter and consciousness are never the same thing. They both exist here in this world and we must understand the difference between them. Movement and evolution are properties of consciousness. Dull matter is only a shadow form. It does not move or evolve on its own; it takes shape according to the influence of consciousness upon it. Evolution can only take place on the conscious level. The movement and evolution of consciousness is positive. Whatever happens within the shadow forms of matter is *māyā* and is negative. It is merely a passing show. The word for *universe* in Sanskrit is *jagat*, which means *gachchhati iti jagat*: that which is always moving. This means that the universe is always moving due to the presence of the *jīva*-souls within it. No form within the universe is permanent. Everything is always changing, and nothing remains in any particular form eternally.

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura has systematically explained in his book *Śrī Chaitanya-śikṣāmṛta* how the *jīva*-souls animate material nature. He explains that consciousness, which is called *chetanā* in the scriptures, animates all forms within the universe in five primary categories: *āchchhādita-chetanā* [covered consciousness], *saṅkuchita-chetanā* [suppressed consciousness], *mukulita-chetanā* [budding consciousness], *vikaśita-chetanā* [blooming consciousness], and *pūrṇa-vikaśita-chetanā* [fully blossomed consciousness]. I printed one book called *Paramārthadharma-nirṇaya* to broadcast this knowledge. If you read it you will clearly understand how the *jīva*-souls are situated within the material energy.



The Centenary Memorial Building, the museum and guesthouse built at Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh Nabadwīp in honour of the 100th anniversary of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's appearance day.

Stone and plant consciousness

There is consciousness within all forms found in the universe. Āchchhādita-chetanā means covered consciousness. All the beauty of this world made of 'immovable' objects, like rocks, stones, and metals like gold, are made of āchchhādita-chetanā.

When I was purchasing materials for a building in Nabadwīp I was surprised to find that there were two kinds of stone for sale: dead stone and living stone. The living stone was a little more expensive than the dead stone. I was surprised that the quarrymen recognised a difference between dead stone and living stone. That sort of knowledge is found in the Vedas, but how did these villagers come to understand it? They had never studied the scriptures or seen any of the mountains moving, but that knowledge came to them simply from working with the stone.

I asked them to show me how to recognise the difference between the two forms of stone. In that way I learned something from them. Through this example we can understand that consciousness is passing through stone forms of life.

All varieties of plant life are also considered āchchhādita-chetanā. Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose scientifically proved the theory that plants and trees have consciousness. This is true for all plant life. I personally saw a plant in Fiji that would noticeably contract when you touched it and return to its position when you moved your hand away. Consciousness must be present within plants; otherwise, this would be impossible. In this way the jīva-souls, the sparks of life, particles of spirit, exist within even the grossest material forms.

Animal consciousness

Saṅkuchita-chetanā means consciousness showing a small fraction of its capacity and activity; consciousness minutely manifesting its natural thinking, feeling, and willing. Saṅkuchita-chetanā refers to insects, aquatics, animals, and similar creatures.

All visibly moving forms, apart from humans, are considered saṅkuchita-chetanā.

jalajā nava-lakṣāṇi sthāvarā lakṣa-vimśati
kṛmayo rudra-saṅkhyakāḥ pakṣiṇām daśa-lakṣaṇam
triṁśal-lakṣāṇi paśavaḥ chatur-lakṣāṇi mānuṣāḥ

(*Padma-purāṇa*)

In the scriptures we hear that there are 8,400,000 different species in this world: 900,000 kinds of aquatics, 2,000,000 kinds of plants, 1,100,000 kinds of insects and reptiles, 1,000,000 kinds of birds, 3,000,000 kinds of four-legged beasts, and 400,000 kinds of humans. All these life forms, except the plants and humans, are considered saṅkuchita-chetanā.

I have seen some very nice examples of animals showing their conscious nature. Once in a film about jungle lions I saw a lioness chase a group of deer. Within the group of deer were a mother and her baby. When the group of deer saw the lioness coming towards them, all the deer began to run away, but the mother deer could not run very fast because she was trying to bring her baby with her. The rest of the deer ran away from the lioness to safety, but the mother and her baby could not. When the lioness caught up to the mother deer and was about to jump and catch the mother deer, she suddenly stopped. I saw the eyes of the lioness then, and the feeling came to me that she was thinking, "Oh, I am foolish. I did not know this deer had a baby with her." That lioness was hungry, but she did not kill that mother deer. After she saw the mother deer's baby she let them go and began to search for food elsewhere. When I saw this, I felt, "Yes, even jungle animals have some consciousness and religion."

Human life

Mukulita-chetanā means budding consciousness, a sprout of consciousness which will soon blossom into its full form. This means human life. In human life, consciousness actively begins



Jagadish Chandra Bose

to expand. In human life, the jīva-souls have some control over their thinking, feeling, and willing. They can make conscious choices. Dogs, tigers, and other species have brains but no species' brain has as much power as the human brain. The human form is more capable than all other forms; it has the facilities of self-consciousness, intelligence, and discrimination. In human life the jīva-souls can consider what is good and what is bad, and then apply what they decide. Jīva-souls in the human form can consciously search for and discover what is spiritually beneficial for themselves.

But the natures and forms of humans are so variegated. *Chatur-lakṣāṇi mānuṣāḥ*: in the scriptures 400,000 species of humans are differentiated! This means there is great diversity within human life. Diversity means differences in mentality. Within human life there are many stages of realisation about the proper use of intelligence and consciousness. These are described by Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura as mukulita-chetanā [budding consciousness], vikaśita-chetanā [blooming consciousness], and pūrṇa-vikaśita-chetanā [fully blossomed consciousness].

The stage of mukulita-chetanā refers to humans who live as little more than animals (saṅkuchita-chetanā), humans who do not utilise their conscious nature properly for spiritual progress. Atheists, jungle-men, and persons from very low grade cultures with only hazy religious sentiments are described as mukulita-chetanā.

Religious life

āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṁ cha
sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṇām
dharmo hi teṣāṁ adhiko viśeṣo
dharmaṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ

(*Hitopadeśa*)

We must understand the difference between animal life and human life. Human life can be almost the same as animal life.



Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura

Humans may live in an organised way in cities and buildings, and animals may live in the jungle, but both humans and animals engage in eating, sleeping, fearing, and enjoying (*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam cha*). These are the natural activities of life for all species. So what is special about human life? What makes human life more than animal life? It is not actually brain power or intellectual capacity but dharma, religion. In human life jīva-souls can connect with their soul's natural religious mood and culture. If humans don't use their brain and consciousness to connect with their transcendental existence as jīva-souls through dharma, then there is no difference between their human life and the life of a beast.

Dharma has been explained in a very nice way by Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura. He explained that if we search everywhere throughout all the planes of existence in the universe, *ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ* (Bg: 8.16), we will find that everywhere there is some form of religion, some form of dharma. He used the example of water. What is the religion of water? Water's nature, or religion, is liquidity. Fire's religion is producing heat and light. A stone's religion is to be hard. In this way he gave many examples. Every object and being within the universe functions according to its dharma because of the presence of consciousness, the presence of a jīva-soul, within it. The jīva-souls always exhibit their dharma, nature, but they do so through their forms of embodiment. The jīva-souls are sometimes covered by an animal form, sometimes by an insect form, and sometimes by a human form. All these forms are coverings, part of the illusory environment of māyā, which make the jīva-souls forget their spiritual dharma, their true nature as eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa.

Blossoming consciousness

Dharma means religion, but *dharma* literally means 'to hold'. When jīva-souls have a human form and their thinking, feeling, and willing is manifest clearly to them, they must practise dharma consciously by holding their mind and mentality in

a good position. This is the vital point of human life. If anyone consciously leads a religious life, actively practising the dharma of the soul, they will always be benefitted, and their practice of religious life will help establish them in their natural position, in their true spiritual dharma.

sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihātā
yayātmā suprasīdati
(SB: 1.2.6)

“Humanity’s supreme dharma is unconditional and unalloyed (self-manifest and irresistible) devotion to the transcendental Lord, which completely satisfies the soul.”

sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.2.6)

The supreme form of all dharma is Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, and the practice of other dharmas gradually develops into Kṛṣṇa-bhakti. The practice of dharma, which is what makes human life more than animal life, ultimately establishes the jīva-souls in their natural position as servitors of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In the stage of mukulita-chetanā the jīva-soul’s consciousness can open itself to revelation from the transcendental plane. When the consciousness of any jīva-soul is influenced by higher consciousness, then it gets sensible and clean knowledge. When revealed knowledge appears within the hearts of the jīva-souls, then they embrace their natural theistic life and ideal. This is when the jīva-souls begin to enter into their natural position and behave according to their true nature. This stage is called vikaśita-chetanā, blossoming consciousness.

Revelation enters the hearts of the jīva-souls by the grace of the Lord and the grace of an expert devotee of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa consciousness exists within all jīva-souls but it is suppressed by the illusory environment. By the grace of a pure sādhu, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which already exists inside the jīva-souls, is revealed to them. Through the practice of religious thought and culture (dharma) in the association of pure devotees, the jīva-souls’ consciousness develops day by day more and more. In this way the Kṛṣṇa consciousness that is already within them marches into the open doors of their hearts from without, and through that the jīva-souls feel the joy of their own pure existence.



Consciousness in full bloom

If, with consciousness, anyone will try to understand the Lord, then the Lord will reveal Himself to that soul, and then the soul won't have any further question about the Lord's existence. Until then one can try to believe and practise the soul's dharma in the association of pure devotees. The pure devotee is in the

highest stage of conscious evolution, pūrṇa-vikaśita-chetanā [fully blossomed consciousness]. A jīva-soul in that stage is described as a siddha-mahāpuruṣ, someone who has genuine and direct experience of the Lord, someone whose pure feelings are enriched with full consciousness of the Lord's Name, Form, Fame, and Pastimes. Everything transcendental and mundane is seen and known by a siddha-mahāpuruṣ.

The play of the Sweet Absolute

In this way the jīva-souls animate the material energy and exist at different stages of spiritual evolution. One name of the transcendental world is the *ātma-jagat*. Through this name we can understand that the jīva-souls do not come from the material world: they are actually members of the eternal world and have an eternal form. *Jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān Tad-vimuktānś cha bhāvāt*. When the jīva-souls misuse their freedom, they enter the material nature and suffer in the bondage of karma. When they are re-established in their natural consciousness of eternal service to Kṛṣṇa, then they transcend Māyā's illusions and feel supramundane joy. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj described this play of the Sweet Absolute with the jīva-souls in his book *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness*.

The Waves of Birth and Death

The mundane world is a plane of exploitation. No one can live there without exploiting others. It has been described in the scriptures as bhogamaya bhūmikā.

ahastāni sahasānām apadāni chatuṣ-padām
phalgūni tatra mahatām jīvo jīvasya jīvanam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.13.47)

“Those who have hands live on those who have no hands. Those who have four legs live on those who have no legs. The big live on the small. No living being can maintain its body without exploitation because every living being’s food is another living being.”

In the mundane world everyone is exploiting everyone. No one’s life can continue without exploitation. The jīva-souls are by nature active; they must always do something, and in this world the jīva-souls cannot do anything without exploiting others. If someone eats something, he eats someone else’s energy. If someone builds a house, or a stadium, or anything, he has to take the material to build that from somewhere. Even if

someone wants to fill in a hole, he must dig up earth from elsewhere to do that. Every jīva-soul takes the energy it needs to act and maintain its body from other living beings in the form of the products produced by the sky, air, fire, water, and earth. In this way the embodied jīva-souls are forced to exploit each other to fulfil their needs and desires in this mundane world. This is always the situation in the mundane environment: exploiting to exist.

Action and reaction

We have seen that sometimes scientists who study the mundane world come to understand something about scriptural thought. For example, I have heard from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj about Isaac Newton and his third law of motion: “To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction”. Newton’s third law is a perfect explanation of karma. The theory of karma is very clearly explained in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. What Newton recently ‘discovered’, the law of karma, was actually explained in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* five thousand years earlier:

te taṁ bhuktvā svarga-lokaṁ viśālaṁ
kṣīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti
evaṁ trayī-dharmam anuprapannā
gatāgataṁ kāma-kāmā labhante

(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 9.21)

“Within the mundane universe pious jīva-souls enjoy in the heavenly planets, and impious jīva-souls suffer in hellish planets after leaving their earthly bodies. When the jīva-souls’ positive or negative karmic reactions are finished, they are born again in the earthly plane.”

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā explains in this way how creation and the wheel of karma revolve within the material environment.

The mundane universe is a passing show (*gachchhati iti jagat*). The jīva-souls are constantly revolving up and down through the different species and planes of life in this universe according

to their karma. The jīva-souls try in many ways to find satisfaction, but none of their attempts are successful.

kabhu svarge uṭhāya, kabhu narake ḍubāya
daṇḍya-jane rājā yena nadīte chubāya

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 20.118)

“In material life, the jīva-souls are sometimes raised to heaven or material prosperity, and sometimes drowned in a hellish situation by their karma. This experience of the jīva-soul is similar to a king’s punishment of a criminal. When a king wants to punish a criminal, he orders his servitor, ‘Take this criminal, drown him until he is nearly dead, raise him up, give him one breath, and then force him under water again.’”

The jīva-soul’s existence and passing enjoyment in this world is comparable to being forced above and below water again and again. The equal and opposite reactions of the jīva-souls’ exploitative actions, done even for survival, force them into this condition.

Inescapable karma

We can also recognise Newton’s third law in another verse of Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā:

mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ
āgamāpāyino ’nityās tāms titikṣasva bhārata

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā 2.14)

“Heat, cold, happiness, sadness, and all the other phases of mundane life come and go. They are a passing show. Whenever happiness comes, sadness follows it, and whenever sadness comes, happiness follows it. This is the nature of the material environment.”

The jīva-souls must tolerate these changes. Happiness and sadness are actually the reactions to the jīva-souls’ own activities. All of the jīva-souls’ experiences and actions register within the cyclic system of karma, and no jīva-soul can avoid the reactions produced by karma.



Sir Isaac Newton

‘Miraculous news’

In the *Mahābhārata*, Dharmarāj asked Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj, “What is the news in this world?” Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj replied:

māsarttu-darvī pariḡhaṭṇena
sūryāgninā rātri-divendhanena
asmin mahā-moha maye kaṭāhe
bhūtāni kālāḥ pachatīti vārtā

(*Mahābhārata: Vana-parva, 313.118*)

“The news of this world is that the conditioned jīva-souls are being cooked by Mahākāl [Universal Time] in the pot of worldly illusion, which is heated by the fire of the sun and burns on the firewood of the days and nights. The pot is stirred by the ladles of the months and seasons, and within the pot the jīva-souls are suffering so much, covered with the masala [flavouring] of kāma [lust], krodha [anger], lobha [greed], mada [pride], moha [illusion], mātsarya [envy], and the desires for kanak [wealth], kāmīnī [women], and pratiṣṭhā [fame]. This is the only news in this world.”

Dharmarāj then asked Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj, “What is miraculous in this world?” Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj replied:

ahany ahani bhūtāni gachchhanti yama-mandiram
śeṣāḥ sthāvaram ichchhanti kim āścharyam ataḥ param

(*Mahābhārata: Vana-parva, 313.116*)

“Day by day the embodied souls are suffering so much in their worldly lives and finally departing for the house of death. Day by day before their eyes death takes away their father, mother, sons, daughters, neighbours, and so on. But the jīva-souls who stay behind think, ‘I will not go. I will never die. I will stay here and enjoy everything. So many others have gone, but I won’t. I will stay here and enjoy. Everyone else has died, but death will never come for me. I will stay here forever.’”

This is the foolishness of the conditioned souls, and Yudhiṣṭhir Mahārāj described it as the greatest wonder in the

world. The conditioned souls think they will live this particular life eternally. It is simply not true. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj used to quote this English verse:

*The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave
Awaits alike the inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.*

(Thomas Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard')

Here the position of everything in this world is very simply explained: according to everyone's culture, qualities, karma, and so on, their position within material life goes up, then down, up again, down again, and finally to the grave. The conditioned souls, however, are not able to properly understand this. When any soul does realise their position in this world, they feel:

**dina yāminyau sāyam prataḥ
śīsira vasantau punar āyātaḥ
kālaḥ krīḍati gachchhaty āyus
tad api na muñchaty āśā-vāyuh***

(Moha-mudgara-stotram: 12)

Again and again the sun rises, the sun sets, and days pass by, but the conditioned souls never really consider it. The conditioned souls always absorb themselves in eating, sleeping, fearing, and enjoying (*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaiṁ cha*). They only think about what they will have for dinner this evening, what they will have for breakfast tomorrow, and so on. While they are thus absorbed in material life, the days continue to pass, and beyond their control Time flows on.

The wheel of karma

Death and birth are very important questions for conditioned souls. The jīva-souls want to enjoy their existing lives forever. They make houses and families for this purpose. But at any time a car accident can happen and take anyone away from

*Day and night, dusk and dawn,
winter and springtime come and
go again and again. Time plays
on, and life passes away, but the
disease of desire never leaves me.
(Everything in this world comes
and goes in the course of time
except the false hope of material
happiness.)*

*Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj wrote two poetic Bengali translations of this verse by Śaṅkar Āchārya:

**divasa-rajani sandhyā-sakāla
ṣaḍ-ṛta-sane-khele mahākāla
nāṣe paramāyū; tabu āśā-vāyū
nā chhāḍe āmāya, e viṣama-dāya!**

*"Time plays with the days,
nights, dusks, dawns, and six
seasons, and takes away
my life. Yet the disease of
desire never releases me. This
is my dire condition!"*

divasa-yāminī-sandhyā-prabhāta
vasanta-śarat kare yātāyāta
kāla sethā khele nāṣe paramāyu
tabu nāhi chhāḍe duṣṭa āśā-vāyu

“Day and night, dusk and
dawn, and winter and spring
come and go. Time plays
amongst them and takes away
my life. Yet the disease of
wicked desire never releases me.”

their house and family. The jīva-soul cannot actually control anything. The reactions to one’s previous actions (karma-phal), can always forcibly oust one from any position in this world. Karmic reactions bring birth, death, old age, disease, happiness, and sadness to the jīva-souls within this material world. The jīva-souls never know when death will come to them and they will have to leave everything to take another birth.

According to their karma, jīva-souls may receive a human birth again or may revolve through the 8,400,000 varieties of species in this world. No one can stay in their present body forever. Everyone must change bodies according to the laws of karma. No one knows where their karma will take them, where they will stay, what they will do, or what their future will be. They only know that the karma-chakra, the wheel of karma, must push them forward. “To every action there is *always* an equal and opposite reaction.” Within the material environment the karma-chakra is always cycling, and the reactions to everyone’s previous actions are happening automatically.

Leaving the body

The waves of birth and death are always flowing within this environment, carrying away the jīva-souls. Some people think that dying in a plane crash is very terrible, but actually it is not an unhappy way to die. Before a plane crashes, when it is falling towards the earth, people lose their senses. When they die they do not feel what happened. They only later realise, “I am out of my body”, and wonder, “Where is my body? Where is my leg?” When their awareness returns to them after they die, they immediately recognise, “I am detached from my body”. Then they begin to search for their body. When they see one body part over here and one body part over there, they think, “How could I ever live in that body again? It is not possible.”

After jīva-souls depart from a body, they often try to enter back into it. But when a jīva-soul leaves a body there is no power for the body to run, and because of that the heart does

not beat and the body stops functioning. When this happens, the body begins to degrade, and after it has degraded it cannot work again properly. In this way it becomes impossible for jīva-souls to re-enter their previous bodies. After trying to re-enter his former body and being unsuccessful, a departed jīva-soul becomes very sad and finally begins following his body around. Even though he can't enter back into his body, he cannot forget his body. Until his body is cremated a departed jīva-soul follows his body, and again and again tries to enter into his body. But once a jīva-soul has left his body, and the body degrades, the jīva-soul cannot enter into his body again. It is like *Paradise Lost*.

Paradise Lost is an epic by John Milton in which the fate of the souls who turn away from God is examined. There death, sorrow, and emptiness are understood to be the consequences of accepting Satan's proposal, "Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven."

Disembodied life

When a jīva-soul follows his body to its cremation ground or grave, he thinks, "What are my relatives doing? Why are they burning my body? They should keep my body for some more time so I can try again to enter back into it."

When his body is finally burned or buried, the jīva-soul feels very helpless. He wonders, "Where should I go now?" After his body is cremated the jīva-soul visits his house, his old bedroom, and the homes of his relatives. He sees his son or mother or father crying, and he also feels very sad. He wants to show himself to his relatives, but he cannot. He tries to talk to his relatives, but they cannot hear him talking. Frustrated, he may go back to the cremation ground where his body was. Left without shelter the jīva-soul wanders around and around restlessly. He may stay at the cremation house thinking of his body, and other souls who were also cremated the same day may be there as well. He will see those souls and talk with them. They may be the souls of rickshaw wallahs, or kings, or anything else. In life a rickshaw wallah cannot speak with a king, but when they have left their bodies, they may live together in a tree near their cremation ground.

In this way the departed soul lives after his body is cremated, and he feels very hungry and thirsty, although he is unable to eat or drink. The departed soul still has his subtle body, his mental body, which contains all his feelings and desires. So he lives in a very helpless condition: full of desires with no way to satisfy them.

Vedic rites for the departed

It is a Vedic rule that three days after a jīva-soul departs his relatives on his daughter's side offer him some water and milk. This is done through mantram after his body's cremation.

sasa naṣṭo nirālabho vāyu-bhūto nirāśrayam
idaṁ kṣīra idaṁ nīra śraddhayā diya te 'pi mām

This mantram means, "You are living now in this cremation field. You have no place to rest and your soul has no formation (*nirālabho*). Your form is now like a *vāyubhūta*, an air form like a ghost, and you have no shelter (*nirāśrayam*). I am your daughter and I am offering you this water and milk. Through this mantram you will receive it and you will feel peaceful."

Mentally the departed jīva-soul then drinks that water and milk. Later his sons offer piṇḍa, traditional sacrificial articles. His sons will become the proprietors of his land, so they must do something good for their father. Ten days after his departure they shave their heads, take a bath in the Ganges or a body of water, put on new cloth, and make an offering to their father or whichever relative of theirs has departed. The departed soul accepts all the offerings through mantram. Through mantram there is communication on the mental plane. The departed soul then feels peaceful, "I have no body or I have no existence among my relatives, but they are still remembering me and they are still doing something good for me. I am not so helpless. Help is coming to me from my relatives." In this way the departed soul feels some mental peace.

After offering piṇḍa the departed soul's relatives perform a śrāddha ceremony. In remembrance of his necessities—maybe

a pair of shoes, an umbrella, some cloth, or some food—they make an offering in his name to a group of brāhmaṇs. There are sixteen items used in this offering. When the departed soul's relatives supply brāhmaṇs in the ceremony with these necessities, the departed soul receives a year's supply of his necessities mentally.

In this way, on the mental level, the departed soul's subtle body receives ten or twelve years of food when a group of ten or twelve brāhmaṇs is fed. In his name his relatives feed a group of brāhmaṇs, and all the property they offer is enjoyed by him mentally. Each of his relatives bears witness, "This śrāddha ceremony is the Vedic practice for departed jīva-souls, and I am offering these articles for the benefit of my father", or mother, or other relative, according to their relationship. Then the śrāddha ceremony is finished. The brāhmaṇs from the ceremony take responsibility for the departed soul's spiritual advancement and bring some light to him. Within a few days he feels the darkness of his situation leave, and he feels detachment in his mind.

The ghost plane

This is the traditional Vedic process. If a departed soul is a Vaiṣṇava, then all of this is not necessary. The best thing that can be done for him is to offer some preparations to the Lord in His Deity form and then serve the Vaiṣṇavas with that prasādam. Serving the Vaiṣṇavas in the name of the departed soul is the best way to help him, and no problems will come to that Vaiṣṇava if a traditional śrāddha ceremony is not held.

Anyhow, after his death a departed soul wants to speak with his relatives, but he cannot. At that time his experience is very bitter. Some days after the ceremony for his passing the grief of his relatives begins to fade and the departed soul thinks, "What is this? Now they are forgetting me. I need to move on and choose my future path. Where shall I go?"

When a jīva-soul is not embodied he can move very quickly over the earth. The departed soul begins to search for his

previous connections who still may be on the mental plane. He searches for his forefathers or persons from his past life that have already departed. He searches for his former associates and maybe he finds his grandfather seated under a tree meditating in the Himalayas. Even if he finds some of his previous connections, none of them say to him, “Oh, there you are! Come here! Come here!” No one responds to him like that. The other departed jīva-souls he meets in the mental plane look at him innocently. They advise him, “It is natural, your feelings. Our feelings were the same as yours when we first left our previous bodies. Now you should try to understand our sober mood and try to proceed towards a higher destiny.”

Question: Mahārāj, there is an Indian lady here who lost her son a few months ago. She is still grieving very much as though it happened yesterday. Will the soul of her son suffer because of this?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: That soul may or may not suffer. That soul knows his mother is foolishly crying for him. He knows he cannot go back to her and she cannot see him. Sometimes in that situation a departed soul may avoid his mother. But if he has much affection for her, he may continue to live near her. Also, sometimes a departed soul may take on a shadow form through great concentration with his subtle body. That means he may become a bhūt [ghost]. Through concentration a soul may take the form of a ghost because of his attachment for his previous worldly life and relatives, but he cannot exist in that form for a long time.

Mental experience

Generally a departed soul will try to see how he can go towards a higher standard of life. According to his previous karma he gets an opportunity to stay in some place he desires, and he also gets the opportunity to do what he desires. This all happens on the mental level. On the mental level the vision of departed



souls is clearer than the vision of humans. Actually, it is the opposite of human vision. Departed souls can see things very far away from them but they cannot see things near to them. If a departed soul thinks of the ocean, the ocean will come to him on the mental level. If a departed soul thinks of a garden, a garden will come before him. Whatever he thinks of will come before him according to his karma (previous experience).

When things come before him, he thinks, "What shall I do with this?" If his previous karma is good and he also had some association with sādhus, he will use his thoughts to try to satisfy the Lord. If someone has given him good association and advised him, "O boy, while you are here (in this disembodied mental state) try to meditate", then he will think, "I am happy when I think of a flower garden so I will meditate on that to satisfy the Lord." Then he will think of a flower garden, the flower garden will come into his mind, and if he has a proper cultured mood, he will offer flowers from that garden to a Deity mentally. In this way he can offer the fruits of his karma, the qualities of his previous experience, to the Lord according to his cultured mood, and when he will offer that to the Lord he will receive double the satisfaction he would by enjoying it himself. In this way a departed soul is tested on the mental plane and must try to do something positive there.

The waves of birth and death

As he is living on the mental plane a departed soul's previous karma also pushes him forward. On the mental plane there are always waves moving, the waves of janma and mṛtyu, birth and death. These waves are always flowing throughout the mental plane. Generally the souls existing in the mental plane avoid the waves of birth and death. When those waves come to them they try to move out of the way. They do not want to be carried away by those waves to take birth again. The waves of birth and death come like thunder. When departed souls see the waves of birth and death, they think, "These waves

will knock me senseless.” When souls on the mental plane see the thunderous wave of birth coming towards them they feel afraid. They know that that thunderous wave will knock them senseless and take them to an unknown destination. They avoid that wave and live in the mental plane according to their karma.

Flying to heaven and hell

Mostly, departed souls try to move towards a higher standard of thinking while they are living in the mental plane. If they have a tendency to enjoy and some pious karma (punya), then they will feel some sort of air come and push them up to Svargaloka (heaven). In heaven there are many enjoyable things and departed souls enjoy them there according to their karma. The reactions to the actions they did in their previous lives come to them and they enjoy the heavenly environment.

If a departed soul has some bad karma, he is taken to an unpleasant environment. There he feels fearful and hungry. He feels burning sensations. He feels as though he is in the middle of a thunderstorm. He feels many varieties of miseries. In India you will see images of narak [hell]: people being killed, burned, scalped, eaten by vultures, and so on. All these reactions happen to a departed soul in his subtle body on the mental level in hell, and he cries so much as he suffers. According to a soul's karma he will either suffer in Narak or enjoy in Svargaloka.



Rebirth

When a departed soul's karma is finished he must again take birth. This is the law. He will not be able to avoid it. It will happen suddenly as though in the meantime. The waves of janma and mrtyu, birth and death, will come and take him forcibly to his birth. He will be knocked senseless and forced down to the ground of the earth. Unconsciously he will take on the form of a tree or plant and then a fruit. From the fruit he will move

into the body of a human, animal, or insect according to the reactions of his karma. If his next body will be a human body, he will take the form of some rice or some food, and in this way move into the body of his future father. From his father's body he will move into the womb of his mother.

Sometimes when a soul is in the womb of his mother, his consciousness will suddenly come back to him. He will see his own form as an ātmā [soul], and he will see that the Paramātmā [Supreme Soul] is living with him. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur has described this experience within the womb:

**jananī-jāṭhare, chhilāma yakhana,
viṣama bandhana-pāśe
eka-bāra prabhu! dekhā diyā more,
vañchile e dīna dāse**

(Śaraṇāgati: 1.2)

*While I was bound in the terrible
confiner of my mother's womb,
You once revealed Yourself to me,
O Lord! Yet since then You have
deprived this poor servant.*

Not everyone receives this consciousness in the womb, but Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur has described it in one of his songs. When the jīva-soul is living in the womb of his mother he has some general consciousness and feelings. When the jīva-soul's body and senses form within the womb, his awareness begins to come back to him, though it is not so strong, after being knocked senseless by the waves of birth and death. But when he is born and comes out from his mother's womb, he forgets everything. His next life begins from that moment.

Sometimes some persons can see mental pictures of their previous lives even after they have taken on a new body. Sometimes when a child is sleeping or looks into the sky, his vision goes beyond this planet, and he sees into another plane of experience. This has been researched in the past.

Picking up where you left off

After birth the jīva-soul loses all memory of his previous experience, and his karma provides him with opportunities for his future.

pūṛva janmārjitā vidyā pūṛva janmārjitaṁ dhanam
pūṛva janmārjitaṁ karma agre dhāvati dhāvati

If he performed some pious activities, or gathered some knowledge or wealth, in his previous life, that follows him into his future life. He cannot see how this happens but it happens. For example, I remember seeing a young girl who played harmonium like an expert the first time she touched a harmonium. She could immediately play and sing very difficult tunes after hearing them only once or twice. She could easily play music that many adults could not play. This quality came to her through her previous karma. According to one's karma one may have particular qualities that bring them quickly to an advanced stage of practice.

In this way the next birth of a soul begins. The atmosphere of his birth may sometimes help him, and may sometimes go against him, according to his karma. Finally that birth passes and his body goes to the grave again. In this way the waves of janma and mṛtyu, birth and death, always flow throughout this mundane world, and the jīva-souls revolve through the passing show of material existence.

The Waves of Kāma and Prema

As humans we all know we have a human body. There is no doubt that we've taken human birth. But how has such fortune come to us? Somehow we came to our mother's womb, and from our mother's womb to where we are now. But we don't really know how we came into our mother's womb and where we were before that. Most persons in this world are not using their time to try to understand this and discover how they can make the best use of their life. The sādhus and scriptures come to give people proper consciousness about this.

The most important question of life

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* it is described that when Mahārāj Parīkṣit was cursed to die within seven days, he asked all the great ṛṣis and munis of his time, "How can I make the best possible use of this short time?"

Many ṛṣis and munis were present in a grand assembly and they gave their opinions according to their ability. But it was as though so many different bottles of medicine were brought to a sick man and he could not decide which one to take. All the



ṛṣis and munis were very scholarly and qualified, but Mahārāj Parīkṣit felt confused after hearing all of their different opinions. He said, “I cannot understand what to do. All of you together should decide what is best for me.”

At that time Śukadev Goswāmī came into the assembly, and all the ṛṣis and munis gave full honour to him. They told Mahārāj Parīkṣit, “This is the most qualified person to answer your question.”

Śukadev Goswāmī sat upon a throne in front of everyone. Mahārāj Parīkṣit worshipped him, and then asked, “How can I derive the greatest benefit from life within the short period of time I have left to live?”

When Śukadev Goswāmī heard Parīkṣit Mahārāj’s question he said, “Oh! You are so fortunate! You have asked the supreme question. This is the only question there is actually.”

śrotavyādīni rājendra nṛṇāṃ santi sahasraśaḥ
apaśyatām ātma-tattvaṃ gṛheṣu gṛha-medhinām

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 2.1.2)

“Other persons ask so many questions, ‘How do we cook this? How do we clean that? How do we perform fire sacrifice? How do we offer worship?’ When persons do not know the nature of the perfect question, then they ask so many questions that are unnecessary.” The only real question is, “How can we be supremely benefitted during our short lifetime?”

Mahārāj Parīkṣit knew he had only seven days to live when he questioned Śukadev Goswāmī. Unlike Mahārāj Parīkṣit, we are not sure how long our lifetime will last. But if we receive some proper consciousness and realise that we may die at any moment, then we will immediately try to discover what is supremely beneficial for our lives and try to proceed in that way. Without proper consciousness we will consider that we have so many mundane duties that are all ‘very important’.

Rare human birth

labdhvā su-durlabham idaṃ bahu-sambhavānte
mānuṣyam artha-dam anityam apīha dhīraḥ
tūrṇaṃ yateta na pated anu-mṛtyu yāvan
niḥśreyasāya viṣayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.9.29)

We have crossed over thousands of births to attain this human birth, which is *sudurlabha*, very rare and difficult to attain. It is only after crossing so many crises and critical positions that this rare human life is now in our hand. It requires so much pious activity to attain a human birth, and somehow we have reached it. We must not forget that it is very rare to attain, and can also be lost very easily.

Within the human form we can receive proper consciousness about the perfection of our life, the perfection of our existence as jīva-souls. In human life we can realise our spiritual potential,

that is, that our only actual duty is to satisfy our Lord, Kṛṣṇa. *Jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—Kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*: as jīva-souls we are all eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa.

**kṛṣṇa bhuli' sei jīva anādi-bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsāra-duḥkha**

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 20.117)

“Forgetting Kṛṣṇa we have abandoned His service, come to this material world, and experienced so many forms of suffering amidst the waves of birth and death.”

Now in our fortunate life as humans we have the opportunity to get liberation from our heavily conditioned position and find the proper help and strength we need to engage in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

Full dedication without hesitation

There is really only one question in our lives: “How may we be supremely benefitted?” And there is only one answer: “Satisfy Kṛṣṇa and you will get the supreme benefit of life.”

Here in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* it is expressed, “*Tūrṇām! Immediately* try to get that result! If you have any sobriety about your position do not wait one second. It is not necessary to wait one second to get that result; immediately start, and until death try for the supreme benefit of your life.” *Niḥśreyasāya* means the super-benefit of your spiritual life and the super-benefit of your mundane life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness will give you everything.

Viśayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt: eating, sleeping, fearing, and enjoying are possible in every birth in every species. We will experience that sort of enjoyment in every birth. Only in human birth do we have the opportunity to get the supreme benefit of our lives—Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**yāvat āchhaye prāṇa, dehe āchhe śakti
tāvat karaha kṛṣṇa-pāda-padme bhakti**

(Śrī Chaitanya-bhāgavat: Madhya-khaṇḍa, 1.342)

“So long as there is life and strength in your body, try to dedicate yourself to the service of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

Sleeping in illusion

The scriptures explain that our position as conditioned souls in the illusory environment is like that of a man dreaming. Because we are bewildered by Māyā and asleep to who we are and what is in our own best interest, we do not engage ourselves in Kṛṣṇa’s service and foolishly suffer through so many forms of material difficulty. The scriptures compare the suffering of the conditioned soul to a man dreaming that a tiger is coming to attack him. Within his dream the sleeping man feels very fearful and suffers great pain. Within his dream he cries out, “Tiger! Tiger! Ah! Save me! Save me!” If any of his friends are awake nearby, what will they do? If they are intelligent they will see that their friend is only dreaming and try to wake him up. They won’t search for a stick to scare away the tiger or anything like that. They will only try to wake him up, “Wake up! Wake up! There is no tiger attacking you. You are simply dreaming in your bed.” When the sleeping person awakens he will see, “Oh. There is no tiger attacking me actually. I was only dreaming.”

Awakening to our real interest

The conditioned jīva-soul’s position is like the dreaming man. All the conditioned souls are sleeping in their bodies under the influence of Māyā’s illusory environment. The jīva-souls’ suffering in this world, which is really only the suffering of their minds and bodies, is like the suffering felt by a sleeping person within a dream. To leave behind that suffering it is only necessary to wake up. If the conditioned jīva-souls can wake up to their real identity as souls they will automatically understand everything and see that all of their suffering is only part of Māyā’s illusion.

tasmād idam jagad aśeṣam asat-svarūpaṁ
svapnābham asta-dhiṣaṇaṁ puru-duḥkha-duḥkham

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 10.14.22)

The jīva-souls will see that the play of the material universe is simply a passing show put on by Māyā in which their consciousness is covered by illusion and they suffer so many varieties of sorrow as though within a dream. Under the influences of Māyā and karma the jīva-souls pass through so many challenges.

yayā sammohito jīva ātmānaṁ tri-guṇātmakam
paro 'pi manute 'narthaṁ tat-kṛtaṁ chābhipadyate

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.7.5)

“When the jīva-souls are deluded by Māyā they foolishly believe they are products of material nature, even though their very nature is superior to matter. Bound by identification with matter they try to exploit the illusory energy and then suffer the reactions to their misconceived actions.”

Māyā's illusory environment

Question: Is there anything wrong with the world today?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Misconception. Misconception about our real identity and function is the only problem within this world. Misconception means māyā. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained that *māyā* means 'mā'-'yā'. *Mā* means 'not' and *yā* means 'this', so 'what is not truth' is māyā. When the conditioned souls forget their Lord, they are polluted by mahāmāyā, the illusory environment, and suffer so much. Māyā Devī's job is to create chaos and confusion in the lives of the jīva-souls so that they become bewildered and cannot see the proper path and purpose of their life. Māyā Devī's function is to hide the jīva-souls' wealth: their eternal loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa. She does anything and everything to disturb the conditioned souls.



The conditioned souls cannot avoid association with mahāmāyā. Suffering in the lives of the conditioned souls is natural and expected; it is the natural reaction to the jīva-souls' misguided activities. That suffering is also good because it inspires fortunate souls to want to clean themselves of the pollution of the illusion; it inspires them to want to steady themselves and avoid further entanglement within material existence.

Positive and negative power

I am habituated to not believe Māyā. We learned from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and other great personalities that we should not believe Māyā Devī and the tricks of her illusory environment. Māyā may have so much power and be able to do anything and everything within her illusory environment, but we have learned not to be bewildered by that. We honour Māyā, but we never believe Māyā. No doubt we cannot fight with Māyā directly; we are tiny souls, and we must be defeated by her because the Lord's power is working behind her. But with the spiritual strength we receive from Guru-Vaiṣṇava we can cross over the ocean of māyā.

Māyā's power is negative. It comes from the Lord, but it is a negative power. The power coming through Guru-Vaiṣṇava to rescue the conditioned souls is positive; it is the Lord's positive power descending from His purposeful and positive world. Whenever the conditioned souls are connected with the Lord's positive power, they must be carried beyond the influence of His negative power. We have no doubt about this as the Lord's natural desire for love, beauty, charm, and sweetness is fulfilled by the unalloyed service of the jīva-souls. If any jīva-soul sincerely wants to dedicate himself to the Lord then the Lord will certainly rescue him and give him that chance. That is the Lord's nature. The Lord gave the jīva-souls free will for this purpose, as well as for facilitating His play of rescuing the jīva-souls with the attractive power of His divine form and Pastimes.

kṛṣṇa—sūrya-sama; māyā
haya andhakāra
yāhā kṛṣṇa, tāhā nāhi
māyāra adhikāra
(Cc: Madhya, 22.31)

“Kṛṣṇa is like the sun;
Māyā is like darkness.
Wherever Kṛṣṇa is present,
Māyā is absent.”

Sons of nectar

Within all the scriptures of India—the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and so on—the Lord invites all jīva-souls suffering in the illusory environment to return to His abode. He calls the jīva-souls,

śṛṅvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā

(Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad: 2.5)

“You are all sons of nectar. Why are you avoiding Me? Come back to your home, back to Godhead. Here everything is ready to give you happiness, ecstasy, service, and joy. Come back to the nectarean ocean of positive spiritual existence. It is your property and real identity; you are actually a proprietor of ecstatic spiritual nectar. Your soul has been covered by the illusory environment, but you are really a son of nectar. Divine nectar is here waiting for you to taste it. Please come and accept it.”

This is the main invitation of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, His associates, and all the scriptures. *Amṛta* means nectar, nectar that enables you to conquer death. Positive eternal existence is the jīva-soul’s transcendental wealth and natural position. *Śṛṅvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā*. The Lord and His associates call out in this way in order to rescue the conditioned souls and give them real immortal nectar—consciousness about their spiritual destiny. They call out to the conditioned jīva-souls:

*Arise! Awake! Find a master
and learn from him.*

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata

(Kāṭha-upaniṣad: 1.3.14)

“Awake! Arise! You are sleeping in the lap of Māyā. You do not know who you are or what you are doing. You are simply dreaming. Try to realise the value of your own existence and proceed to your life’s goal.”

Inspiring association

The general lifestyle of the conditioned souls does not lead them to sincerely consider spiritual life. But when the conditioned

souls come into the association of the sādhus and the scriptures, they can be inspired to take spiritual life seriously. When souls are in the association of persons who can discriminate between matter and spirit, persons who are pursuing the supreme benefit of their spiritual lives, then they will be influenced and inspired. They will think about their own position more and they will begin to feel the existence of their spiritual wealth. Then the soul will begin to enquire about matter, spirit, transcendence, karma, jñān, bhakti, and so on. Through discussion of these topics in the association of the sādhus, and by engaging in the service of the sādhus who enlighten them, the jīva-souls will be benefitted and their spiritual fortune will be revealed to them.

Essential questions

In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, Sanātan Goswāmī asked Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev:

‘ke āmi,’ ‘kene āmāya jāre tāpa-traya’
 ihā nāhi jāni—‘kemanē hita haya’
 ‘sādhya’-‘sādhana’-tattva puchhite nā jāni
 kṛpā kari’ saba tattva kaha ta’ āpani

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 20.102-103*)

“Who am I? Why am I suffering within this material environment? If I do not know this, how will I be benefitted? What is the supreme benefit of my life? How can I attain that? I do not know how to enquire properly. Please be merciful to me and reveal these truths in my heart.”

Sanātan Goswāmī was not foolish. He was the Prime Minister of Bengal under Nawab Hussain Shah, but he asked these questions. There are many examples of great persons in the scriptures, such as Mahārāj Parikṣit and Mahārāj Nimi, who asked simple questions. Such questions are actually the best questions for the conditioned souls.

The inspiration to ask questions about the essence of life comes to fortunate conditioned souls through self-realisation.

The *Vedānta-darśana* begins, “*Athāto Brahma jijñāsā*: now let us search for the Absolute.” *Athāto* means, “Now, after experiencing so many things in the mundane world and gradually coming to properly realise their position, the jīva-souls come to enquire about the Absolute.” The necessity for spiritual life can be felt by the conditioned souls only after a fundamental level of realisation.

Proper realisation begins by understanding consciousness and then the ātmā (self). The first lesson from the sādhu, the first lesson in spiritual life, is *ātmānam viddhi*: “Know thyself; try to understand your own self.”

When a conditioned soul becomes a sincere seeker and he finds a real master, then both the master and student are fully satisfied. The sādhu teaches the sincere seeker how to discover his own self. Self-realisation is the best thing for the conditioned souls, and it is the real necessity of the conditioned souls. When, through their fortune, souls begin to search for their own self, they will begin to feel it, at first a little and then more and more. When their feelings come to them, then their searching spirit will increase, and they will come to understand who they are and the illusion they have fallen into. The jīva-soul will gradually realise, “This body is not actually me. I am simply existing inside this body and mind. My mental position is playing under the influence of the illusory environment, and it is neither acting according to my soul’s intelligence nor guiding me properly.”

The transmigration of the soul

The conditioned souls under the influence of the illusory environment act foolishly, but they are not actually foolish. They need only to discover their ātmā (self). It is necessary for everyone to discover the ātmā so that they can act in their own best interest. As jīva-souls, we are not our mundane bodies. If we think about this we can feel that it is true. If my father dies and I look at his dead body, what is different? My whole life I have

been seeing his body, but now it is useless. Within two or three days it will spoil and emit a bad smell. There must have been something inside his body that has now left, some spark of life. You can call it a spirit or whatever you like. Only when his spirit was present was his body active and conscious. The presence of his soul, the *jīvātmā*, gave life to his body. Now that his *jīvātmā* has left, his body is dead.

In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* death is compared to the routine changing of clothing:

vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro 'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī
(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 2.22)

Every day we change our clothes. We take off our dirty clothes and put on clean clothes. When our clothes become too old we take them off and never put them on again. The *jīva*-soul's position in the mundane world is like this. The soul changes bodies the way the body changes its clothes. When the soul's body becomes too old or diseased, the soul leaves that body and accepts a new one. In this way the soul moves along the waves of birth and death. *Na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre* (*Bg*: 2.20): the soul is never killed when the body dies. The soul is *sanātana*: eternal, indestructible, always fully conscious, and active.

Self-discovery

It is also very helpful to understand clearly not only the relationship between the soul and the body, but also the soul and the mind.

indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ
(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 3.42)

The senses—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin—are the most prominent features of the body. *Indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ*: the mind is superior to the senses. If the mind does not give its

attention to the senses, then one does not experience anything. An elephant may walk right in front of someone, but he will not see it if he is not paying attention with his mind. In this way we can understand that the mind is superior to the senses. *Manasas tu parā buddhir*: the intelligence is superior to the mind. If someone does not have good intelligence, he will not get any good results from his mind. A madman has a mind, but because his mind is unsteady and not guided by his intelligence, he does not get a good result from his mind. Finally, *yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*: the soul is superior to the intelligence.

Vedavyās has given us a very nice example to understand this:

na rarājodupaś chhannaḥ sva-jyotsnā-rājitair ghanaiḥ
 ahaṁ-matyā bhāsitayā sva-bhāsā puruṣo yathā

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 10.20.19)

If we look for the moon in the night sky during the rainy season, we see only clouds floating across the sky. We are not able to see the moon. But how are we able to see the clouds? By the moon's light. Even though we cannot see the moon we know it is present in the sky because we are seeing the clouds with its light.

Like the moon, our ātmā is covered by the clouds of our subtle body—the mind, intelligence, and false ego (ahaṅkāra). The subtle body is called chidābhās, a hazy reflection of our consciousness. The conditioned souls live in the haze of their mundane mind, intelligence, and false ego, unable to directly see their true self (ātmā). But it is the light of the jīvātmā (soul) that illuminates their subtle body, and through their subtle body souls experience the mundane world. In this way we can understand that it is the jīva-soul's light that powers his intelligence, mind, senses, and body. The jīva-soul exists inside his mind and body but cannot be seen by them because it is the jīva-soul himself who is the seer.

Liberation: self-determination

When the jīva-soul begins to realise something about his position he considers, “I am transcendental to mental and physical existence. I now have this human body and the opportunity to pursue the supreme benefit of my life.” But when the Upaniṣads say, “*Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā*: you are all sons of nectar”, how much can a conditioned soul feel this to be true? Only a liberated soul can feel the full form of this truth. And liberation does not mean demolition of the jīva-soul’s individual existence; it means realising the jīva-soul’s eternal form as Lord Kṛṣṇa’s servitor.

muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 2.10.6)

In the scriptures it is explained that mukti (liberation) means giving up the illusory forms we have adopted within māyā and becoming situated in our eternal conscious form (svarūp) as a jīva-soul, as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa—*jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—Kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’*.

ihā yasya harer dāsyē karmaṇā manasā girā

nikhilāsv apy avasthāsu jīvan-muktaḥ sa uchyate

(Nārādīya-purāṇa)

“Anyone who gives up all other activities and wholeheartedly serves Kṛṣṇa with his body, mind, and words at all times under all circumstances is a liberated soul (*jīvan-muktaḥ*).”

Nothing a soul engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service does binds him, even though he may exist within the material environment and his activity may look like that of an ordinary person. A liberated soul may remain engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service here in the material world or he may cross over into the Lord’s eternal abode.

The transcendental service world

Kṛṣṇa explained the nature of His transcendental abode in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (15.6):

na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama

The transcendental world is illuminated by the light of Kṛṣṇa's divine form. Kṛṣṇa says, "The sun, the moon, and the light sources of this material world cannot illuminate that world. They have no power to do so. Once you go to that abode you will never return to the illusory environment."

Why would we not want to remain within the material world? Why is the illusory environment bad? Our Guru Mahārāj, Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, gave us a book named *The Search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Reality the Beautiful*. We can see this type of Kṛṣṇa conception present everywhere within this mundane world. Everyone everywhere is searching for pleasure, joy, happiness, wealth, beauty, love, and so on. They are searching in so many ways and spending so much of their energy. They are getting something of the essence of that from everything in this mundane world, but what they are experiencing in this world is only a shadow form of pleasure's essential existence.

Everyone's heart is full of rasa (pleasure), but it is distorted and spoiled within this mundane environment. Everyone here is exploiting to exist. Their pleasure is always coming at the expense of others, and no one can really be happy with that. Also, because their pleasure comes through exploitation, it is temporary; it can only last for a short time before its reaction comes and takes it away. Even if the conditioned souls find a situation with good possibilities for enjoyment within the mundane environment, they cannot remain there forever. Beyond their control the karmic waves of birth and death always flow throughout the mundane environment and carry them away.



The conditioned soul may make a nice building and experience many joyful matters there, but if he is to die then suddenly he is bound to leave everything behind: his house, wife, children, relatives, property, and so on. In the mundane world anything—accidents, injuries, death—can happen within a second. There is very little hope for happiness in the mundane environment. It is not actually a suitable environment for the jīva-souls. When the jīva-souls have an opportunity to go to the Lord’s transcendental abode, the eternal service world, why should they stay in the mundane world? They will not lose anything by going there.

Conditioned souls think, “I have a very nice television set. If I die and leave this life, I will lose that television set.” In the Lord’s abode the jīva-souls will realise their transcendental form and live in the transcendental service plane where everything they need—joy, ecstasy, happiness—is fully present in an exalted way. There in the transcendental world the jīva-souls never lose anything and they have everything. They have full opportunity to fulfil their existence through Kṛṣṇa’s service. If any soul once enters that world he will never feel the need to return to the mundane environment.

Mystic conscious worlds

The conditioned souls live in the mundane world, but liberated souls live in both the transcendental world and the material world. The material and transcendental worlds are completely different. Their only similarity is that they are both environments for the jīva-souls. Though they are separate, the transcendental world can appear within the material world. It is *vigata kuṅṭha yasmād*: it is infinite and can appear within the finite world. The material world is not material actually. It is an illusory conscious world, an illusory environment. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said, “Everything is existing within consciousness.” If a jīva-soul’s consciousness is covered by illusion and he

is not consciously connected with Kṛṣṇa, then he exists within Māyā's illusory environment, the mundane material environment, and he is a conditioned soul. But a liberated soul fully established in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has clean and clear vision; he sees the presence of Kṛṣṇa everywhere.

sarvatra kṛṣṇera mūr̥ti kare jhalamala
se dekhite pāya yāra ākhi niramala

If any jīva-soul sees and feels the presence and influence of Kṛṣṇa everywhere, then he is not under Māyā's control and does not live in a mundane environment. Rather, he is liberated and lives in the transcendental world, even while present within the material world.

Consciousness is necessary. The consciousness of the jīva-soul has two states: one under the control of Mahāmāyā, Kṛṣṇa's external potency, and the other under the control of Yogamāyā, Kṛṣṇa's internal potency. Beside the illusory environment Kṛṣṇa's divine play is going on everywhere. If any jīva-soul can understand Kṛṣṇa's play, then the illusory environment will leave him, he will get transcendental feelings of happiness in his heart, and he will enter the eternal service world.

Mysterious depth

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī has presented a very deep idea in *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*:

kāma-gāyatrī-mantra-rūpa, haya kṛṣṇera svarūpa,
sārdha-chabbiśa akṣara tāra haya
se akṣara 'chandra' haya, kṛṣṇe kari' udaya,
trijagat kailā kāmamaya

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 21.125*)

Here Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī gives an explanation of the Kāma-gāyatrī mantram that we receive at the time of initiation (dikṣā). Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī explains that there are twenty-four and a half syllables in the mantram.

Generally it is peaceful and agreeable to consider that there are either twenty-four or twenty-five syllables in the mantram. Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur tried to understand why Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī said there were twenty-four and a half syllables. He meditated and searched for the half syllable. When he was unable to find the half syllable, he became disturbed and began fasting: “If I cannot feel the meaning of this mantram it is unnecessary to continue living. If the meaning of this mantram will not come to me, I do not want to remain alive. I would rather die.”

He passed one, then two, then three days without food. Finally, on the night of the third day, Rādhārāṇī Herself came to him and gave him the meaning of the mantram: “In the scripture *Varṇāgama-bhāsvadī* you will find an explanation that the syllable *ya*, when followed by the syllable *vi*, is considered a half-syllable. Please be relieved and take prasādam. Do not give up your life in this way.”

This was the experience of Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur with this verse of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī. Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur was so learned, but he could not understand this point made by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī tasted the deep, deeper, and deepest aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The universe flooded with desire

This is not the matter that I feel is necessary to discuss about this verse. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī explains here that the Kāma-gāyatrī-mantram is Kṛṣṇa-svarūp: it is a nondifferent form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He explains that the twenty-four and a half syllables in the mantram are like moons manifest within Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental form. Kṛṣṇa’s face, Kṛṣṇa’s forehead, Kṛṣṇa’s eyes, and so on are all described as moons. This also, however, is not the matter I feel it is necessary to discuss.

My matter is Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī’s expression,



Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī writing Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta on the bank of Rādhā Kuṇḍa.

“*Trijaḡat kailā kāmamaya*: the whole universe is overflowed with *kāma*.” This is the fact. *Kāma* means desire, and *kāma* has two forms: selfish desire and service desire. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī explains:

ātmendriya-prīti-vāñchhā—tāre bali ‘kāma’
kṛṣṇendriya-prīti-ichchhā dhare ‘prema’ nāma
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.165)

[“The desire to gratify one’s senses is called *kāma* (lust), and the desire to gratify Kṛṣṇa’s senses is *prema* (love).”]

In English we translate the word *prema* as “love for Kṛṣṇa”. Actually there is no word in English for *prema*. *Prema* means something like a mixture of love, attraction, attachment, affection, and sincere hankering. When Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī says *trijaḡat kailā kāmamaya* he means that the universe is overflowed with both *kāma*, the desire for mundane enjoyment, and *prema*, the desire to lovingly serve Kṛṣṇa. *Kāma* and *prema* are both manifestations of Kṛṣṇa’s power, and like waves, they both constantly move throughout the universe.

When Kṛṣṇa manifests His power externally within the mundane world as *kāma*, His power becomes the influence of Cupid, the desire for mundane enjoyment. Everyone everywhere in the mundane environment is influenced by that. Not only everyone here, everyone throughout the three worlds—*Svarga*, *Martya*, and *Pātāla* (heaven, earth, and hell)—is influenced by it. No one can avoid Kṛṣṇa’s power, and His power is present everywhere within the mundane worlds of *Māyā*’s illusory environment in its external manifestation as *kāma* (selfish desire).

Kṛṣṇa also manifests His internal power within the mundane world to distribute *prema*. Through His personal beauty and attractiveness He inspires the *jīva*-souls to engage in His service. Kṛṣṇa does this through the *gāyatrī*-mantram, which gives the *jīva*-souls a connection with Him and His abode of transcendental service.

It is explained in the scriptures that the *gāyatrī*-mantram

comes from Kṛṣṇa's flute. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained the meaning of Kṛṣṇa's flute-song, that is, the meaning of the gāyatrī-mantram. He explained that the sound emanating from Kṛṣṇa's flute is fully fledged with love, ecstasy, beauty, and charm; it attracts everyone and fills their hearts with joy. It is always sweet and produces attachment, attraction, and affection. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained that Kṛṣṇa is always playing everywhere in that way; He is always communicating everywhere with everyone's heart. The sound of His flute, that wave, descends from the transcendental world with the power to capture the hearts of everyone in the three worlds and overflows the external environment through the gāyatrī-mantram. That is the divine form of *trijagat kailā kāmamaya* (filling the universe with desire).

Through that gāyatrī-mantram the jīva-souls connect to Kṛṣṇa and are thrown into the wave of devotion, that is, filled with intense desire to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. Within a second that devotional wave can automatically lift us up to the transcendental plane like an elevator. That devotional wave can conquer our heart and give us good nourishment. Through that we will always feel the presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa in our heart, and through His service we will feel the full happiness of our existence.

Everything is within us, within our own jurisdiction. It is not necessary for us to go anywhere. What we receive from our Guru Mahārāj, that is, the full form of the gāyatrī-mantram, is more than sufficient for us. If we can receive it properly we will taste it and feel its divine form.

The wave of kāma

The waves of kāma and prema are always flowing throughout the universe by the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One carries the jīva-souls to the illusory environment and one carries the jīva-souls to the transcendental environment. The illusory environment appears by the Lord's will as the material world, but within that the transcendental wave of prema also plays. The jīva-souls must join in



The domes on Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh's Temples are crowned with an om surrounded by a chakra and flute. This ornament, which was originally conceived by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, represents the gāyatrī-mantra and Kṛṣṇa's flute-song calling all living entities to engage in His service.

the flow of these waves; they cannot avoid them. The jīva-souls are always moving under the influence of these waves. When the jīva-soul wants to enjoy māyā then he is carried away by the wave of kāma and suffers through great troubles in illusion; he forgets his abode, the service of his Lord, everything. The wave of kāma becomes the wave that rounds throughout the mundane world pushing the jīva-souls through repeated births and deaths. That wave takes the form of their karma and pushes the jīva-souls birth after birth all over the material universe, through the upper planetary systems—Bhū, Bhuva, Sva, Maha, Jana, Tapa, and Satya lokas—and the seven lower planetary systems.

A departed soul once told me about that wave that surrounds souls when they leave their bodies and takes them to their next birth. After her death she was existing for some time in a neutral position on the mental plane as a pretayoni (ghost). She once quickly spoke to me and said that she could only speak for a short time because at any moment a great wave as thunderous as a storm was coming to knock her senseless and take her off to her next birth. She described this force as a wave and said she needed to leave quickly to hide from that wave.

That wave of kāma is always flowing through this mundane world by the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa. We can see its influence on society. Within the last ten or twenty years we have seen that the dress which was acceptable on television has changed. Before it was gentle and sober, but now everyone is nearly naked. This has changed in a very short period of time. Ten years ago it was not that way. This means that the world is being influenced by the wave of kāma. Day by day this is happening more and more in our society during the Age of Kali, and lastly human society will become no different than beastly animal life. But when this is happening by Māyā's influence, who can avoid it? By the influence of the wave of kāma, society is gradually moving towards a hellish position for the satisfaction of the general people. People are trying to enjoy materially, and for that they

are breaking and changing the laws of society.

The wave of prema

This is related to the waves of kāma and prema, and their influence on the consciousness of people. Whenever there is disturbance in this mundane world, like we see in the world today, then the spiritual wave, the wave of prema, comes down to set everything right. Kṛṣṇa Himself says:

dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 4.8)

I appear age after age to properly establish dharma.

Everything is actually the Lord’s play, and everyone is really the Lord’s instrument. The Lord gave us freedom, expecting we would happily serve Him, but some unfortunate souls want to enjoy for themselves and thus become conditioned. To set those souls and the situation of society on the right path the Lord comes to the mundane world or sends His associates there.

ataeva kāma-preme bahuta antara

kāma—andha-tamaḥ, prema—nirmala bhāskara

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.172)

“Kāma and prema are complete opposites. Kāma is like darkness and prema is like bright light.”

Under the influence of kāma the jīva-souls cannot see anything; they live in great darkness. They can only feel the influence of that wave of kāma indirectly and are unable to avoid it. But prema is like very clean, happy light, not burning light, and it liberates the conditioned souls. Many people say, “Mukti, mukti, mukti,” but *mukti* actually means moving out of darkness into light. That is real liberation.

The jīva-souls have natural capacity for thinking, feeling, and willing, so they will automatically feel love and affection for their Lord, and be exalted with that, when they see Him through the light of the wave of prema. The solution to the suffering of the jīva-souls is dedication, love, and affection for

Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Lord's service is transcendental, and through the Lord's service the kāma present in the jīva-souls' hearts is transformed into prema by the Lord's divine influence.

When we are established in the plane of dedication we will get an undisturbed and peaceful life. Until that wave of prema transforms the desires within our hearts and carries us beyond the illusory environment, we will still be pulled by illusion's gravitational field. But when we cross the illusory environment's gravity by the Lord's positive power, we will realise our standard position. We will understand ourselves, and over and above that we will enter the transcendental plane where the eternally liberated souls are engaged in the Lord's service. We are connected with the Lord and His service before liberation no doubt, but real service begins after liberation, after we are wholeheartedly dedicated with our full energy to satisfying the Lord. When that pure mood of devotion, that wave of prema, enters our hearts, we will cross the gravitational field of Māyā's illusory environment and easily be carried by it to Goloka Vṛndāvan.

SECTION FOUR

*Achintya-
Bhedābheda-
Siddhānta*

Daśa-mūla-tattva

Truth Eight:

bhedābheda-prakāśam sakalam api hareḥ

Everything is a manifestation distinct
yet non-distinct from Kṛṣṇa.

CHAPTER NINE

Perfect Harmony

The conception of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is called the achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta: the conclusion of inconceivable difference and nondifference. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu taught that the achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta applies to everything, and that everything can be adjusted and harmonised by it. His teaching of achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta is not a vād, an ism. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu did not preach an ism. He preached siddhānta: perfect conclusions that make perfect harmony with everything, perfect conclusions that harmonise all isms.

Before the appearance of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu there were great Āchāryas who preached different conceptions. There was Śaṅkar Āchārya and his conception of advaitavād [non-dualism], which is also known as māyāvād [illusionism]. There was Rāmānuja Āchārya and his conception of viśiṣṭādvaitavād [qualified non-dualism]. There was Madhva Āchārya and his conception of śuddha-dvaitavād [pure dualism]. There was Viṣṇu Swāmī and his conception of śuddhādvaitavād [pure non-dualism]. And there was

Nimbārka Āchārya and his conception of dvaitādvaitavād [dualism–cum–non-dualism]. There were so many vāds, isms.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu met with followers of all these conceptions, and everywhere He successfully established His conception of achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta. He met many famous scholars like Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya and Prakāśānanda Saraswatī. He discussed religion with them and gave them Kṛṣṇa consciousness through His achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta.

The Supreme Lord: Viṣṇu

Other than māyāvād, all of these conceptions are Vaiṣṇava conceptions, and following them should be considered Vaiṣṇavism. The definition of *Vaiṣṇava* is *Viṣṇur asya Devatā iti Vaiṣṇava*: one who is a devotee of Viṣṇu is a Vaiṣṇava. All the scriptures say, “All creation comes from Viṣṇu.” Viṣṇu means everyone’s Lord. There may be many different conceptions of Viṣṇu, and many different conceptions of how to worship Him, but everyone who worships Him is a Vaiṣṇava.

The Supreme Lord has many different forms and all of them can be referred to generally as Viṣṇu. You will see a perfect example of this in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. There it is described that Kṛṣṇa is the Lord’s original and supreme form and that Viṣṇu is His expansion. There it is also described that Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are a nondifferent tattva [truth]. Everyone knows that Kṛṣṇa performed the rāsa-līlā. Everyone knows that it was not Viṣṇu, and that only Kṛṣṇa can perform the divine Pastime of dancing with the gopīs all night in Vṛndāvan. But when Vedavyās described that Pastime he wrote, “*Vikrīḍitaṁ Vraja-vadhūbhir idam cha Viṣṇoḥ*: Viṣṇu is playing with the Vraja-gopīs in the rāsa-līlā.” Everyone knows it was really Kṛṣṇa who performed this Pastime, but Vedavyās used the name Viṣṇu to emphasize that Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from Viṣṇu so that no one would conceive of Kṛṣṇa’s rāsa-līlā in a mundane way.

vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir
idam cha viṣṇoḥ
śraddhānvito ’nuśṛṅnyād
atha varṇayed yaḥ
bhaktiṁ parāṁ bhagavati
pratilabhya kāmaṁ
hṛd-rogam āśv apahinoty
achireṇa dhīraḥ
(SB: 10.33.39)

“A sober soul who faithfully
hears about and then
describes Viṣṇu’s play with
the Vraja-gopīs quickly
attains supreme devotion to
the Lord and soon leaves
behind his heart disease of
material desire.”

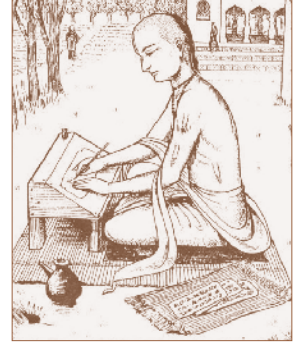
From general to specific

In this way we can understand that God is one, but, according to our capacity, we understand Him deeply, more deeply, and most deeply. Because of this, many different forms and conceptions of God consciousness are taught in this world for different persons. God consciousness is always one, but we see that within different conceptions there are different procedures for practising devotional life and that different forms of the Lord are worshipped. For example, Rāmānuja Āchārya worshipped Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇ and Madhva Āchārya worshipped Bāla Kṛṣṇa.

Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev knew everything, and He taught the procedure to worship Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has the full range of relationships with the jīva-souls.

ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kāchid upāsanaṁ vraja-vadhū-vargeṇā va kalpitā
śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramaṇam amalam premā pumartho mahān
śrī-chaitanya-mahāprabhor matam idam tatrādarah naḥ paraḥ

Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura, who was a very exalted devotee in the school of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, presented Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's conception in gist form in this verse. His expression is, "Nanda Nandan Kṛṣṇa of Śrī Vṛndāvan Dhām is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the most worshippable form of the Lord, the Vraja-gopīs' worship of Kṛṣṇa is the supreme form of worship, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the supreme scripture, and divine love for Kṛṣṇa is the supreme goal and wealth of life."



Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī
Ṭhākura

The sun and his rays

We can understand Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev's conception, especially His achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta, clearly through the writings of Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura.

tad bhinnāmsāmś cha jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāmś cha bhāvāt
bhedābedha-prakāśam sakalam api hareḥ sādhanam śuddha-bhaktim

(Daśa-mūla-tattva-niryāsa)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur explains Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s teaching: everything is a manifestation of the Lord and is inconceivably different and nondifferent from the Lord. The jīva-souls, for example, are different and nondifferent from the Lord. The jīva-souls’ existence is compared to sun-rays which come from the sun, the Lord. The jīva-souls’ existence has almost all the same qualities as the Lord, just as sun-rays have almost all the same qualities as the sun. But just as it is the qualities of the sun that exist within sun-rays, so it is the Lord’s qualities that exist within the jīva-souls.

The Lord is supreme and exists with full power and quality, while the jīva-souls are very tiny and insignificant. In this way we can understand the jīva-souls and the Lord to be achintya-bhedābheda, inconceivably different and nondifferent. This is Mahāprabhu’s conception.

Harmonising the inconceivable

The Lord is all-powerful. He exists with all quality and qualification, and He is never subject to illusion. He is infinite and therefore able to reveal Himself to the finite jīva-souls. When the jīva-souls pray for His mercy, the Lord can reveal Himself to them and give them His ecstatic service. If He could not do this, then He would not be infinite.

The jīva-souls, though they are finite and subject to illusion, can know the Infinite (Kṛṣṇa), by His will. That is achintya, inconceivable, and that means that the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Gurudev is achintya, the relationship between Gurudev and the jīva-soul is achintya, and the jīva-souls’ service to Kṛṣṇa is also achintya. Yet they all happily exist, by the will of Kṛṣṇa, which is also achintya.

The jīva-soul is finite and Kṛṣṇa is infinite. But everyone has heard so many times that Kṛṣṇa exists within every soul’s

heart. This is a firm truth. But how can the Infinite live within the finite's heart? Only by the Infinite's will. That is achintya. How exactly it is possible that Kṛṣṇa exists within the heart of the jīva-soul is achintya. Where exactly He exists there is achintya. How the jīva-souls can do wrong and go off to the illusory environment when He is present in their heart is also achintya. If Kṛṣṇa exists in everyone's heart, and Kṛṣṇa's power can remove all inauspiciousness, then why are the jīva-souls conditioned in the mundane environment? Why are they attached to the mundane environment? This is also achintya. The jīva-souls are simultaneously very near the Lord and very far from the Lord. Their position is achintya. All of these examples of inconceivable relationships can be harmonised naturally through Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta.



Levels of knowledge

The jīva-souls are by nature chit, spiritually conscious and knowing. This means that the jīva-souls can by nature experience transcendental reality, that they have the capacity to experience what is achintya. To do so they only need to be free from the influence of illusion and receive the Lord's grace.

The scriptures describe the jīva-souls' knowledge in five stages: *pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa*, *aparokṣa*, *adhokṣaja*, and *aprākṛta*. *Pratyakṣa-jñān* means direct knowledge, knowledge based on what is seen and felt by the senses and mind. *Parokṣa-jñān* means indirect knowledge, knowledge that is learned from others based on their experiences with the senses (*pratyakṣa-jñān*). Mundane science, Darwin's theory of evolution, and so on, come from these two forms of knowledge. The scriptures explain that these are external forms of knowledge; they are like smokey coverings over the fire of the jīva-souls' pure conscious nature.

Under the influence of illusion the jīva-souls perceive the material environment through their mind and senses, and

they also make so many misperceptions of that environment with their mind and senses. They easily mistake smoke for fog, ropes for snakes, and so on. If jīva-souls try to make conclusions about the inconceivable based on their sensory knowledge and mental experience of the mundane world, they will be confused and misled. The *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa* forms of knowledge are ignorable for jīva-souls who want to experience the inconceivable.

Scientific research and transcendental existence

We can also see though that scientific knowledge has a relationship with transcendental knowledge. All jīva-souls are naturally theistic; they are made of *chetanā*, consciousness, and their thinking, feeling, and willing all lead them towards the theistic world. Now, in the scientific age, there is so much research going on. The subject of the scientists' research is mundane no doubt, but their research is also very successful. We now have radio, television, internet, space travel, and so on.

Significantly, we can see that the scientists have discovered how to communicate through the ether. This shows everyone that it is not unreasonable to try to connect to a transcendental source of knowledge and the transcendental world.

After making so many discoveries Albert Einstein said, "I am searching beyond this material world now." And Kṛṣṇa said, "*Bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān Mām prapadyate* (Bg: 7.19): after a very long time someone who has actual knowledge will surrender to Me." Many scientists are now concluding that they have been studying so many things in the material world but that now they must expand their search. This means that the searching spirit and the nature of consciousness itself naturally leads scientists (souls) in a theistic direction. It is my hope and expectation that as scientific research progresses the scientists and everyone who follows them will proceed towards the transcendental world as they get clues about connecting with transcendental knowledge. I expect that gradually, by the mercy

of Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the atheistic age will come to an end, and most scientists will become theistic and get Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I do not think everything will go into the line of atheism.

If someone can believe that transcendental knowledge can descend from the transcendental abode, then we cannot say he is an atheist. I have travelled all over the world, and I have not actually seen an atheist anywhere. In some way everyone respects higher knowledge and higher existence. It is just that their respect is not properly adjusted. This means that everyone has a theistic mentality and respect for theism. Whenever anyone has clean consciousness, faith, and real hankering in their heart, they can easily understand the divine form of existence that is present in the Lord's transcendental abode, full with love and affection.



Albert Einstein

Overpowering revelation

In this way we can understand the position of pratyakṣa-jñān, direct sensory knowledge, and parokṣa-jñān, knowledge from others' discoveries. Above these types of knowledge is aparokṣa-jñān: indistinct knowledge of consciousness. We cannot clearly describe that type of knowledge, though we can connect with it through scriptural advice. Then, from beyond that plane of hazy consciousness comes transcendental knowledge: adhokṣaja-jñān. Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura has given a definition of adhokṣaja knowledge:

adhaḥ-kṛtam atikrāntam akṣajam
indriyajam jñānam yena saḥ adhokṣaja

“Knowledge that exists beyond the reach of our senses—our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, touch, and mind—that can forcibly knock down and cross over our worldly knowledge is adhokṣaja knowledge.”

Within adhokṣaja knowledge there are stages of revelation, and the highest level is the fifth level of the jīva-souls'

knowledge: aprākṛta-jñān. *Aprākṛta* means supramundane. *Aprākṛta-jñān* means divine knowledge that reveals the transcendental form of reality but may appear ordinary. Inspiration to seek this highest, fifth dimension of knowledge is most valuable. Light from that aprākṛta plane has been given to the world by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, who has shown aprākṛta-līlā—the divine Pastimes of the Supreme Lord’s supramundane, human-like form—to be the subject and focus of all the scriptures, and the supreme goal of eternal life.

Spiritual form

The *Vedānta-darśana* begins with the command to search for Brahma, “*Athāto Brahma jijñāsā*: search for Brahma, search for the Absolute.” This advice is actually for persons who are unqualified, who must be reminded to search within the transcendental plane. But anyone whose consciousness has entered religious ground and the religious platform can play there happily with the meanings of the next sūtra, “*Janmādy asya Yataḥ*: Brahma is the source of everything.” Brahma is adhokṣaja. We cannot understand Brahma, the source of everything, with only our mind and senses, but Brahma can be revealed to us, and that revelation can easily overpower our mundane experience.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam begins with an explanation of this second sūtram, an explanation of *janmādy asya Yataḥ*—Brahma. This means Śrīmad Bhāgavatam begins with an explanation of what descends from the adhokṣaja plane of knowledge; it begins from the all-powerful divine platform.

Śaṅkar Āchārya’s theory of māyāvād [illusionism] is summarily dismissed within the very beginning of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam’s explanation of Brahma:

**janmādy asya yato ’nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñāḥ svarāṭ
tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ
tejo-vāri-mṛdām yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo ’mṛṣā
dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.1.1)

We meditate on the Supreme Truth, who is eternally self-existent beyond illusion, autonomous, and directly and indirectly aware of everything. He creates, maintains, and destroys this world. He revealed the Absolute to Brahmā through the heart and bewilders the demigods. In Him the three creations (the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance) exist like transformations of light, water, and earth.

Māyāvād is dismissed here because Vyāsadev concluded this introductory verse with the phrase *Satyam Param dhīmahī*: “I meditate on Brahma, the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Reality.” There cannot be meditation upon something that has no form, so there cannot be meditation on the Supreme if the Supreme has no form.

Śaṅkar Āchārya taught that Brahma is nirākār [formless], nirviśeṣ [devoid of qualities], and niḥśakti [powerless]. He wrongly claims that the Supreme is formless and all forms are illusory. His philosophy, māyāvād, is a very bad thing. It is directly offensive to the Supreme Lord and His eternal spiritual form, and is contradictory to the teachings and intentions of Vedavyās. Inside Śaṅkar Āchārya’s teachings are many miraculous expressions, but his conclusions lastly lead nearly to nāstikavād [atheism].

Concealing the Lord

Śaṅkar Āchārya’s philosophy is no doubt very prominent in India. Still today forty per cent of the people in India follow Śaṅkar Āchārya. That is so, however, only because it is Kṛṣṇa’s desire.

muktim dadāti karhichit sma na bhakti-yogam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 5.6.18)

Kṛṣṇa is always eager to give liberation to the jīva-souls. If anyone approaches Him through the proper channel He will easily grant them liberation. It is no problem for Him. But for Kṛṣṇa to give conditioned souls devotion is very heavy for Him. Through devotion Kṛṣṇa’s heart can be captured, and He can be bound by love and affection to His devotee. Kṛṣṇa is not foolish, and He does not always want to give everyone devotion. When Kṛṣṇa wanted to hide the practice of bhakti-yoga from insincere souls, He ordered Lord Śīva, “Go and preach māyāvād.”

**māyāvādam asach-chhāstram prachchannaṁ bauddham uchyate
mayaiva vihitam devi kalau brāhmaṇa-mūrtinā**

(Padma-purāṇa: Uttara-khaṇḍa, 25.7)

rājan patir gurur alam
bhavatām yadūnām
daivam priyaḥ kula-patiḥ
kva cha kiṅkaro vaḥ
astv evam aṅga bhagavān
bhajatām mukundo
muktim dadāti karhichit
sma na bhakti-yogam
(SB: 5.6.18)

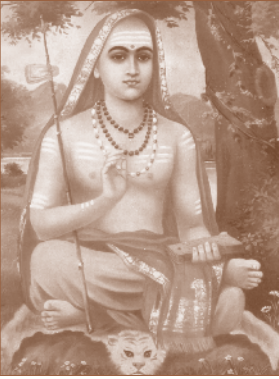
[Śukadev Goswāmī says
to Mahārāj Parikṣit:]

“O King, Lord Mukunda is the maintainer, teacher, worshippable friend, and patriarch of you and the Yadus; sometimes He is even your servant. He gives liberation to those who serve Him, but He never gives them loving devotion (like He has given you, who do not desire liberation or enjoyment).”

Then Lord Śiva told Durgā Devī, “In the Age of Kali I will take the form of a brāhmaṇ, Śaṅkar Āchārya, and explain the Vedas in an atheistic way similar to Buddhism to cover and hide the Lord’s position.”

Supernatural capacity

In this way Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa came to preach the theory of māyāvād in the Kali-yuga in the form of Śaṅkar Āchārya. Śaṅkar Āchārya was the only son of his mother, and he decided he wanted to take sannyās when he was an eight-year-old boy. It is a Vedic rule that no one can take sannyās without the permission of his mother. Śaṅkar Āchārya tried in several ways to get permission from his mother, but she would not give it to him.



Śaṅkar Āchārya

As an incarnation of Lord Śiva, Śaṅkar Āchārya could perform miracles. One day he went with his mother to the river to bathe and performed a miracle so that he could receive her permission to take sannyās. While he was bathing in the river he arranged for a crocodile to suddenly grab him. Then he cried, “Save my life!” He called to his mother, “O Mother! Give me permission to take sannyās. This crocodile is eating me and before I die I want to take sannyās. Please give me permission now.”

His mother gave her permission at that time. What could she do? She said, “I give you my permission to take sannyās.” Then immediately the crocodile left Śaṅkar Āchārya alone. Śaṅkar Āchārya came out of the water, paid his daṇḍavat praṇām to his mother, and left to take sannyās. Śaṅkar Āchārya had this sort of miraculous character, and with this type of capacity he preached his philosophy of māyāvād.

The lotus eyes of Brahma

We can understand how Śaṅkar Āchārya preached his philosophy of māyāvād and how it was defeated by the devotees of the Lord through a story about Rāmānuja Āchārya. I am very much attracted to the philosophy of Rāmānuja Āchārya

because Mahāprabhu has shown the glory of his teachings. There are many very sweet stories from the Śrī sampradāya. Anyhow, once when Rāmānuja was a twelve-year-old boy he defeated his Sanskrit guru, Yādava Prakāś. In the *Chhāndogya-upaniṣad* there is a beautiful explanation of Brahma which describes how Brahma’s eyes are sweet, beautiful, and attractive:

yathā kapyāsaṁ puṇḍarīkam evam akṣiṇī

(*Chhāndogya-upaniṣad*: 1.6.7)

Śaṅkar Āchārya said that this verse means that Brahma has no eyes, that Brahma is nirākār and nirviśeṣ, devoid of form and qualities. That is Śaṅkar Āchārya’s description of Brahma. Rāmānuja Āchārya explained this verse of *Chhāndogya-upaniṣad* to mean that Brahma’s eyes, meaning Bhagavān’s eyes, the personal Lord’s eyes, are like beautiful lotus petals. He explained that it means that Bhagavān’s big eyes have a little light blue and reddish colour around them, and they are very palatable looking.

In his commentary, Śaṅkar Āchārya said, “*Kapi asam—kapyāsam.*” *Kapi* means monkey. Maybe you have seen at the Jagannāth Temple in Puri Dhām there are monkeys whose back part is a little reddish. This was Śaṅkar Āchārya’s explanation: “Bhagavān’s eyes are like the reddish back part of a monkey’s body.” I have read this explanation in Śaṅkar Āchārya’s commentary. Śaṅkar Āchārya is not foolish. It is only the divine will of Lord Kṛṣṇa that Śaṅkar Āchārya gave this explanation.

When the twelve-year-old boy Rāmānuja heard this explanation from Yādava Prakāś he began to cry. His guru asked him, “Why are you crying?”

Rāmānuja replied, “It is impossible! Bhagavān’s eyes are not like a monkey’s reddish back part! How could any gentleman make this sort of comparison? I cannot understand!”

Yādava Prakāś asked him, “Can you explain something more than Śaṅkar Āchārya?”

We must not forget Rāmānuja was only a twelve-year-old boy at this time. He replied, “Yes, I can. The word *kapi* means



Rāmānuja Āchārya, founder of the Śrī sampradāya of Vaiṣṇavism.

monkey, but *kapi* also means padma [lotus]. The definition of *kapi* is *kam pibati kapi*, that is, *kapi* means something that drinks. So *kapi* means the *nāla* [stem] of a lotus flower. Thus *kapy-āsam* means that which lives on top (*asam*) of a drinking stem (*kapi*); it means a lotus flower. The whole verse *yathā kapyāsam puṇḍarikam evam akṣiṇī* means that Bhagavān’s eyes are lotus eyes. Everyone knows this! Everyone knows Bhagavān’s eyes are like lotuses. Why did Śaṅkar Āchārya miss this point?”

Hearing young Rāmānuja’s explanation, Yādava Prakāś was surprised, “I cannot tolerate this boy, I shall kill him!” He tried to also, but lastly Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇ saved Rāmānuja, and Yādava Prakāś became his disciple. This type of story is found in Rāmānuja Āchārya’s sampradāya. Of the four Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas—the Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra, and Sanaka sampradāyas—we see that the Śrī sampradāya has the most exemplary devotional activity.

The bright effulgence of the dark Lord

In this way we can understand that Brahma really means Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But what is the actual definition of Brahma?

*I serve Govinda, the original Lord,
whose illustrious bodily efful-
gence is the origin of the indivisi-
ble, inconceivable, and unlimited
Brahma, within which innumera-
ble universes filled with unlimit-
edly variegated creations and
opulences exist.*

**yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-
koṭiṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi vibhūti-bhinnam
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi**

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.40)

Brahma, or Brahmāloka, is the plane of divine light beyond all the material universes which is described by the Upaniṣads. Many jñānis and yogīs may study or meditate on this impersonal form of Brahma, considering it the highest destination, but that aspect of Brahma is actually an external form of Kṛṣṇa which emanates from His divine personal form.

**vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam
brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.2.11)

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Vyāsadev explains that all the ṛṣis and munis have taught that the highest conception and destination in spiritual life is beyond Brahma, the nondifferentiated Absolute, and beyond Paramātmā, the Supreme Soul. They have taught that the highest conception is Bhagavān. Only in the Bhagavān conception—the Sweet Absolute, Śrī Kṛṣṇa—is there full-fledged theism. Kṛṣṇa is really Brahma’s svarūp, Brahma’s original form.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī gave us a very clean and clear example to understand this:

**brahma—aṅga-kānti tāra, nirviśeṣa prakāśe
sūrya yena charma-chakṣe jyotirmaya bhāse**

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 20.159)

When we look at the sun in the sky, we see it as a gloriously illumined ball though we know that inside the sun there is an environment and life and many things playing in different ways. Our vision of Brahma is like that. We see it from very far away, and we do not see directly what it is. It is actually beyond our capacity to understand directly. It is adhokṣaja [imperceptible]. We may be able to think of it at first by thinking of a light or energy not found in this world; but inside that, what we may think of as the light of Brahmaloaka, is Vaikuṅṭhaloka, the variegated spiritual world.

jyotir-abhyantare rūpaṁ atulaṁ śyāma-sundaram

(Nārada-pañcharātra)

If you enter into the glow of Brahmaloaka, you will see it is actually the effulgence of Kṛṣṇaloka, and inside Kṛṣṇa’s eternal abode you will find the beautiful, blackish form of Śyāmasundar, Reality the Beautiful, Kṛṣṇa, eternally engaged in His sweet play. That is full-fledged theism.

In Śaṅkar Āchārya’s conception there is no Reality the Beautiful, no emporium of all rasa, no Supreme Personality of Godhead. In Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s conception Śaṅkar’s nirākār nirviśeṣ Brahma is the divine effulgence of the playground of the Lord—Reality the Beautiful, Kṛṣṇa.

The Creator and His creation

To consider Brahma to be nothing more than nirviśeṣ and nirākār, impersonal and formless, is to be avoided because it is not possible. All of creation, both transcendental and mundane, has form, and all jīva-souls have form. But the Creator Himself cannot have a form? It is unthinkable. How can the Creator of everything, the Creator of all forms and qualities, have no form and qualities? The Creator cannot be less than His creation. He can never be zero. Whatever is present within us must be present in our source. We can never think that the divine source of all things is powerless and has no personality. After the Lord has created me, I will deny Him? He has given me a form, consciousness, realisation, and so on. He has given me so many things, and with them I will deny Him? It is nonsense thinking.

Within the material creation everything generally moves in a systematic way. The planets orbit around the sun and so on. How can the Creator be powerless or foolish? It sometimes may be difficult for some persons to see that everything is moving nicely under the Lord's control. Sometimes it may seem to some that everything is happening in a wrong way. But whether everything seems to be moving rightly or wrongly, the Creator cannot be considered powerless.

Divine personality

Vedavyās said, “*Raso vai Saḥ.*” *Saḥ* means ‘He’. Brahma is ‘He’, who is the Creator of all, the cause of all causes, who has His own existence, who is fully complete, and who is Reality in its fullest form, who is for Himself and by Himself as Reality the Beautiful. This expression of Vedavyās also summarily dismisses Śaṅkar Āchārya’s nirviśeṣvād. If Brahma is ‘He’ then Brahma cannot be nirākār, nirviśeṣ, and niḥśakti. He must have form, qualities, and power.

We read everywhere that the Lord has eternal form, qualities, and power. He does not have a material form. He does

not have a form like the forms we see in this world. He has a transcendental form. In Islam they do not explain this entirely, but they always pray, “By your mercy Allah, by your mercy Allah.” If the Lord does not have form and power, how can He bestow mercy? The Muslims also say that after death everyone will be judged by the Lord. If the Lord has no potency and personality, how can He judge everyone? In Christianity there are many descriptions of heaven. The Lord Himself, His form, His qualities, and so on are not directly described, but if He is said to be eternally playing in heaven, then He must have a transcendental form and qualities.

Inconceivable wonders

The transcendental, eternal form of the Lord is aprākṛta, supramundane, and is supremely worshippable. But it is no doubt difficult to believe that the Lord’s supreme form is that of a young boy named Kṛṣṇa, whom we can play with and feel joyful by serving.

śrutim apare smṛtim itare
bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhītāḥ
aham iha nandaṁ vande
yasyālinde param brahma

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 19.96)

Who will actually believe that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa plays in the courtyard of His father Nanda Mahārāj? So many ṛṣis have done so much research and finally given us this knowledge. They have no intention to cheat us. Vyāsadev has given us this knowledge, this finest consciousness, and he has no intention to cheat us. Whether we believe it or not, it is true. It may be difficult for us to conceive, but still it is true, and when we become established in that truth we will feel complete joy and ecstasy.

Kṛṣṇa’s eternal abode and His existence within that abode are no doubt inconceivable for the conditioned souls. How it is that the Lord has unlimited eternal forms—like Nṛsimhadev,

asad vā idam agra āsīt tato vai sad
ajāyata tad ātmānaṁ svayam akuruta
tasmāt tat sukṛtam uchyate iti
yad vai tat sukṛtam raso vai saḥ
rasām hy evāyaṁ
labdhvānandī bhavati
ko hy evānyat kaḥ prāṇyāt
yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na
syāt eṣa hy evānandayāti

“At first, this world was unmanifest. It manifested from Brahma, He who created Himself and is thus known as perfection (‘self-made’). He who is perfect is rasa. Only by attaining rasa (Him) does the soul become joyful. If He, Joy, the Supreme, did not exist, who would live, who would breath? He alone gives joy to everyone.”

Vāmandev, Rāmachandra, and Kṛṣṇa—is achintya [inconceivable]. How it is that They all exist in an eternal, fully conscious way, full with Their own spiritual property within Their own infinite abodes is also achintya. How They all exist at once within Paravyoma Dhām, the spiritual world, is also achintya. How Kṛṣṇa sometimes takes the form of Vāsudev, sometimes takes the form of Saṅkarṣaṇ, and sometimes takes the forms of Pradyumna and Aniruddha is achintya. How Kṛṣṇa sometimes shows His prābhava-vilās and vaibhava-vilās forms in His different abodes—Dvārakā, Mathurā, and Vṛndāvan—is achintya. How Kṛṣṇa can expand His power like a candle that lights thousands of other candles, and how all the candles can shine with His same supreme power, is achintya. *Aṅor aṅīyān mahato mahīyān*: how Kṛṣṇa can be smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest at the same time is achintya. How Kṛṣṇa is always fully present within all of His infinite manifestations simultaneously—all of these things are achintya.

Achintya means that which is beyond our capacity to think or understand.

That which is beyond material nature is inconceivable. Do not try to understand it intellectually.

**achintyāḥ khalu ye bhāvā na tāmś tarkeṇa yojayet
prakṛtibhyaḥ param yach cha tad achintyasya lakṣaṇam**

(Mahābhārata: Bhīṣma-parva, 5.22)

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj used to say that our mundane brains are like puppy brains: they cannot conceive of the transcendental reality. *Prakṛtibhyaḥ param*, everything we can think, see, and do is all powerless in trying to realise what is achintya, inconceivable. But when the scriptures describe something as inconceivable (achintya) and imperceptible (adhokṣaja) it does not mean that it does not exist; it means it is happily existing beyond this universe in the transcendental realm that can be revealed to us.

I serve Govinda, the original Lord, who is lovingly served by hundreds of thousands of goddesses and tends His bountiful cows in His abodes made of spiritual gemstone, which are covered by millions of wish-fulfilling trees.

**chintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vṛkṣa-
lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhīr abhipālayantam
lakṣmī-sahasra-śata-sambhrama-sevyamānam
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi**

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.29)

How can we conceive of Kṛṣṇa's divine abode? How can we conceive that every woman there is like Lakṣmī Devī, and that all wealth is existing within each of them? How can we conceive that Kṛṣṇa is their only Enjoyer, and that everything there exists for Kṛṣṇa's enjoyment? How can we conceive that there we can ask a wish-fulfilling tree for a ripe mango that has no skin or seed? It is all achintya, but also, very happily existing.

Internal feeling

Everything that exists in the transcendental world exists within consciousness. The divine play of Kṛṣṇa's aprākṛta-līlā can be felt in the hearts of the jīva-souls through revelation. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would say, "Everything exists within consciousness; everything exists within bhāva."

Bhāva means mood and internal feeling. It is through bhāva that Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes happily flow. Kṛṣṇa's asura-nidān-līlās [Pastimes of killing demons] exist within bhāva, and the Pastimes of viraha [separation from Kṛṣṇa] also exist within bhāva. How can we conceive that time does not move in Kṛṣṇa's abode? That there is no past or future there, only the eternal present? How can we conceive that there every day is Kṛṣṇa's birthday, and every day is Kṛṣṇa's play day? It is all achintya.

There, whatever is present within a devotee's bhāva immediately happens in front of them. When Mother Yaśomatī thinks, "Oh! Kṛṣṇa has gone to Mathurā!", she faints and cries. But when she wakes up and sees Kṛṣṇa playing His flute and asking her, "O Mother, give me some butter and sweets", she makes these for Him, Kṛṣṇa eats them, and her mood changes. This is Kṛṣṇa's spiritual abode. That all jīva-souls have a service-place there, that all the conditioned souls can go to that plane and engage in service there, is achintya, and miraculous.

True liberation

In the material world the jīva-souls suffer through death and birth, happiness and sadness, and so many things. They cannot

cross the natural laws. But if they have a little sincere interest in the fifth dimension, in the aprākṛta plane of transcendental service, they can easily be rescued from the material world. They can attain liberation and become a member of the holiest place within Vaikuṅṭhaloka: Goloka Vṛndāvan, where fully auspicious happiness exists eternally.

muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthiṭṭh

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 2.10.6)

Real liberation means not only becoming free from the illusory environment and the whole of mundanity, but living in the transcendental service plane as the Lord's eternal servitor.

In the scriptures five kinds of liberation are described: sārūpya, sālōkya, sāmīpya, sārṣṭi, and sāyujya. When the jīva-souls practise bhakti-yoga, they can attain the first four forms of mukti for the Lord's service. Sārūpya-mukti means attaining a form like that of the Lord, sālōkya-mukti means attaining a place in the Lord's abode, sāmīpya-mukti means attaining direct association with the Lord, and sārṣṭi-mukti means attaining opulence like that of the Lord. The last form of mukti, sāyujya-mukti, is bad. Sāyujya-mukti means merging into the fire of the Lord's effulgence. This type of liberation is the goal of the māyāvādīs who follow Śaṅkar Āchārya's theory.

Śaṅkar Āchārya's theory of sāyujya-mukti is nothing more than the idea of a black hole. If anything enters a black hole it disappears and will never return. In his theory of mukti, Śaṅkar Āchārya said that jñān, jñeya, and jñātā—knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower—are all demolished and disappear.

His theory is called jñāna-mukti. Non-devotional scholars explain that jñāna-mukti is like the meeting point of three lines. They say that jñān, jñeya, and jñātā—knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower—are like three different lines that merge at one point and that point is liberation. Real mukti, however, is the extension of those lines into the transcendental service world.

muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ

Real mukti is the extension of the jīva-souls' thinking, feeling, and willing—the extension of their knowledge, their environment, and themselves—into their transcendental forms for the service of the Lord. *Anyathā rūpaṁ* means that the jīva-souls' thinking, feeling, and willing all merge in one point, mukti, and after that they are extended onto the spiritual platform.

All jīva-souls are naturally thinking, feeling, and willing, so love and affection automatically come to them for their Lord when they leave the darkness of māyā and enter the light of the transcendental world. Leaving the darkness of illusion and entering into the light of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the actual meaning of mukti.

Inconceivable manifestations

In this way we can understand the conception of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His teaching of the achintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta.

**tad bhinnāmsāmś cha jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāmś cha bhāvāt
bhedābedha-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanam śuddha-bhaktim**

(Daśa-mūla-tattova-niryāsa)

When the jīva-souls are *prakṛti-kavalitān*, covered by illusory matter, they live apart from the Lord. And when the jīva-souls are *vimuktāmś cha bhāvāt*, liberated through their devotional mood—the improvement of their consciousness (*bhāva*)—they play within the Lord's divine abode. By the Lord's will the transcendental environment and the illusory environment exist side by side as His manifestations, and the jīva-souls live within these environments. Only a very few jīva-souls temporarily exist within the illusory environment, and gradually all jīva-souls come to exist within the transcendental environment of divine attraction to the Lord. In this way we can see everything in perfect harmony as an achintya-bhedābheda-prakāś, an inconceivably different and nondifferent manifestation of the Supreme Lord.

SECTION FIVE

*Pure
Devotion*

Daśa-mūla-tattva

Truth Nine:

sādhanaṁ śuddha-bhaktim

Pure devotion is the way.

Spiritual Evolution

Question: Why are there different types of yoga if the primary aim of all of them is to get in touch with our true nature?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Everything about yoga and spiritual life is concisely explained in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa took the form of a Jagad Guru and gave transcendental knowledge to the world.

In the beginning of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna surrenders to Kṛṣṇa wholeheartedly. He prays, “My Lord, I am fully surrendering to You now. I do not know and cannot understand what is good or what is bad for me. Please reveal transcendental knowledge in my heart.” Kṛṣṇa took His chair as Arjuna’s Guru and enlightened Arjuna with transcendental knowledge in a very clear and broad way. In the 700 verses of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* everything is explained; all types of knowledge and yoga are explained by Kṛṣṇa Himself in His form as Jagad Guru.

The scripture *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is Vedavyās’ record of Kṛṣṇa’s instructions to His dearest friend Arjuna, but Arjuna was actually an instrument used by Kṛṣṇa to express the essence of yoga and transcendental knowledge to the whole world.

Kṛṣṇa actually spoke *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* for the benefit of the conditioned souls of this world, and we see now how famous *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is all over the world. If anyone will read *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and try to follow Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's advice as though Kṛṣṇa is his own Guru, then he must be benefitted. If anyone fully surrenders to Kṛṣṇa in this way, Kṛṣṇa will never cheat him. Rather, Kṛṣṇa will always be merciful to him, and all obstacles will be removed from his spiritual life.

The basis of all yoga

In the early portion of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains that yoga means practices for progress in life, practices for sympathetic and harmonious dealings with nature. Kṛṣṇa begins His explanation of yoga by giving inspiration to everyone to avoid selfish action and instead take up yoga. Kṛṣṇa says:

Karma is far inferior to buddhi-yoga. Take refuge in buddhi-yoga; those who seek the fruits of their actions are misers.

**dūreṇa hy avaraṁ karma buddhi-yogād dhanañjaya
buddhau śaraṇam anvichchha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ**

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 2.49)

“You are an eternal jīva-soul. You have natural capacity for thinking, feeling, and willing. You cannot avoid those aspects of your existence. If you use your natural conscious property to exploit the material nature, you will not be fulfilled; you will be a miser destined to suffer helplessly. By your nature you are always active, so do something positive, otherwise you will always be the cause of harm to yourself and others.”

In this verse Kṛṣṇa encourages everyone to take up buddhi-yoga [the yoga of wisdom]. Buddhi-yoga is the first form of yoga mentioned in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, and buddhi-yoga is the basis of all the forms of yoga Kṛṣṇa goes on to describe: karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, haṭha-yoga, dhyāna-yoga, abhyāsa-yoga, bhakti-yoga, and so on. Kṛṣṇa explains:

**buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam**

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 2.50)

["A wise person engaged in buddhi-yoga abstains from both good and bad actions in this world and simply engages in yoga because *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*: yoga is the art of action."]

Buddhi-yoga is a very wide idea. It is the basis of yoga itself, and all other forms of yoga are expressions of buddhi-yoga.

Sacrifice

When Arjuna first asks Kṛṣṇa how to practise buddhi-yoga, Kṛṣṇa begins by giving Him advice about karma-yoga [pious activity].

karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadāchana
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 2.47)

Kṛṣṇa explains that the karma-yogī has the right to perform his prescribed duty but not to enjoy the fruits of his actions. The karma-yogī should not be motivated to do his duty because of the fruits it produces, and he should not be inclined to give up action. Rather he should be motivated by the desire to be in proper harmony with the environment and its Controller.

yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samāchara

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 3.9)

Kṛṣṇa advises that by performing actions as a sacrifice, rather than an attempt to exploit the environment, the karma-yogī will attain great piety and happiness. Action offered as a sacrifice to the Lord is called yajña. *Yajñō vai Viṣṇuḥ*: sacrifice means Viṣṇu, the Lord. All sacrifice, and therefore all action (karma), is actually meant to satisfy Viṣṇu, and any action that is not offered to the Lord is the cause of bondage and suffering in this world.

Enlightenment and meditation

After explaining karma-yoga Kṛṣṇa says:

sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 4.33)

[“The perfection of pious activity (karma-yoga) is its culmination in transcendental knowledge (jñān).”]

Through karma-yoga one is enlightened and receives proper knowledge. Without practising karma-yoga, that is, engaging in sacrifice and service, transcendental knowledge will not actually appear in the heart. But when someone offers themselves properly and opens their heart then they are enlightened and can practise jñāna-yoga [the yoga of knowledge].

Through jñāna-yoga one understands the entangling nature of material existence and then pursues liberation from saṁsāra [the cycle of birth and death] and realisation of Brahma [the Absolute]. Kṛṣṇa advises persons who become firmly established in knowledge and the practice of jñāna-yoga to practise meditation through aṣṭāṅga-yoga (dhyāna-yoga). When one practises aṣṭāṅga-yoga one meditates, striving to remove one’s consciousness from the outside world and attain to a vision of the Supreme Soul who is subtly present everywhere throughout existence.

Yoga’s primary form

In this way Kṛṣṇa explains how selfless action (karma-yoga) leads to the yogas of knowledge, renunciation, and meditation (jñāna-yoga and dhyāna-yoga). After describing these processes Kṛṣṇa presents His final teaching about yoga practice:

A yogī is superior to persons engaged in austerities (tapasvīs), superior to persons of knowledge (jñānīs), and superior to persons of action (karmīs). Therefore, one should be a yogī. A faithful soul who serves Me with his heart dedicated to Me is the best of all yogīs. He is most intimately united with Me.

**tapasvibhyo ’dhiko yogī jñānibhyo ’pi mato ’dhikaḥ
karmibhyaś chādhiko yogī tasmād yogī bhavārjuna
yoginām api sarveṣāṁ mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ
(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 6.46-47)**

Here Kṛṣṇa clearly expresses, through direct comparison, that the bhakti-yogī is the highest type of yogī. Within *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* gradual levels of development in spiritual practice and realisation are explained. Kṛṣṇa explains that yoga is one, but that there is a development within yoga. He explains that

yoga, that is, buddhi-yoga, develops through different forms, beginning with karma-yoga, and goes up past jñāna-yoga and aṣṭāṅga-yoga to bhakti-yoga.

Because it is so accommodating and broad in its discussion, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* explains not only its primary subject, bhakti-yoga, but also explains all the levels of realisation that lead to bhakti-yoga: karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and so on. This is done through the idea of buddhi-yoga. In this way Kṛṣṇa praises karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and aṣṭāṅga-yoga, but praises bhakti-yoga the most.

Bhakti-yoga is what is truly necessary for all jīva-souls eternally. The other yogas are only necessary for conditioned souls according to their relative stages of advancement. A primary school student will not understand the lessons taught in secondary school. A secondary school student will not understand the lessons taught in a PhD programme. Kṛṣṇa explained different stages of development in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, and in that way they are all important. But unless a yogī advances through the stages of yoga practice mentioned up to bhakti-yoga, he will not attain the ultimate goal of all yoga.

The ultimate path and destination

Each form of yoga practice has a specific destination. The destination of karma-yoga is Svargaloka [heaven]. The destination of jñāna-yoga is Brahma, the nondifferentiated spiritual plane. The destination of haṭha-yoga is Paramātmā-tattva: vision of the Supreme Soul within all things.

All the forms of yoga practice do not lead to the same destination, and all the destinations are not the same. Heavenly enjoyment may be considered very desirable by materialistic persons, but not by spiritualists. Also, the spiritual destinations of Brahma and Paramātmā are Absolute, but there is gradation amongst them. They are not of equal value, and someone travelling east cannot expect to attain something that is found only in the west.

*Those who know the Absolute
Truth say that it is non-dual
knowledge and that it is known
as Brahma, Paramātmā, and
Bhagavān.*

**vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaṃ yaj jñānam advayam
brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.2.11)

Beyond the temporary enjoyment of the heavenly plane within the mundane universe there are three primary spiritual destinations: Brahma, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. Through jñāna-yoga one can go to Brahmaloḥa, through haṭha-yoga one can realise the Paramātmā, and through bhakti-yoga one can go to Bhāgavatloḥa, the divine abode of the Supreme Lord, and serve there eternally. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says:

yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṃ mama

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 15.6)

“Through devotion (bhakti-yoga) you can come to My divine abode and play eternally with Me, the emporium of all rasa. From there the illusory environment will never attack you, and you will never have to return to the mundane world again.”

In this way we can understand the position of the Lord’s eternal abode as the supreme destination for all jīva-souls, and bhakti-yoga as the supreme form of yoga practice.

Satisfying Kṛṣṇa

When any of the different types of yogīs finally collect all of their energy and use it with concentration to serve and satisfy the Lord, they will truly receive their supreme benefit. They will enter the transcendental service world, become free of the influence of māyā, and feel the supramundane joy of engaging in Kṛṣṇa’s service. One who serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day is really the supreme yogī. Kṛṣṇa Himself says this in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. It is His conclusive opinion.

What does a bhakti-yogī actually do? How does he engage in the Lord’s service? The natural property of jīva-souls is the capacity for thinking, feeling, and willing. A bhakti-yogī engages these facilities in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 9.27)

Kṛṣṇa lovingly advises us how to practise bhakti-yoga: “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer, whatever you give, whatever vow you keep—do it as an offering unto Me. That is your eternal duty and natural religion.”

This sort of bhakti-yoga is the ideal practice for all jīva-souls. When our practising life will advance to this stage we will be completely satisfied. When we can engage all of our activities in Kṛṣṇa’s service we will receive His mercy and feel complete fulfilment.

Through bhakti-yoga, we can merge our account with Kṛṣṇa’s account. If everything we do is for the service and satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa then we will be established on the spiritual platform of existence. We will live in the transcendental service world and will not be further entangled in karma. This is the highest and best path, as well as the highest and best destination, for all jīva-souls.

The Lord’s merciful appeal

Kṛṣṇa gave His guidance to the conditioned souls in different stages throughout Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā. He presented the knowledge of karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and aṣṭāṅga-yoga to bring all the jīva-souls whose minds and mentalities are attracted in different ways to the devotional platform. Finally He showed His greatest mercy in His very happy conclusion:

sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vachaḥ
iṣṭo ’si me dṛḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 18.64)

“Because you are so dear to Me I will now tell you the most hidden treasure that I have to share with you. Hear My advice with full faith and you must be super-benefitted.”

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo 'si me

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 18.65)

“I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Whatever you do, do it for Me. Think of Me always, devote yourself to Me, worship Me, and bow to Me, and surely you will come to Me. Your whole account will come to Me. I promise you this because you are dear to Me. Other practices will not be truly fruitful for you. The practice of bhakti-yoga must be fully fruitful for you and will give you supreme benefit.”

The inner quality of all yoga

Within bhakti-yoga all the rules and regulations of the various forms of yoga merge together for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. In bhakti-yoga all actions and their results go to Kṛṣṇa. Here we find the full meaning of buddhi-yoga and *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*: “Yoga is the art of all activity.” That is, through bhakti-yoga, everything is perfectly adjusted for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa.

When I translated *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* under the guidance of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj I found that Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur, who was a very expert translator, put great emphasis on Kṛṣṇa’s teaching of buddhi-yoga. He wrote that what is explained as buddhi-yoga in the beginning of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is actually a covered form of bhakti-yoga, and that Kṛṣṇa actually begins teaching bhakti-yoga from the very beginning of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* under the covering of buddhi-yoga.

There are eighteen chapters in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, and externally they are named *Karma-yoga*, *Jñāna-yoga*, and so on. What is actually inside those chapters? We see that within all eighteen chapters of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* the fully enlightened form of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, expressed as bhakti-yoga, is present. All the other forms of yoga—karma, jñān, and so on—are actually dependent on bhakti-yoga.



Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur

ei saba sādhanera ati tuchchha bala
kṛṣṇa-bhakti vinā tāhā dite nāre phala

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 22.18)

“Without the presence of devotion, that is, Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, the practices of karma, jñān, and so on will not be fruitful. They have no power on their own.”

In every chapter of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa connects the jīva-souls’ activity within the different forms of yoga with bhakti. The results the jīva-souls may get from the various lower forms of yoga—karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and so on—are actually produced by the presence of bhakti within those practices. The practices of karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga are actually mixed with bhakti-yoga.

The main heart of all the jīva-souls’ spiritual activity is always bhakti-yoga. Everything Kṛṣṇa explained in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* from beginning to end, is actually about bhakti-yoga. This means that nothing within *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* can be ignored: every chapter is important for everyone, including those who practise bhakti-yoga.

I have been reading *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and practising bhakti-yoga all my life, and through that I have understood that everything within *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is important for everyone. I have read *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* so many times, and



Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj reading
The Hidden Treasure of the
Sweet Absolute, Śrī Chaitanya
Sāraswat Maṭh’s English edition
of Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā.

every time I read it new meaning comes to me. But the general meanings of the verses do not become suppressed. Rather, more and more meanings continue to overflow. I am so satisfied with that. From deep to deeper to deepest, everything is presented in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. It is necessary for everyone to read *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* every day attentively. Day by day I am more and more enthusiastic to preach the conception taught in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* because it is very essential for the primary religious education of all people.

Abandon all religions

Question: I read in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* that Kṛṣṇa says, “Abandon all religions and come to Me.” Can you clarify the meaning of this?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Yes. All religions are actually one: the jīva-souls must be attracted to their Lord, who is like an all-attractive magnet. The purpose of all the different kinds of religion practised within this material world is to give the jīva-souls consciousness about this, their main religion, their natural religion: divine attraction and service to their Lord.

We are not actually Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or anything. We are all actually jīva-souls who are covered by the illusory environment. As jīva-souls we have the capacity for thinking, feeling, and willing. And when our natural conscious capacity will come into its own clean, transcendental position, then we will automatically feel attracted by the Lord’s divine form and be inspired to engage in His service. That is the main and real religion of all jīva-souls, and in remembrance of that eternal, spiritual religion Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna:

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ
(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 18.66)

“I shall give you the supreme in life if you take shelter at My lotus feet. Give up all other forms of religion and surrender exclusively to Me. I will liberate you from all sin. Have no fear.”

What Kṛṣṇa means is that the different kinds of religion practised in this material world are not perfect forms of religion's actual nature, and that actual religion is to surrender to the Lord's lotus feet and engage eternally in His service. Kṛṣṇa is teaching the conditioned souls: "You are nonsense. You are tiny, insignificant souls. You cannot understand what is what, what is good, what is bad, and so on. You should always avoid irreligion—that is never worshipping. But not only that, you should also leave behind even your good knowledge, even your understanding of religion, even your idea of proper religious life for peace and harmony in this world.

"Just surrender to Me. I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and I control everything. I will take care of everything for you as well as everyone else. I will take care of the results of all your activities whether they are religious or irreligious, good or bad. You have nothing to fear. I give you this assurance. Do not be fearful. Just surrender to Me. Because you are very dear to Me I am advising you in this way. I am the only Person who can give everything to you. Surrender to Me and act according to My direction. By serving Me you will be fully satisfied."

The Lord's guardianship

Only the Lord, Kṛṣṇa, can say this, and it is a very serious matter. When Kṛṣṇa says, "*Aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi*: I will liberate you from all sin", He means that He will take full charge of a surrendered soul. It is actually the Lord's duty to mercifully accept the surrendered souls who fully realise their eternal spiritual position and offer themselves to Him. He must say to them, "Yes, I am your Lord, and I am taking your whole charge." Kṛṣṇa promises the jīva-souls:

samo 'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktiā mayi te teṣu chāpy aham
(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 9.29)

"I do not interfere with the freedom of any jīva-soul, but if any jīva-soul surrenders to Me and worships Me, then I will take



Between the lowest set of domes
on the main Temple in
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh,
Nabadwīp, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak
Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj
wrote Kṛṣṇa's celebrated
declaration, "Sarva-dharmān
parityajya Mām ekaṁ
śaraṇaṁ vraja: abandon all
religions and surrender unto Me",
to demonstrate that
the Temple is a place to practise
the true sanātana-dharma.

special interest in him. I will take his charge. I will look after everything for him and satisfy him."

ananyāś chintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham
(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 9.22)

"If any jīva-soul fully surrenders to Me and serves Me with all his energy, then I will give full satisfaction to him and I Myself will supply him with food, lodging, and all his necessities (yoga-kṣemam). It will not be necessary for him to think about his material life. He will only need to engage in My service."

The Lord knows how He will take the surrendered souls back to the transcendental world. He knows how He will promote them from the material world to the spiritual world, and the surrendered souls feel that; they feel the Lord's guardianship.

The ocean of sin

When Kṛṣṇa tells the conditioned souls, "Leave not only your irreligion but your religion also", then a conditioned soul may ask, "If I leave behind my pious activities, which are good for everyone in this world, then only my sinful activities will remain. So will I be left in a sinful position with nothing good to show for myself?"

This question can be answered by understanding that the whole material world, where the conditioned souls live, is actually an ocean of sin. It is a world constructed for the sinful souls who are averse to the Lord (*Kṛṣṇa bhuli' sei jīva anādi-bahir-mukha*). Generally we know what sin is. It is a very simple thing: a sin is something unlawful in this world. But here in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa teaches a deeper idea. Kṛṣṇa teaches that sin actually means anything not done for the Lord's satisfaction. He teaches that even pious activity is actually sinful if it is not done for the Lord's satisfaction.

What the jīva-souls do in the material world is very simple: they eat, sleep, fear, and enjoy (*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunariṇi cha*). This is the simple summary of all the conditioned souls' activity. These activities may be done very piously by conditioned souls, but Kṛṣṇa's final teaching in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is that if these activities are not done with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if they are not done for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, then they are actually sin. Although they may be done in a way that is harmonious externally within the material world, they are actually the cause of bondage in the illusory environment if they are not dedicated to Kṛṣṇa.

It is written in the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, and so on that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa Himself says this. Many times in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa identifies Himself as the Lord. He declares:

ahaṁ hi sarva-yajñānāṁ bhoktā cha prabhur eva cha
na tu mām abhijānanti tattvenātaś chyavanti te

(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 9.24)

"I am the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the rightful enjoyer of everything. The conditioned souls who do not recognise Me fall into the bondage of māyā."

When Kṛṣṇa says, "*Ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi*: I will liberate you from all sin", He means that He will liberate you from the sinful world of māyā, from the world where it is a sin just to exist. In this way Kṛṣṇa shows the conditioned souls that all of their activity, even pious or general religious activity, is actually sinful if it is not done as surrendered service to His lotus feet. He also shows the conditioned souls that if they consciously enter the platform of transcendental service, then they can play there happily with no fear (*mā śucaḥ*). Only when the jīva-souls surrender to Kṛṣṇa and serve Him with their full energy—*Man-manā bhava Mad-bhakto, Mad-yājī Mām namaskuru*—will they find proper adjustment in life, that is, true yoga.

Dive deep into śaraṇāgati

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj also explained that after Kṛṣṇa declared, “*Sarva-dharmān parityajya Mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*: abandon all varieties of religion and surrender unto Me”, His battlefield mentality was curtailed, and He needed to end His conversation with Arjuna.

When the word *vraja* came from His mouth, His mood softened. The sound of the word *vraja* brought Kṛṣṇa’s consciousness to Vraja Dhām, Śrī Vṛndāvan Dhām. If anyone says, “Vraja, vraja, vraja”, their mind will think of Vraja Dhām. So why would Kṛṣṇa not also think of Vṛndāvan when He said, “*Mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*”? When Kṛṣṇa remembered Vraja Dhām at this time He thought, “What is śaraṇāgati? What is surrender? That exists in its supreme form only in Vraja Dhām.”

The word *vraja* actually means gaman korā, gachchha [‘move’, ‘go’]. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained that *vraja* means, “Dive deep into Reality. Dive deep into the reality of śaraṇāgati.” When Kṛṣṇa remembered Vraja Dhām and the surrendered devotees of Vraja Dhām in this way, His mood changed, and He ended His conversation with Arjuna. He forgot Arjuna actually.

After His verse *sarva-dharmān parityajya Mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja* He thought, “Enough! What I have explained is sufficient, and it is not necessary for Me to explain anything more at this time.” He concluded by telling Arjuna:

**idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadāchana
na chāśuśrūṣave vāchyaṁ na cha mām yo ’bhyasūyati**

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 18.67)

“Do not give this consciousness I have given to someone who is devoid of self-sacrifice, to someone who is not My devotee, to someone who does not engage in My service, or to someone who is envious of Me.”

Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, “*Yathechchhasi tathā kuru*: now you can do as you like. I have told you enough of what is necessary for you.

It is not necessary for Me to say anything more. I am finishing our conversation. You can now do as you like.”

Arjuna was Kṛṣṇa’s intimate friend, and he understood that if he said anything more, it would give pain to Kṛṣṇa. So Arjuna immediately surrendered and said:

naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat-prasādān mayāchyuta
sthito ’smi gata-sandehaḥ kariṣye vachanam tava

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 18.73)

“You have undoubtedly been so merciful to me, and my illusion is now gone. I am now firmly situated in my real consciousness, and all my doubts are gone. I shall follow Your instructions and do my duty.”

Then Kṛṣṇa said, “Start the fighting!” Arjuna said, “Yes. This is my job, as You have given it to me, so I shall finish it as soon as possible. Then You will get some relief.”

This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness: acting fearlessly for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is so beautiful and so merciful. We can see that all charm, ecstasy, love, and harmony exist within the Kṛṣṇa conception. *Kamī vā dayāluṁ śaraṇam vrajema* (SB: 3.2.23): who shall we surrender to other than Kṛṣṇa? Everything is present wherever Kṛṣṇa is. In the final verse of Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā Sañjaya said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanur-dharaḥ
tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 18.78)

“O foolish King, you are asking me so many things. How can you again ask me who will be victorious in the battle of Kurukṣetra? You must understand that victory will always be wherever Kṛṣṇa is.”

What can I say more than, “Take shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa!”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Spiritual Revolution

In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explained the evolution of consciousness. Kṛṣṇa explained how the conditioned souls can advance from irreligious life into yoga and how their practice of buddhi-yoga can evolve from karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and dhyāna-yoga into bhakti-yoga. In this way we can understand that the gist of all the scriptures is present in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and that everything essential for the spiritual evolution of all conditioned souls is explained there.

The position of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* has been explained in poetry form:

sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopāla-nandanaḥ
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīr bhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtaṁ mahat
(*Śrī Gītā-māhātmya*: 6)

“The *Gītopaniṣad*, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, which contains the essence of all the Upaniṣads and Vedas, is just like a cow, and Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is most famous for His Pastimes as a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. Arjuna is just like a calf, asking question after question to draw out the cow’s milk, and all

those who are sudhīr, who have real inspiration for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, drink the cow's milk, which is the nectar of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*."

This is our conception of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa mercifully gave His divine glance to everyone through His lecture to Arjuna. He distributed the essence of the Vedas and all the scriptures for the spiritual evolution of everyone.

We have a very nice book made from the lectures of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, named *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness*. *Evolution* means the gradual improvement of a substance. I consider that the idea of evolution is good; there is no problem with the idea of spiritual evolution. We can always see things moving up, step-by-step, towards the divine form of Reality. And we can see Reality's divine form also, step-by-step, effulgently evolving. Evolution is standard actually. It is always in front of everyone and it is the law of the spiritual world.

The line of progress for spiritual evolution coming to the conditioned souls from Kṛṣṇa is known as āmnāya. *Āmnāya* means divine knowledge coming down through the Vedic channel, it means the revealed scriptures, which are apauruṣeya, not made by any mundane man. *Āmnāya* is always fully divine. It descends down from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute-song through one channel, the Vedic channel. Vedavyās caught, organised, and distributed everything coming down through the āmnāya-paramparā for the spiritual benefit of everyone. Vedavyās divided that knowledge and presented it in the form of the Vedas: the *Sama*, *Yajur*, *Ṛg*, and *Atharva* Vedas, the *Āyurveda*, the *Mahābhārata*, and so on. Kṛṣṇa enlightens the conditioned souls about spiritual evolution and religious life through āmnāya.

Kṛṣṇa the revolutionary

But when Kṛṣṇa personally teaches the conditioned souls, He does not present only spiritual evolution. He presents spiritual *revolution*. Everything Kṛṣṇa Himself does is always

revolutionary. Revolution is the actual subject and factor of Kṛṣṇa. Why? By Kṛṣṇa's will the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, eighteen Purāṇas, and so on appeared in this world. All of their teachings gradually lead everyone towards worshipping Kṛṣṇa. Also, Kṛṣṇa descended in so many different forms—Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Vāman, Rāma, and so on—and taught proper Vedic religious behaviour. Kṛṣṇa Himself, however, always knocks the Vedic channel. He always minimises the teachings of the Vedas.

This is miraculous. I am surprised by this, and not only temporarily. I am permanently surprised by this. I have also read almost all the different kinds of śāstra, and I have read them under the guidance of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. I know the subjects they teach and what subjective evolution is. But Kṛṣṇa's dismissal of the Vedic teachings must be surprising to almost everyone. It must be surprising to hear that the final advice of the Vedas is to ignore the general line of progress the Vedas teach!

The revolutionary knowledge that Kṛṣṇa Himself wants to distribute to the conditioned souls is *Vedeṣu durlabham*, "very rare to get in the Vedas." Śrī *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.56) says, "*Vidantas te santaḥ kṣiti-virala-chārāḥ katipaye*: it is only known to very few sādhus in this world, so few that they can be counted on our fingers." It is very rare to get!

"I am all-in-all!"

What evidence can there be for the revolutionary idea that the final advice of the Vedas is to abandon them? The primary evidence for this is found in Kṛṣṇa's instructions to Uddhava in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Kṛṣṇa first gave a clue about His revolutionary teachings to Arjuna at the end of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* with His verse *sarva-dharmān parityajya Mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*. But *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* begins from that stage. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* begins from Kṛṣṇa's teaching not of a subjective evolution of consciousness but of a subjective *revolution* of consciousness. In Kṛṣṇa's instruction to Uddhava in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* we find

Kṛṣṇa's revolutionary teaching from the conclusion of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* expressed more clearly:

tasmāt tvam uddhavotsṛjya chodanām pratichodanām
pravṛttiṅ cha nivṛttiṅ cha śrotavyaṁ śrutam eva cha
mām ekam eva śaraṇam ātmānam sarva-dehinām
yāhi sarvātma-bhāvena mayā syā hy akuto-bhayaḥ
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.12.14–15*)

Kṛṣṇa's first condition in His instruction to Uddhava was, "Uddhavotsṛjya! Uddhava! Whatever rules and regulations were given by the Vedas, everything that was given in the Vedas for the spiritual evolution and upliftment of the conditioned souls to the transcendental abode, all of that you should avoid! Not only avoid: if it comes to you, throw it away!"

Prabhupād Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur explained the word *utsṛjya* in this way. I heard from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj that Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur used a word in the Oriyan language, *phaphāḍibā*, that meant, "Throw it away!"

What is being avoided and thrown away? Kṛṣṇa says, "*Chodanām pratichodanām*: the inspiration given in the scriptures for following the perfect evolutionary Vedic line, both the śruti and the smṛti, is to be avoided. *Pravṛttiṅ cha nivṛttiṅ cha*: leave both your attachment and detachment. If you have attachment to some type of food, leave that type of food. If you have detachment from wealth, leave behind that mentality; don't care whether wealth comes to you or not. *Śrotavyaṁ śrutam eva cha*: leave aside all that you have heard before, *śrutam*, and all that you will hear in the future, *śrotavyam*; all the knowledge you have gathered before and all the knowledge you may collect in the future. Avoid all of it. Leave behind and avoid anything that you have heard or will hear other than the consciousness of eternal service to Me.

"What should you do? What should be your mood? *Mām ekam eva śaraṇam Ātmānam sarva-dehinām*: surrender to Me! Who am I? I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the emporium

of all rasa, the ecstatic ocean of rasa. All your necessities will be fulfilled when you come to Me, take shelter of Me, and surrender to Me. You will not lose anything by that because I am all-in-all. I live in the heart of everyone. Not one soul can exist without Me.”

dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariṣvasjāte

(Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad: 4.6)

“I live with every jīva-soul like a bird next to them on a tree branch, and I watch all of their activities. *Ātmānam sarva-dehinām yāhi sarvātma-bhāvena*: surrender to Me! You will be fully occupied by Me. I am so powerful. *Sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*: I can do anything, everything, something, and nothing. All power is within Me. You have nothing to fear.”

In this way Kṛṣṇa expressed His revolutionary advice: “The laws, rules and regulations, the procedures beneficial in the lives of practitioners given in the Vedas, you can ignore all of them and come exclusively to My channel, that is, surrender to Me and serve.”

Kṛṣṇa is always fully independent and detached from the general line of the Vedas. He is revolutionary and supreme. Kṛṣṇa Himself has deeply exposed the position of the exclusively surrendered soul, showing that it is not a factor whether he is externally good or externally bad according to the rules and regulations of the scriptures.

Incorruptible purity

In his *Upadeśāmṛta* (6), Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī gave a standard and sweet explanation of our vision of a surrendered soul:

drṣṭaiḥ svabhāva-janitair vapuṣaś cha doṣair
na prākṛtatvam iha bhakta janasya paśyet
gaṅgāmbhasām na khalu budbuda-phena-pāṅkair
brahma-dravatvam apagachchhati nīra-dharmaiḥ





*Devotees from Śrī Chaitanya
Sāraswat Maṭh crossing the
Ganges River during
Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām Parikramā.*

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī smilingly said, “O boy! Though you are unqualified, don’t be fickle-minded: never hesitate to give honour to the Vaiṣṇava. You must try to understand that the pure nature of the Vaiṣṇava is like the pure nature of the Ganges. Water is everywhere, but Ganges water is Ganges water. Ganges water comes down from Lord Viṣṇu’s lotus feet and is fully transcendental. Ganges water is never polluted by dirty things. Many dirty things may appear in the Ganges but Ganges water is still Ganges water; it never loses its transcendental quality. You must give honour to the Ganges in this way, and you should give honour to the Vaiṣṇava in the same way.

“The Vaiṣṇava is to be considered pure in the way the Ganges is always considered pure. A devotee may fall down, or you may see him fall down, but where he may fall down to, and where he has gone up to, you do not know. You are only seeing him with your vision. Only up to that point are you able to see him. You do not know his actual position. If he has pure devotion, you must not dishonour him, and you must not make offence to him. You should always consider him pure, even if his body is filled with itching boils and diseases, or his behaviour appears improper.”

Radical spiritual ethics

This is Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu’s explanation of how to view a devotee of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa’s explanation is revolutionary and miraculous. Kṛṣṇa said,

api chet sudurāchāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 9.30)

“Through your vision of Vedic knowledge and your understanding of good and bad, if you see an exclusively dedicated devotee of Mine, an ananya-bhāk-bhakta, doing something terribly wrong, or you see some very bad quality in him, you must never think that he is not My devotee. You must never think that he is not perfect and that what he does is also not perfect. It is My declaration that anyone who is My surrendered devotee is a sādhu, and what he does is always right because of his exclusive devotional mood.”

This is very difficult to understand. Bad is bad and good is good. We have learned what is good and what is bad in all the scriptures. *Durāchāra* means someone whose actions are against the Vedic rules and regulations, and *sudurāchāra* means someone whose actions are extremely bad in this respect. How can we digest that someone who does something wrong in this way is actually right and perfect? What is this? Is Kṛṣṇa saying that,

because His devotee has the proper resolve to serve Him, even if His devotee slapped someone, still he has done very well and made no offence? Is Kṛṣṇa saying that everything His devotee has done is very good? That even if His devotee is doing wrong, it is very good? Yes! *Samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*: Kṛṣṇa is saying that His devotees are ananya-bhāk, leading exclusive devotional lives, and that if any disturbance appears within their lives He does not care, and His devotee does not get any reaction for that. Naturally action and reaction are always happening in this world: “To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” But Kṛṣṇa does not care.

This is still very difficult to understand. Even the twelve Mahājans had trouble with this point and discussed it over and over. The twelve Mahājans could accept this declaration of Kṛṣṇa faithfully, but when they heard that this was Kṛṣṇa’s final, conclusive declaration, and considered the meaning of His expression, they were confused about how to harmonise it with their relative vision. After they discussed the verse for some time they decided that if Kṛṣṇa said His exclusive devotee could do wrong externally but still be rightly situated, then they would have to believe it. But when they read Kṛṣṇa’s next expression they became even more confused.

**kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvach-chhāntiṁ nigachchhati
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati**

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 9.31)

Here Kṛṣṇa declares, “My exclusively dedicated devotee may do great wrong externally, but what he does is also perfect because he is engaged in remembering and serving Me. Through his surrendered devotional mood he will be purified, and his defects will be dispelled. He will become *dharmātmā*, virtuous. He will become peaceful eternally, and he will not have any more trouble in the future. So declare to everyone that My devotees are never vanquished.” Kṛṣṇa promises this to His unalloyed devotees and everyone.

Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākur also very nicely added in his Sanskrit commentary on *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* that Kṛṣṇa meant, “O Arjuna, I sometimes have had to break My promises for the sake of My devotees, so even if I promise to everyone, ‘*Na Me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*: My devotees are never destroyed’, everyone may still have some doubt about it. So it is My order that *you* promise this, that you promise that My devotees are never destroyed. I cannot always keep My promises, and you cannot always keep your promises either. But I always keep the promises of My devotees, and everyone knows this. So you promise that My devotees will never be ruined, and I will make sure your promise is fulfilled.” In this way Kṛṣṇa gave total assurance to everyone that His devotees are never vanquished.

Golden property

Question: I have heard many different explanations of this verse *api chet sudurāchāro*. I have heard one interpretation that the wrong behaviour, *sudurāchāra*, is only apparent in our vision, and I have heard another interpretation that the devotee’s behaviour is actually wrong. But my question is, in whose estimation is someone an *ananya-bhāk-bhakta*, an exclusively surrendered devotee?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: In the verse *api chet sudurāchāro bhajate Mām ananya-bhāk*, Kṛṣṇa indicates that if you see anything bad in the character of His devotees then you should not judge them, insult them, or make any offence to them. You may choose not to associate with them, but you should also overlook their faults. You should never consider that they are actually wrongdoers, *sudurāchāra*. Rather, you should try with consciousness to see how their spiritual life is going on and honour them as devotees of the Lord. You must think, “They have the golden property of surrender and devotion in their hearts (*ananya-bhāk bhakti*). They are devotees of Kṛṣṇa, and they would never do



anything wrong willingly. Howsoever they happen to act is surely for the satisfaction of the Lord and must be positive.”

If a piece of gold falls into a dirty place it is still respected as gold. It will not be ignored or dismissed. Similarly, you should never ignore the golden property in the hearts of devotees. You should always consider that the golden property of devotion is within them. Even if their activity does not appear proper you should never ignore the golden property within them. At any moment that gold may be taken out of that dirty place and shine cleanly. You should be very serious and cautious

before commenting anything negative about them. For your own safety you should be very careful not to make any offence to them. This is the meaning of *sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ*.

Kṛṣṇa's next verse, *kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā śāśvach-chhāntiṁ nigachchhati*, also supports this idea. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur relieved the confusion of the Mahājans by explaining that in this verse Kṛṣṇa means, "If *you* consciously consider that their activity is not bad but really is good, that they are fully surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and what you thought was bad in their character was actually good, then *you* will become righteous and peaceful, then *you* will become a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa."

In our life we can see everything as our enemy, and we can also see everything as our friend. Our duty is to make friends, not enemies, and if we try heart and soul to do this through this revolutionary adjustment of our consciousness given by Kṛṣṇa, then we must get a good result, and what looks bad to us now we will see in the future is actually good for us.

Real sin and piety

In this way we can understand the revolutionary teachings of Kṛṣṇa. He makes the rules. He reveals the Vedic scriptures and evolutionary spiritual teachings, and He also dismisses them. He makes the rules, and He also breaks the rules.

It is very difficult for general people to digest. Many persons are able to understand something about Vedic knowledge, Vedic culture, philosophy, and so on, but they struggle to understand this finest point. The main point of understanding needed to harmonise everything—to properly understand Kṛṣṇa's revolutionary teaching—is given by Kṛṣṇa in the *Padma-purāṇa*:

man-nimittam kṛtam pāpam api dharmāya kalpate
mām anādṛtya dharmo 'pi pāpam syān mat-prabhāvataḥ
(*Padma-purāṇa*)

Kṛṣṇa says, "Anything you do for Me, even if it is sinful according to Vedic law, is actually a pious act (dharma), and anything

you do that is not for Me, even if it is pious according to Vedic law, is actually a sinful act.”

Kṛṣṇa’s advice is revolutionary but also simple. It is actually a direct description of the jīva-soul’s position as His eternal servant. Kṛṣṇa’s teaching is actually an expression of the universal spirituality natural to all souls: anything not done in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sinful, and everything done for Kṛṣṇa is pious. This is the key to harmonising everything and understanding Kṛṣṇa’s revolutionary teaching at the conclusion of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and throughout *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*—Kṛṣṇa’s subjective revolution of consciousness.

The purifying force of devotion

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj once questioned Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur about what should be done when a gentle devotee does something wrong. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was highly educated and an authority in material law. He was thinking that a devotee should be punished according to material rules when he breaks the rules or regulations, but Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur did not agree. Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur said, “Your forehead, that is, your future, is born from your conception. *Maṇi-maya-mandira-madhye paśyati pipīlikā chidram*: if you focus on the faults of a devotee then your conception will be like that of an ant. An ant enters a temple decorated with golden jewels and looks only for the holes in the walls. Only when you look for the good qualities in the devotees will your future be exalted. Only then will you proceed properly towards service.”

Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur answered Śrīla Guru Mahārāj in this way but did not fully answer his question. Then one day about six months later in Madras as Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur was reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in his room, a verse came before him, and he called for Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, “Here is the answer to your question.” Śrīla Guru Mahārāj had asked Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur his question about the misbehaviour of devotees six months before. When Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur said, “Here is

your question's answer," Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was surprised and thought, "What is my question?" When Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur handed him the book and Śrīla Guru Mahārāj saw the verse, he immediately remembered and understood which question Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur was answering. That verse was,

sva-pāda-mūlaṁ bhajataḥ priyasya
 tyaktānya-bhāvasya hariḥ pareśaḥ
 vikarma yach chotpatitaṁ kathañchid
 dhunoti sarvaṁ ḥṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.5.42)

The meaning is that it is not necessary to apply material law to dedicated devotees of the Lord. It is possible that dedicated devotees may do something wrong; their mundane body and mental position are not always in a liberated state. It is possible that they may sometimes be polluted by the illusory environment. But because they are dedicated, because they are serving the Lord and chanting His Holy Name, the Lord is living within their heart, and the Lord will clean their heart. The Lord will remove their offences by His divine influence. If they are dedicated to Kṛṣṇa then He will take care of everything. It is not necessary for a dedicated devotee to do any prāyaścitta, atonement.

We can also understand that a dedicated devotee will always feel anutāp, regret, when they understand that they have done something wrong. They will think, "Why have I done this? It is very bad!" They will scrutinise themselves very seriously in this way, and the fire of their repentance will purify their hearts of pollution. This verse (*sva-pāda-mūlam*) is necessary for everyone to discuss and understand. There are very powerful feelings within it, and when everyone will understand it they will be purified very quickly.

Service to the Lord is transcendental, no doubt, but we cannot say when liberation will come in the life of a dedicated soul. It is also necessary for everyone to follow the material and social

The Supreme Lord, who resides in the hearts of His dear devotees who give up all other concerns and serve His feet, absolves any sins they happen to commit.



laws, and maintain themselves in the material world without making any disturbance in society. People are always hating others when they see them improperly following the laws of society, but no solution to that comes through hate. The only solution is dedication and service to the Lord. The Lord and the power of devotion purify the hearts of everyone and remove any and all traces of mundane desire and ego. Nothing external can do that.

Positive vision

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj taught us that whenever we see a bad quality in someone it is a test given to us by Kṛṣṇa to purify us. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave us that vision, and we feel that if everyone will see with that type of vision, then Kṛṣṇa will be happy, and everyone will be spiritually benefitted. This is so important because we live in an ocean of faults, and we can find someone with faults everywhere. Many of the spiritual practitioners around us are not perfect. We will become hopeless if we do not try to see the good qualities in others and in our environment.

A Western scholar, Katherine Mayo, once came to India to learn about Indian philosophy but after arriving she publicly criticised Indian culture. When this happened Mahatma Gandhi said, “She has not come to appreciate the wealth of India. She has come to inspect India’s drains. She is a drain inspector.” We heard this story from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj.

We should not be drain inspectors. By Kṛṣṇa’s mercy we should try to see beauty and charm everywhere. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said, “To err is human and to forgive is divine.” Everyone has imperfections and will sometimes do something wrong. Why should we lose our own devotional mood because of that? Through his devotional mood Śrīla Guru Mahārāj could see goodness everywhere. He would give great respect to all devotees, and also give great respect even to persons who were against Vaiṣṇavism.



Dedicated devotees may do something wrong but we should not act like ants that see only the holes of a golden temple (*maṇi-maya-mandira-madhye paśyati pipīlikā chidram*). We should not be a drain inspector looking for devotees' faults. We have much more capacity than ants. We should see that all dedicated devotees have golden property within their hearts, and we should consciously try to recognise their good qualities.

The sole necessity of devotion

Persons who have mundane qualifications and persons who have no mundane qualifications appear the same to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa only wants our eagerness and hankering, our mood of devotion. If we have that, then Kṛṣṇa will be merciful to us. Kṛṣṇa is like an exalted sun: His rays can drive away all inauspiciousness from anyone. Someone's mundane qualifications are not notable for Kṛṣṇa, and someone's mundane disqualifications are also not a problem for Kṛṣṇa. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says,

**patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayachchhati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ**

(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 9.26)

"If anyone offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, flower, fruit, or water, I will affectionately accept that offering."

**mūrkho vadati viṣṇāya dhīro vadati viṣṇave
ubhayos tu samaṁ puṇyaṁ bhāva-grāhī janārdanaḥ**

(*Śrī Chaitanya-bhāgavat: Ādi-khaṇḍa*, 11.108)

Someone who does not know proper Sanskrit grammar may offer food to the Lord saying, "*Viṣṇāya namaḥ*." This is a common grammatical mistake. Someone who is expert in grammar will offer food to the Lord saying, "*Viṣṇave namaḥ*." This is correct grammar. But if both persons have devotion, then the Lord will accept both of their offerings.

The Lord does not consider grammar or external qualifications; He considers the heart. He sees only someone's mood of devotion. It is necessary to offer everything to the Lord with devotion, *bhaktiyā prayachchhati*. Without devotion nothing is actually satisfying to the Lord because the Lord is *bhāva-grāhī Janārdanaḥ*, the enjoyer of the devotee's heart and devotional mood.

Once when I was in Purī Dhām during the time of Ratha Yātrā the Director General of Police of the state of Orissa came to visit me. He was very learned. His knowledge was like an ocean and he had defeated many sādhus who had come to Purī. He had read all different types of philosophy: the writings of Rāmānuja, Śaṅkar Āchārya, Buddha, Confucius, Christ, and so on. No one could defeat him in debate. When I spoke with him I was very surprised to hear a very nice verse from him that is dear to all devotees:

vyādhasyācharaṇaṁ dhruvasya cha vayo vidyā gajendrasya kā
kubjāyāḥ kim u nāma rūpam adhikaṁ kim tat sudāmno dhanam
vaṁsaḥ ko vidurasya yādava-pater ugrasya kim pauruṣaṁ
bhaktiyā tuṣyati kevalaṁ na cha guṇair bhakti-priyo mādhaḥ

(*Padyāvalī: 8*)



This verse explains that Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not depend upon any external qualifications, and it presents many examples from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* to prove this. A hunter who killed deer in the jungle and did not follow Vedic culture got a chance to worship Nārāyaṇ, so proper behaviour cannot be the cause of pleasing the Lord. Dhruva received Viṣṇu's mercy when he was only five years old, so age cannot be the cause of receiving the Lord's mercy. Gajendra the elephant had no proper Vedic knowledge, but the Lord answered his prayer; so knowledge cannot be the cause of receiving the Lord's grace. Kubjā was not beautiful, but she satisfied the Lord with her devotion. Sudāma Vipra had no money, but he satisfied the Lord through his devotion. Through these examples and others, this verse

shows that the Lord is satisfied by the mood of devotion within His devotees, not their external qualifications.

When I heard this verse from the policeman I was surprised, “This man is the head of the police department but he is quoting this verse which has a purely devotional theme.” I spoke with him for about half an hour and he was very satisfied. Now by the will of Kṛṣṇa he is my very good friend and wants to become my disciple.

Swinging on a meat-scale

There is also a story in the *Mahābhārata* I have told many times about a hunter who used a Śālagram-śilā as a weight for his scale when he sold meat in the market to make his living. Once a brāhmaṇ came by and saw the Śālagram-śilā on the meat scale. He chastised the hunter: “O you sinful man! You are using a Śālagram-śilā as a weight to sell meat. That stone is Lord Nārāyaṇ Himself; you are making a great offence.”

The hunter was very simple-hearted and believed the brāhmaṇ that the stone was Nārāyaṇ Himself. He became afraid and apologised to the brāhmaṇ: “I did not know this stone was a Śālagram-śilā. What should I do now?”

The brāhmaṇ said, “Give me this Śālagram-śilā; I will make sure that it is properly worshipped.” The hunter gave the brāhmaṇ the Śālagram-śilā, and the brāhmaṇ offered the Śālagram-śilā tulasī, abhiṣek, bhoga, āratī, and everything. The brāhmaṇ worshipped the Śālagram-śilā properly according to all the rules and regulations of the Vedas, but after two or three days the Śālagram-śilā appeared in a dream to the brāhmaṇ as Nārāyaṇ Himself and said, “I was very happy swinging on the scale of that hunter. Every day he gave Me very nice nourishment in that way. You have now disturbed My mind. Please give Me back to that hunter.”

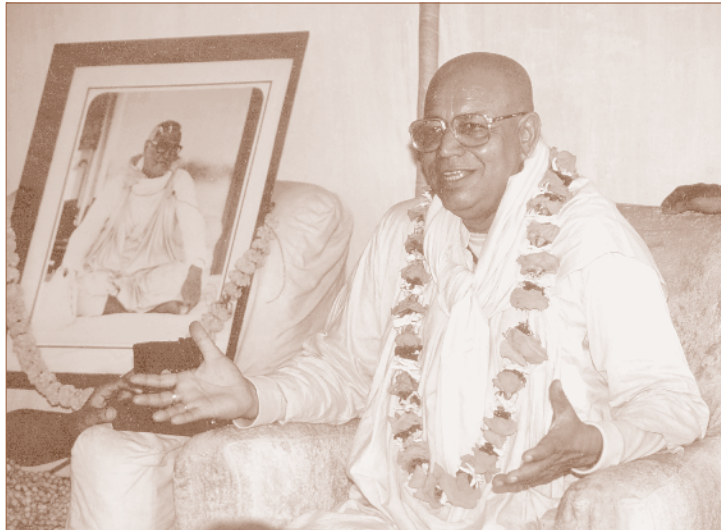
The Lord was not happy to be with someone who was simply following the rules and regulations of the Vedas. What the brāhmaṇ did was not wrong; it was correct according to the

Vedas. And it is the Lord Himself who gave the Vedic scriptures to society. But the Lord actually always wants to be with His exclusive devotees. The Lord considers faith, dedication, and devotion for Him to be supreme.

Kṛṣṇa's play and satisfaction

Unalloyed devotional mood, straight devotional spirit, is the real basis of surrender and dedication, not rules and regulations. Unalloyed surrender is Kṛṣṇa's real desire for the conditioned souls. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj taught me this; I learned it from him, and I am following it 100 per cent. I am trying to follow it 100 per cent. My associates are also proceeding in that way, in the line of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness—the search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa Reality the Beautiful. This is the true form of religion.

Kṛṣṇa is a revolutionary. Kṛṣṇa makes the rules, and Kṛṣṇa breaks the rules. Why? For Himself. "Reality is by Itself and for Itself." Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Reality by Himself and for Himself. Everything is really only for His play and satisfaction. The jīva-souls who realise this revolutionary ideal experience the supreme joy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.



CHAPTER TWELVE

Surrender

Devotee: I have heard of two different analogies for surrender, *mārjara-kiśora-nyāya*, the surrender of the kitten who is carried by his mother, and *markaṭa-kiśora-nyāya*, the surrender of the baby monkey who holds on to his mother. Which example is the proper conclusion in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Neither of these examples of surrender is perfect. We have seen cats carrying their kittens, but we have also seen monkeys carrying their babies when they are sick. A baby kitten and a baby monkey are not actually surrendering to their mothers; they are simply continuing their lives in a natural way. A baby monkey naturally holds on to his mother, and a mother cat naturally protects her kitten. In these examples there is no consciousness: the baby and mother are simply living in a natural way.

We must surrender to the Lord with consciousness. A mood of surrender is what is actually necessary for us. We must always be consciously dependent on Kṛṣṇa and fully surrendered to Him. We must always try to satisfy Him with all of

our energy. Prabhu’s question actually is, “Who is responsible, the Lord or the jīva-soul?” The full responsibility is ours, but when we try to approach Kṛṣṇa He will also see us and help us.

Kṛṣṇa has given us freedom, and we have misused that. We have come into great difficulty and become bound by Māyā. It is now necessary for us to stop misusing our freedom and surrender wholeheartedly to Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa sees that we are fully surrendered to Him He will be eager to take us out of our very low position, bring us to a high position, and give us His service. If we sacrifice our freedom and surrender at His lotus feet, then Kṛṣṇa will see that and help us.

**kṛṣṇa āmāya pāle rākhe jāna sarva-kāla
ātma-nivedana-dainye ghuchāo jañjāla**

(Śrī Prema-vivarta: 7.7)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur explained that if we humbly and fully surrender to Kṛṣṇa with the mood that, “Kṛṣṇa will always protect me”, then all obstacles and other obligations will be ousted from us by Kṛṣṇa’s grace. We need this mood of perfect surrender.

The jīva-soul’s duty is to be active in Kṛṣṇa’s service in a surrendered mood. Here is a perfect example of how Kṛṣṇa bestows His mercy upon a surrendered soul:

**sva-mātuḥ svinna-gātrāyā visrasta-kabara-srajaḥ
dṛṣṭvā pariśramaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 10.9.18)

“When Kṛṣṇa saw His mother was trying so hard to bind Him and becoming exhausted, when He saw that the flowers in her hair were falling down and her whole body was covered with sweat, He became merciful to her and allowed her to bind Him.”

Mother Yaśodā tried so hard to bind Kṛṣṇa with a rope. She tried many times, and collected more and more rope each time, but her rope always ended up two fingers too short and she failed to bind Kṛṣṇa. Only after she tried so hard and became very tired did Kṛṣṇa allow her to bind Him.

This is a perfect example. The jīva-souls will try as far as possible by them to satisfy the Lord, and when even with their full eagerness they are not successful, then Kṛṣṇa will come to help them. Kṛṣṇa wants to see how much you will give of yourself to Him. He wants to see that you start out with a pure desire to satisfy Him. Then He will respond to you. Depending upon how perfectly you start your approach to Kṛṣṇa with a pure mood of surrender, He will bestow His mercy upon you. In this way we can understand the process of surrender (śaraṇāgati) in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Rocketing to the spiritual world

Devotee: What is the starting point of śaraṇāgati?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Śaraṇāgati starts from the point of śraddhā (faith). The mood of perfect surrender will come to us through śraddhā.

‘śraddhā’-śabde—viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niśchaya
kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 22.62)



“Śraddhā means confident, firm faith that everything will be fulfilled, and everything impossible will become possible, by serving Kṛṣṇa.”

What is what, who is who—everything—is determined by our faith. Faith is the basis of all religions, not only the Vaiṣṇava religion, because faith is the jīva-soul’s true and best property. Faith is always the friend of everyone, and if we have faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we will be able to adjust everything.

sakala chhāḍiyā bhāi, śraddhā-devīra guṇa gāi,
yāra kṛpā bhakti dite pāre

(Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura)

“Giving up everything, sing the glories of Śraddhā Devī [the goddess of faith], by whose mercy we can feel the presence of devotion in our hearts.”

śraddhāvān jana haya
bhakti-adhikārī
‘uttama’, ‘madhyama’, ‘kaniṣṭha’—
śraddhā-anusārī
(Cc: Madhya, 22.64)

“Faithful persons are qualified for devotion. According to the strength of their faith, they are either advanced devotees, intermediate devotees, or neophyte devotees.”

Faith is our main property. We should never lose our faith. Our faith must also grow. It must become stronger and stronger until it reaches an unshakable position. Our faith must be transcendental, sincere, and chaste. You cannot throw a rocket from anywhere; you must have a substantial foundation. When your faith becomes unshakable and you understand the fundamental position of surrender and devotion to Kṛṣṇa, then you will be worry-free, and śaraṇāgati, your mood of surrender, will protect you. You will have an unshakable launching pad, and from there you will be able to throw your rocket across the illusory environment to Goloka Vṛndāvan. The spiritual world exists entirely within the plane of faith, and anyone whose faith is very strong will get that highest property when his faith takes on a transcendental form and is successfully activated in his heart. Everything will be revealed to him.

Devotion is awakened by devotion

To have 100 per cent faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa is not easy. We live in the mundane world and deal with many material things, so our faith is naturally influenced by our impressions of this world.

prakṛtibhyaḥ paraṁ yach cha tad achintyasya lakṣaṇam

(Mahābhārata: Bhīṣma-parva, 5.22)

“Kṛṣṇa is achintya. He is beyond our mundane experience.” How can we develop faith in Him and His divine service? Kṛṣṇa’s causeless mercy is always flowing throughout this mundane world, and if any conditioned soul is touched by that merciful wave, then he will receive some nitya-sukṛti [spiritual fortune], which will bring him faith.

General pious activities like feeding people can bring good fortune to people, but that is anitya-sukṛti [temporary merit]. Nitya-sukṛti, eternal fortune, is gained by being connected with the Lord’s affairs, by rendering service to the Lord’s devotees, the Lord’s temples, or anything connected with the Lord.

When a conditioned soul receives the opportunity to serve the Lord in some way and he collects sufficient nitya-sukṛti, then śraddhā develops in his heart automatically by the mercy of the Lord. As nitya-sukṛti develops into śraddhā within his heart the conditioned soul can begin to associate with sādhus. Before the conditioned soul can associate with sādhus properly he needs faith in them. This comes to him through nitya-sukṛti. Once the conditioned soul has a little faith in sādhus then his faith will become stronger and stronger through the sādhus’ association.

The illusory environment will not be able to attack the conditioned soul in any way if he tries to proceed in his spiritual life faithfully under the guidance of sādhus. *Sādhu* does not only mean someone wearing saffron cloth. A sādhu may be a gṛhastha, a brahmachārī, or vānaprastha. If anyone is a sincere devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa then he must be considered a sādhu.

kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma, ataeva ‘śānta’

bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kāmī—sakali ‘aśānta’

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 19.149)

Anyone who serves Rādhā-Govinda twenty-four hours a day without selfish interest under the guidance of his Guru is a real

devotee and real sādhu. His association will always be good and give everyone good nourishment in their spiritual life. In the association of a real sādhu the conditioned soul's faith and service attitude will increase more and more. This is the path given by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and all the scriptures: *bhaktyā sañjātayā bhaktyā* (SB: 11.3.31), devotion is awakened by devotion.

In exclusive devotional practising life only the process and the mercy of a real practitioner, a sādhu, will give the conditioned souls more and more faith, enthusiasm, and inspiration to serve their Lord. Under the guidance of a proper sādhu the conditioned souls will collect more and more devotional property in their heart, that is, faith and real hankering to serve the Lord, and their spiritual practising life will develop.

When someone has full faith that, "Kṛṣṇa is the supreme for me. He is my life and soul, and His service is my life's only goal", then we can say he is a śaraṇāgata, a soul surrendered unto Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is the natural position and religion of all jīva-souls even though it may be very difficult for conditioned souls to follow.

Indispensable surrender

The conditioned souls suffer so much in Māyā's illusory environment. Through their karma they experience so much sadness, confusion, and unsuccessfulness. But Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has taught that when the conditioned souls become established in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, when they are established in the transcendental service world of dedication to Lord Kṛṣṇa through faith, chastity, and sincerity, then they can very quickly cross over the illusory environment. There is no other way to do this than through śaraṇāgati, surrender.

The conditioned souls need to change their hearts and dedicate themselves to Lord Kṛṣṇa. That will give them the super-benefit of their lives. But śaraṇāgati is first of all necessary. Without śaraṇāgati no one can enter the transcendental service

smarantaḥ smārayantaś cha
mitho 'ghaughā-haraṁ harim
bhaktyā sañjātayā bhaktyā
bibhraty utpulkāṁ tanum

(SB: 11.3.31)

"Remembering and reminding one another of the Lord, who absolves all sin, with devotion (prema) produced by devotion (sādhana), devotees become ecstatic."

world, no one can offer anything to Lord Kṛṣṇa or do anything devotional. Because of this Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, have tried to give the conditioned souls inspiration to surrender. This is the primary purpose of their teachings.

When Śrīla Guru Mahārāj left the Gauḍīya Mission his first target was to give the conditioned souls knowledge about the proper mood of surrender to the Lord. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj had full scriptural knowledge and he gave so many supremely beneficial gifts to the conditioned souls, but he especially decided that śaraṇāgati is the first and best thing for everyone. He composed his *Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam*—*Nectar in the Lives of the Surrendered Souls* with this in mind: to give the conditioned souls enlightening knowledge about the proper mood of surrender to the Lord.

Pure śaraṇāgati

The qualities of śaraṇāgati have been identified in the scriptures:

ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlya vivarjanam
 rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso goptṛtve varaṇam tathā
 ātma-nikṣepa kārpaṇye ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ
 (Śrī Sātoata-tantra: 73)

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj composed his *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam* according to these procedures for surrender that are given in the scriptures. I have read so many things about these qualities of śaraṇāgati from so many places, but what Śrīla Guru Mahārāj has given is supreme. In a verse from his *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam* he has given us a very nice, clear explanation of śaraṇāgati that is a perfect jewel you cannot find anywhere else. It is the most essential prescription given anywhere for everyone to enter the transcendental service world. If you can memorise just this one verse and put it in your heart, then you will receive everything ever given in any scripture.

Accepting everything that is favourable for devotion to Kṛṣṇa, rejecting everything unfavourable for devotion to Kṛṣṇa, being confident that Kṛṣṇa will grant His protection, embracing Kṛṣṇa's guardianship, fully offering one's self to Kṛṣṇa, and feeling oneself to be lowly are the six aspects of śaraṇāgati.

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Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj
and Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj
reviewing the English edition of
Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam.*



**bhagavad-bhaktitaḥ sarvam ity utsṛjya vidher api
kainkaryam kṛṣṇa-pādaikāśrayatvam śaraṇāgatiḥ**
(*Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam: 1.35*)

Here Śrīla Guru Mahārāj expresses that śaraṇāgati means faith that *Bhagavad-bhaktitaḥ sarvam*, that through devotion to

Bhagavān you will get everything. *Bhagavān* means the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa, the Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti, the emporium of all rasa, who possesses all worshipping qualities. Everything you want and need—rasa, ecstasy, joy, nourishment, and so on—will automatically come to you through His service. Your life will be glorious, successful, and perfect through devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Not only will you receive everything you need internally, but full facility to serve Kṛṣṇa will also come to you.

**vāsudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ jñānaṁ cha yad ahaitukam**
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.2.7)

Practising devotion to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, quickly produces detachment and unconditional knowledge.

Automatically renunciation from this material world will come to you and spiritual knowledge will be revealed in your heart.

**bhaktis tvayi sthitararā bhagavan yadi syād
daivena naḥ phalati divya-kīśora-mūrtiḥ
muktiḥ svayaṁ mukulitāñjali sevate 'smān
dharmārtha-kāma-gatayaḥ samaya-pratīkṣāḥ**
(Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta: 107)

Mokṣa, liberation, will come to you with folded palms and ask, “What service shall I do for you?” Dharma, artha, and kāma [piety, wealth, and enjoyment] will wait by her side to assist you in your service to the Lord. Through a mood of submissive surrender and devotion to Kṛṣṇa everything will come to you. The Lord’s divine form and the prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam, the nectar of a life of surrendered service, will appear in your heart. We must understand that devotion to Kṛṣṇa is all-in-all (*Bhagavad-bhaktiḥ sarvam*).

Then Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said *ity utsrjya vidher api kainkaryam*: even if we cannot follow so many rules and regulations written in the scriptures for the guidance of conditioned souls, even if we cannot follow the standards of vidhi-mārg, but we are surrendered to the Lord, then our devotional mood will purchase the Lord and we will get a good result. This is one way

of explaining Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's expression, and it gives us much hope. But *ity utsrjya vidher api kairkaryam* also means that we must leave everything for Kṛṣṇa. We must leave all of our mundane activity, no doubt, but to exclusively worship Lord Kṛṣṇa wholeheartedly we will also have to ignore the general rules and regulations given in the Vedas. We must fully surrender to Kṛṣṇa: "I will utilise my full energy for Your service." We must leave the service of all gods, demigods, demigoddesses, and so on. Our service target must be Kṛṣṇa. When we can finally go beyond all types of formal religion and fully offer ourselves to Kṛṣṇa then He will give us entrance into exclusive devotional life by giving us inspiration in our hearts.

**yadā yasyānugṛhṇāti bhagavān ātma-bhāvitaḥ
sa jahāti matiṁ loke vede cha pariniṣṭhitām**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 4.29.46)

"When the Lord affectionately bestows His causeless mercy upon His surrendered devotees, they naturally give up all mundane activity and ignore Vedic religious practices to engage in His service."

**bhagavad-bhaktitaḥ sarvam ity utsrjya vidher api
kairkaryam kṛṣṇa-pādaikāśrayatvam śaraṇāgatiḥ**

(Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam: 1.35)

When a jīva-soul comes to the strong position of taking exclusive, unconditional shelter at the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet with full chastity and sincerity, then he becomes a pure śaraṇāgata. This is Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's explanation. *Kṛṣṇa-pādaikāśrayatvam*: when a jīva-soul accepts Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet as his one and only shelter, having faith that everything will be successful and fulfilled by His grace, and abandons the shelter of Vedic religion, demigods, selfish activity, and so on, then he becomes firmly, purely surrendered. We must fully surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa and believe it! With that we will get super-benefit in our lives.

“I am Yours”

We can understand the seriousness of a genuine surrendered soul’s mood through the story of Vibhīṣaṇ in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. During the battle between Lord Rāmachandra and Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇ, the brother of Rāvaṇa, came to take shelter at Lord Rāmachandra’s lotus feet. He prayed to Rāmachandra, “I am here to take shelter at Your lotus feet. Please accept me as Your own. I am Yours.” Hanumān and other associates of Rāmachandra were very angry when they heard this and heavily chastised Vibhīṣaṇ. They thought that Vibhīṣaṇ was a spy coming to harm Lord Rāmachandra, and they told Rāmachandra, “Don’t give him shelter at Your lotus feet. He cannot be trusted.” Then Rāmachandra took a vow in front of everyone. You will find His vow expressed in this verse from *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam*.

sakṛd eva prapanno yas tavāsmīti cha yāchate
abhayam sarvadā tasmai dadāmy etad vratam mama

(*Rāmāyaṇa: Yuddha-khaṇḍa*, 18.33)

“If anyone comes to Me and once says, ‘My dear Lord, I am Yours. I am taking shelter at Your lotus feet’, I promise for all time to come that I will never leave him.”

Here Lord Rāmachandra removes all possible fear from the hearts of the surrendered souls. He gives them 100 per cent assurance that He will accept them as His own and never abandon them. He gives them the faith that He will forever take their charge. So we can have full faith that if anyone will sincerely take shelter of the Lord, the Lord will never abandon them. Any and all circumstances may come to them, but if they once sincerely surrendered to the Lord then they are permanently under the Lord’s charge. This is a very heavy thing.

Depending on Kṛṣṇa

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura has very cleverly explained the faithful confidence of a surrendered soul in one of his songs.

By fully offering myself unto
 You, my false ego has gone away.
 I will no longer make any
 arrangements to protect myself.
 O Lord! Knowing me to be
 Your property, You will maintain
 me and keep me with You
 as one of Your protected cows.
 O Mādhava! You will herd me
 along the bank of the Yamunā.
 You will play Your flute and call
 me gently. By killing
 Aghāsura, Bakāsura, and so on,
 You will always make all
 arrangements for my protection,
 O Kān of Gokul! Knowing
 that You will certainly protect me,
 I will drink the poisoned water
 of the Yamunā. You will absolve
 Kāliya's offences, purify the
 Yamunā's waters, and thus
 increase my faith. By swallowing
 the forest fire, You will protect
 me and thus become known as
 'Gopāl' and 'Govindā'. Deciding to
 level the pride of Devarāj
 Indra, You will protect me from
 his rains, O Lifter of Girirāj
 Govardhan! When Brahmā will
 abduct me, You will rescue me,
 O Lord of Gokul! Bhakti Vinod is
 one of Your cows in Gokul.
 O Keśava! Surely you will
 carefully protect him.

ātma-samarpaṇe gelā abhimāna
 nāhi karabū nija rakṣā-vidhāna
 tuyā dhana jāni' tuhū rākhabi nātha!
 pālya go-dhana jāni kari' tuyā sātha
 charāobi mādhava! yāmuna-tīre
 vaṁsī bājāota ḍakabi dhīre
 agha-baka mārata rakṣā vidhāna
 karabi sadā tuhū gokula-kāna!
 rakṣā karabi tuhū niśchaya jāni
 pāna karabū hāma yāmuna-pāni
 kāliya-dokha karabi vināśā
 śodhabi nadī-jala bāḍāobi āśā
 piyata dāvānala rakhabi moya
 'gopāla' 'govinda' nāma tava hoyā
 surapati durmati-nāśa vichāri'
 rākhabi varṣaṇe giri-vara-dhāri!
 chaturānana karaba yava chori
 rakṣā karabi moye gokula-hari!
 bhakati-vinoda tuyā gokula-dhana
 rākhabi keśava! karata yatana

This is the mood of ātma-samarpaṇ, fully surrendering oneself to the Lord. This song is found in *Śaraṇāgati*; you must have read it. When I joined the Mission of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, he gave me a copy of *Śaraṇāgati* and tick-marked thirty-two songs inside. He said, "You must memorise these songs within seven days." I had some capacity as a kīrtan singer, and Śrīla Guru Mahārāj wanted to begin training me according to my qualifications. Somehow I memorised those songs on Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's order. I still have the book Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave me in my room.

It is also my request to the devotees that they try to memorise the songs of *Śaraṇāgati* if it is possible for them. There are so many very sweet, sweet songs inside *Śaraṇāgati* which are

very nice to chant daily. *Śaraṇāgati* is a small book but all wealth is present within it in a glorious way. Through the songs of Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur we get the gist of all the scriptures. If all the scriptures disappeared from this mundane world but Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur’s songs remained, we would still have everything. We can get everything through his songs.

This song *ātma-samarpaṇe gelā abhimāna* is not in pure Bengali. It has some Vraja-bhūli in it to convey the mood of Kṛṣṇa’s surrendered devotees in Vṛndāvan Dhām. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur expresses that if we are fully surrendered to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa then we have nothing to fear from anywhere. And he said even more than this.

rakṣā karabi tuhū niśchaya jāni
pāna karabū hāma yāmuna-pāni

(*Śaraṇāgati*: 23.5)

“Kṛṣṇa, I will even fearlessly drink the poisonous water of the Yamunā because I am sure that You will save my life.”

Kṛṣṇa: our sole proprietor

It is Kṛṣṇa Himself who gives and takes our life. No one else can do so. We do not need to be so fearful of our environment and association. How much can we actually protect ourselves? We have seen that Indira Gandhi was shot by her own body-guard. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated although he was a very pious man and dear to nearly everyone. The only saviour of anyone’s life is Kṛṣṇa. If Kṛṣṇa wants us to be saved, we will be saved, and if Kṛṣṇa wants us to die, then we will die. There is a saying in Bengali, “*Rākhe Kṛṣṇa māre ke, māre Kṛṣṇa rākhe ke*: when Kṛṣṇa protects you no one can kill you, but when Kṛṣṇa wants to kill you no one can protect you.” The mood of the surrendered soul is,

mārabi rākhabī yo ichchhā tohārā
nitya-dāsa prati tuyā adhikārā

(*Śaraṇāgati*: 11.3)

“Kṛṣṇa, You may kill me or protect me as You wish. You are my Master.”

This kind of submission and dedication is very valuable. Our real safety is found only in surrender and devotion. What Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura has explained is very serious. It is not easy to quickly catch this conception of full dedication to the Lord and full dependence upon His mercy. So we consider some percentage in our devotion. Someone may be 10 per cent devoted, 20 per cent devoted, 50 per cent devoted, or 100 per cent devoted.

The power of ego

The only obstacle to surrender and dedication is ego. If someone has no mundane ego they can easily connect with the transcendental plane and leave behind their mundane attachments. Everything mundane—our body, our possessions, and so on—is part of Māyā’s illusory environment. It is temporary and does not belong to us. When our ego is bewildered by the illusory environment, then our proper knowledge and consciousness of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal service is covered by mundane attachment, and that egotistic attachment creates a great obstruction between us and the Lord.

ahaṅkāra-nivṛttānām keśavo nahi dūragāḥ
ahaṅkāra-yutānām hi madhye parvata-rāśayaḥ

(Brahma-vaivarta-purāṇa: 3.9.9)

The scriptures explain that mundane ego is like a great mountain that blocks our contact with Kṛṣṇa and His transcendental abode. But when our ego is disengaged from the mundane then it is very easy for us to contact the transcendental abode and feel the Lord’s guardianship. *Tad dūre tad v antike* (Īu: 5), “The Lord is very far from us if we are not surrendered and dedicated, but the Lord is very near to us if we are surrendered and dedicated.”

Kṛṣṇa is always with us. He lives in our heart in the form of Paramātmā. From within our heart He observes everything we do and all the reactions we create for ourselves. Whenever we consciously surrender to Him and act according to our nature as His eternal servants, He removes all of our karmic reactions, fills our hearts with happiness, joy, and beauty, and gives us entrance into the ecstatic world of Goloka Vṛndāvan Dhām.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Transcendental Service World

We must engage all of our senses, our mind, and our full energy in Kṛṣṇa's service. But before we can engage in any devotional activity we must first surrender to the Lord; we must first offer ourselves over to the Lord internally. That is called *ātma-nivedan*, self-surrender. This is the first step in *śaraṇāgati* as well as our first necessity in devotional life.

Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura wrote in one of his commentaries on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: “*Ādau arpitā paśchād kriyeta*: first surrender, then serve; first offer, then act.” When we surrender to Kṛṣṇa and think that our whole account is being arranged by Kṛṣṇa then we can serve Him in all circumstances, and whatever we do will be Kṛṣṇa's service. That is the teaching of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Prabhupād Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Our Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, gave us this conception.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj taught us that everything is made of *chetanā*, consciousness, so everything has a transcendental form.

om̐ ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
chakṣur unmilitam̐ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

“Gurudev opens our transcendental eyes and gives us transcendental knowledge—transcendental vision—and through that we can see the transcendental form of the environment.”

It is necessary to leave the illusory environment and live in the transcendental environment. When we are connected with transcendental knowledge by the grace of Gurudev then gradually the transcendental plane reveals itself to us and we feel everything to be transcendental. Everything around us in this mundane world is material, but everything material is also an expression of the spiritual plane—movement is a property of consciousness. Both matter and spirit are always in front of us, and we need to avoid material feeling and cultivate spiritual feeling. That is called paramahansa-dharma.

If a pot has a mixture of milk and water inside it, a haṁsa (swan) can drink all the milk within the mixture and leave the water in the pot. Our practising life is like this. In our environment everything is good, and everything is bad; everything is spiritual, and everything is material. We must be conscious about seeing everything in a spiritual way and avoiding materialistic thinking. General people, conditioned by the illusory environment, ignore the presence of the jīva-soul within everything and do not know that the jīva-soul naturally has a service spirit.

The life of liberated souls

In the material world everything is a passing show. There is no eternity or purity within the material environment. The happiness conditioned souls feel in the material environment is not real happiness. Conditioned souls do not actually know what happiness is. What they consider to be happiness is actually only temporary relief from their material difficulties. Between the births and deaths of the conditioned souls so many varieties

of suffering come to them. Sometimes conditioned souls become frustrated and want to become liberated from the material atmosphere. Thus they desire to merge into Brahma the way a raindrop merges into the ocean.

muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 2.10.6)

But real liberation means leaving material life and living a spiritual service life. What does a liberated soul actually do? He engages his every action in the service of the Lord and feels full satisfaction through the Lord's service. Liberation means detachment from material thinking, and attachment to the transcendental world through dedicated service to the Lord in a surrendered mood. A liberated soul is directly attracted to Kṛṣṇa. He understands that his eternal necessity for happiness, love, charm, beauty, and ecstasy will be fulfilled by Kṛṣṇa's service.

All the scriptures—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, the Purāṇas, the Vedas, and so on—have taught us that we can transform the mundane environment into the transcendental environment through the spirit of service and devotion. Kṛṣṇa Himself said,

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 18.66)

“Only I can give you everything. Surrender to Me and serve Me according to My directions, and you will be fully satisfied by your service. *Tat kuruṣva Mad-arpaṇam*: before you do anything, first offer it to Me.”

The Lord's service connects everything with the transcendental plane and gives us the realisation that, “Everything is the property of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Everything here, there, and everywhere exists for His satisfaction. Even I myself belong to Him and exist to serve Him. Nothing exists for me.” When we live within that consciousness, then we live within the transcendental service world; we live as a liberated soul in Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode.

Partial bodily consciousness

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj always taught us to not take anything for ourselves. He taught us to first offer anything that came to us to Guru, Vaiṣṇava, and the Lord and in that way be free from all illusory matter. This is the life of a devotee. A devotee lives in the nirguṇa-sevāmaya-bhumikā, the transcendental service world, where everything is for the satisfaction of the Lord and His devotees.

There are many examples of how everything within the material environment can be spiritually transformed when it is utilised for the Lord's service. The primary example is mahāprasādam, the Lord's divine remnants. If we first offer everything we need for our life to the Lord then all of our necessities become transcendental. If everything we take in our lives is the remnants of the Lord and His devotees then everything will be beneficial for us materially and spiritually. This type of lifestyle is very sweet and very suitable for our bodily maintenance. When we take the Lord's remnants we feel connected to the Lord and we feel a satisfaction in our hearts that brings us the mood of eternity and eternal service to the Lord. In our practising life we are somewhat bodily conscious, but not fully bodily conscious. We know that everyone must eat to maintain their body. We know so many people are suffering from diseases, and because of that they have restrictions on their diets, like not taking sweets or not taking fried foods. But if we offer everything we are going to eat to the Lord before we eat it then that foodstuff becomes transcendental.

People must maintain their bodies according to the laws of nature, but as possible by them they will proceed in a spiritual way by considering and feeling that anything they put on their tongue must be mahāprasādam, the Lord's remnants. If they have that mood and consciousness then everything in their life will be spiritually beneficial for them.

Conquering the world

To honour prasādam, the proper sense, feeling, and consciousness are necessary. The prasādam of Lord Jagannāth in Purī Dhām is famous all over the world. Every day they cook so much for Lord Jagannāth and offer everything to Him in giant pots. If we look at that prasādam it looks just like rice, dal, and vegetables. It appears just like ordinary matter. But through faith and the spirit of devotion we know that when it is offered to Lord Jagannāth it becomes transcendental.

Once Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu brought some Jagannāth-prasād to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya to test him, to see if he had more faith in the formal religion of the Vedas than transcendental Kṛṣṇa consciousness and Kṛṣṇa-prasād.

āji muñi anāyāse jininu tribhuvana
āji muñi karinu vaikuṅṭha ārohaṇa
āji mora pūrṇa haila sarva abhilāṣa
sārvabhaumera haila mahāprasāde viśvāsa

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 6.230–231)

When Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu brought him the mahā-prasādam and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya accepted it without any mundane considerations, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Today I have conquered the three worlds! Today I have ascended to Vaikuṅṭha! Today all of My desires have been fulfilled! Sārvabhauma has developed faith in mahāprasādam!”

When we take prasādam we are not taking rice, vegetables, water, or anything mundane. We may see prasādam and see that it appears like an ordinary material thing, but within that mahāprasādam is the transcendental mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If we think we are simply eating while we take prasādam, then we are not properly honouring the prasādam and we are not spiritually qualified. If we think that we are serving the Lord’s divine remnants and that only externally it looks like we are



The Temple of Lord Jagannāth in
Śrī Purī Dhām.



Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh,
St Petersburg, Russia.

eating, then we actually will be honouring prasādam. When we taste prasādam in this way with full faith, we can very easily control our senses and engage in the service of Guru, Vaiṣṇava, and Bhagavān.

Real transcendence

I once noticed the way a girl in St Petersburg was distributing prasādam. As she put rice, or dal, or sabji on everyone's plates she recited this verse,

brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahma-karma-samādhinā

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 4.24)

“The spoon is Brahma, the offering is Brahma, the fire is Brahma, and the person making the offering is Brahma. One whose consciousness is always absorbed in Brahma surely attains Brahma.”

I think she may have stayed in India for many years because this verse is used as part of the style of serving prasādam in other sampradāyas like the Śāṅkar sampradāya. Through realisation we will see that prasādam substantially exists in the very, very finest way on a higher platform of transcendental knowledge than is expressed in that verse. There are many other verses to explain this, but in Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa simply says,

yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo muchyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ
bhuñjate te tv aghaṁ pāpā ye pachanty ātma-kāraṇāt

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 3.13)

“One who cooks for the Lord and offers one's cooking to the Lord is freed from all sin by honouring the remnants of that offering as the Lord's transcendental mercy (prasādam). One who cooks for oneself and does not honour anything as the Lord's prasādam eats only sin.”

O brothers! Kṛṣṇa is very merciful:
to conquer the tongue He has
given us His remnants! Accept
this nectarean food, sing the
glories of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and with
love call out, “Chaitanya! Nitāi!”

kṛṣṇa baḍa dayā-maya, karibāre jihvā jaya,
sva-prasāda-anna dila bhāi
sei annāmṛta pāo, rādhā-kṛṣṇa guṇa gāo,
preme ḍāka chaitanya-nitāi

(Gītāvalī: Prasād-sevāya, 1.1-2)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur explains in his poem that everything you eat will be the cause of future bondage in this material world unless you use the energy and nourishment you receive from your food to serve liberated souls and the Lord. Furthermore, if you honour everything you eat as mahāprasādam—the remnants of the Lord, Gurudev, and Vaiṣṇavas—then eating it will not cause any further bondage in this world. Rather, it will increase your devotional mood and the devotional atmosphere of your life.

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur also mentions in his poem that the tongue is the most difficult sense to control. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.8.21) Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

tāvaj jitendriyo na syād vijitānyendriyaḥ pumān
na jayed rasanam yāvaj jitaṁ sarvaṁ jite rase

“Someone may be able to control their senses temporarily, but unless one can control one’s tongue one has not truly conquered one’s senses.”

In this verse from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Kṛṣṇa certifies that someone who can control their tongue’s activities, that is, eating and speaking, has truly controlled his senses. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur wrote in his poem that Kṛṣṇa is supremely merciful because He gives us the opportunity to control our tongues and transcend the illusory environment through the joyful activity of honouring the Lord’s divine remnants and chanting the Lord’s Holy Names.

Dancing with joy

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Uddhava also describes the glorious position of the Lord’s prasādam and how the conditioned souls are supremely benefitted by it:

tvayopabhukta-srag-gandha-vāso 'laṅkāra-charchitāḥ
 uchchhiṣṭa-bhojino dāsās tava māyām jayema hi

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.6.46)

["Simply by maintaining ourselves with the garlands, fragrances, clothing, ornaments, and foods that have been offered to You [Kṛṣṇa], we, Your eternal servants, easily cross over Your illusory environment."]

This is Uddhava's prescription for the conditioned souls to get relief from the illusory environment. Our vision needs to be that anything we use in our life must be the Lord's remnants. If we honour everything in that way and always remember the glories of the Lord's remnants then we will be enriched with a devotional mood and proceed happily in our spiritual life. Enjoyment in our spiritual life will always come to us through the Lord's remnants. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura also said,

krṣṇera prasāda-anna, tri-jagat kare dhanya,
 tripurāri nāche yāhā pāi'

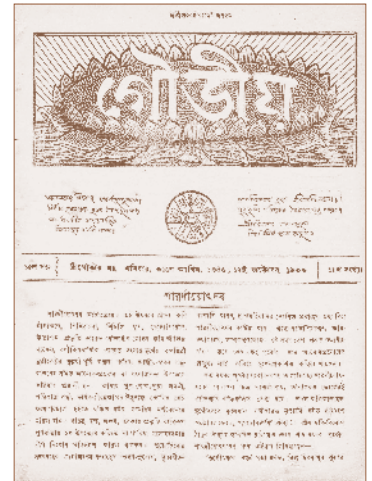
(Gītāvalī: Prasād-sevāya, 3.3)

"The three worlds are made glorious by Kṛṣṇa-prasād. Even Lord Śiva dances with great joy when he receives Kṛṣṇa-prasād."

What should be our mood when we receive prasādam? It is the great joy of our life.

Attachment and detachment

Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura collected many evidential verses from Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, and other scriptures to establish the transcendental nature of the Lord's remnants. He also established this transcendental practising process, that is, paramahansa-dharma, of seeing and relating with everything in a spiritual way through devotion to the Lord. This practising process is very sweet and also a very easy standard of life for practitioners. Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura always published two verses from Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu in his magazine the Gaudīya to give everyone proper consciousness about this transcendental practising process:



The Gaudīya, Śrī Gaudīya Maṭh's weekly magazine.

The earnestness of a detached devotee who uses objects appropriately in their relationship with Kṛṣṇa is known as yukta-vairāgya (proper detachment). The rejection of objects related to the Lord by liberation-seekers who consider them mundane is known as phalgu-vairāgya (false detachment).

**anāsaktasya viṣayān yathārham upayuñjataḥ
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaṁ vairāgyam uchyate
prāpañchikatayā buddhyā hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ
mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo vairāgyaṁ phalgu kathyate**

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Pūrva-vibhāga, 2.255–256)

In these verses Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu gives a point of very strong advice: *anāsaktasya viṣayān*, you must be detached from everything mundane. Material things come naturally in life. We cannot live without some level of material activity. But we must be very conscious about our material connections and not be involved with them. We must not be attached to them. This is Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu’s advice, “*Anāsaktasya viṣayān*: we must be detached from material things, and *yathārham upayuñjataḥ nirbandhaḥ Kṛṣṇa-sambandhe*: in that detached mood we must see everything in relationship to Kṛṣṇa and use everything for His service.” Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu’s advice means that we must live with everything, but not be attached to it. We must live within the material environment, but while there we must connect everything with Kṛṣṇa.

The flow of desire

There can be no compromise in this matter; without a detached nature we will not be qualified to properly honour the Lord’s divine remnants and act always for His satisfaction. Sometimes practitioners feel very fearful and hopeless when they confront their material desires and struggle to leave their mundane attachments. But they should not be hopeless or fearful because, as the Lord Himself explains, He helps them with the challenges they face in their devotional life.

**jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu nirviñṇaḥ sarva-karmasu
veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān parityāge ’py anīśvaraḥ
tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ śraddhālur dṛḍha-nīśchayaḥ
juṣamāṇas cha tān kāmān duḥkhodarkāmś cha garhayan**

proktena bhakti-yogena bhajato māsakṛṇ muneh
kāmā hṛdayyā naśyanti sarve mayi hṛdi sthite

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.20.27–29)

“If a devotee is conscious and firm in his faith, if he has no real interest in mundane activity though he may struggle to be detached from it, and if he knows that his material desires are the source of his suffering, then he will get strength from the Lord’s mercy. The Lord will appear in his heart and remove all inauspiciousness from his heart.”

A devotee may feel that he lives within a family and has so many attachments he cannot leave, such as his attachment to his father, mother, brothers, sisters, uncles, and so on. He may ask, “How can I do Hari-bhajan?” The main point mentioned in these verses, which is necessary to understand, is desire—the desire to enjoy. *Kāmā hṛdayyā naśyanti*, the desire to enjoy, is present everywhere. It is within both the material and spiritual planes. Why does creation itself happen at all? Because of desire. Desire is the cause of all creations. But a devotee’s life and desires are completely different from a life of ordinary mundane desires. How are they different? *Duḥkḥodarkāmś cha garhayan*, the devotee desires to satisfy the Lord and repents that he is entangled by mundane desires.

The internal battle

Whenever our internal enemies, our material desires and attachments, show their face to us we hopelessly surrender to them. We are not liberated souls. We are conditioned souls, and we are always attacked by the six enemies living within us: *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *mada*, *moha*, and *mātsarya* [lust, anger, greed, madness, illusion, and envy].

kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 3.37)

In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains that these six enemies are produced by *rajo-guṇa*: the mode of passion. We know

Know lust and anger—which are produced by the mode of passion, extremely voracious, and malicious—to be the soul’s enemies in this world (the cause of the soul’s propensity to sin).



that none of the three modes of material nature, which control everything within material existence, is good for us. Sattva-guṇa [goodness], raja-guṇa [passion], and tama-guṇa [ignorance] are all ropes that bind us within material existence and material consciousness. As sādhakas, practitioners, we must be conscious about this in our practice.

When our enemies show themselves to us, our position as conditioned souls may become hopeless, and we may surrender to them. Unfortunately we may be their victim for some time. For some time we may be a servant of *kāma*, a servant of *krodha*, a servant of *lobha*, *mada*, *moha*, *mātsarya*, and so on. But after that we must set ourselves back within our proper position of engagement in the Lord's service. This is not easy. We will not get the qualification necessary to do that by attending school or college. Only through the association of pure devotees can we get that type of qualification. To be a pure devotee, as well as find a pure devotee, is not so easy. Difficulty is always around us, but we must tolerate that and try to correct ourselves. That is our situation in our practising life: first tolerating and then trying to correct.

Sometimes devotees fall from their principles. But again they must come back to them, wake up, and continue running. That is the life of a devotee, and that life is very good and hopeful for devotees. Without this everyone will become hopeless.

If we realise the nature of our conditioned position we will see that our weaknesses, that is, our material desires, are stronger than our spiritual desire. We sometimes surrender to our weaknesses. But only if we remain submissive to them forever will we be the loser. It is always necessary to take back our spiritual strength. These verses from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* very nicely explain the procedure for this: faith, humility, tolerance, repentance, and service.

Mercy + service = sense control

Earlier in our life it was not within my realisation but now I am realising this very happy news for us: *parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ*. We cannot leave our internal enemies forever. From time to time our internal enemies will disturb us. Sometimes we will be submerged in them. I can understand now that such immersion is for our purification, and that we will not remain immersed in them forever. This is our position, and all we can do is try

to not allow ourselves to always be a servant of our mundane desires, while we pray to the Lord for His mercy and try to engage in His service.

Yogīs try to control their senses and desires directly by restraining themselves through the process of yama, niyama, āsan, prāṇāyām, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyān, and samādhi. But *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says,

yamādibhir yoga-pathaiḥ kāma-lobha-hato muhuḥ
mukunda-sevayā yadvat tathātmāddhā na śāmyati

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 1.6.35)

“It may be possible to temporarily control the senses and the effects of kāma, lobha, and so on with the power of self-control and the practice of yoga (yama, niyama, and so on), but only the Lord’s service can permanently control the senses and the flow of our desires.”

The devotional path is different than the yoga path. In the devotional path desire, the senses, and their functions are controlled by engaging them in the Lord’s service. In devotional life the senses are automatically controlled through service. It is not necessary to try to control them ourselves directly in a pushing way. Rather, we must try to use the senses and our desires for the Lord’s service and satisfaction.

Offering everything to the Lord

Śrīla Narottam Ṭhākura has explained how we can properly practise this:

‘kāma’ kṛṣṇa-karmārpaṇe, ‘krodha’ bhakta-dveṣi jane,
‘lobha’ sādhu-saṅge hari-kathā
‘moha’ iṣṭa-lābha vine, ‘mada’ kṛṣṇa-guṇa-gāne,
niyukta kariba yathā tathā

(*Prema-bhakti-chandrikā*: 2.10)

‘Kāma’ Kṛṣṇa-karmārpaṇe: if you have many desires in your mind, then you can offer the things you desire to Kṛṣṇa before

you take them. ‘Krodha’ bhakta-dveṣi jane: if you feel angry, then you can use your anger to check persons who are inauspicious and envious of the devotees. ‘Lobha’ sādhu-saṅge Hari-kathā: you can engage your greed in hearing the glories and Pastimes of the Lord from the sādhus. ‘Mada’ Kṛṣṇa-guṇa-gāne: you can engage your desire for intoxication in madly glorifying the Lord and His devotees. ‘Moha’ iṣṭa-lābha vine: if you have not connected with your worshipping Master, then you can try to realise why that is and can express your hankering in a bewildered way like Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī.

Śrīla Narottam Ṭhākura advises us how to engage our internal enemies in Kṛṣṇa’s service. We all have desires that we are suffering from, but if we engage them in the service of Guru, Vaiṣṇava, and Bhagavān with our full energy, then they will be controlled automatically. Everything we struggle with in our life can be good if we use it properly for Kṛṣṇa’s service. This is our hope. When our enemies—lust, anger, greed, and so on—come to us, we can invite them in: “Come here and pay daṇḍavat praṇām to the Deity! You are already coming, so come, and offer yourself to the Deity.” The practising procedure of bhakti-yoga is very sweet, and finally,

bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiś chhidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ
kṣīyante chāsyā karmāṇi mayi dr̥ṣṭe ‘khilātmani

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.20.30)

“All of the material desires in our hearts will be removed, all of our doubts will be finished, and we will engage ourselves exclusively in the Lord’s service, seeing Him everywhere.”

Such Bhāgavat-darśan, divine vision of the Lord, is both very easy and very rare to attain. *Tad dūre tad v antike* (Īu: 5): “The Lord is very far from us if we are not surrendered or dedicated, but the Lord is very near to us if we are surrendered and dedicated.”

The purity of our mood

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu’s advice to be detached from the mundane is very important for us. We must always try to honour the transcendental form of everything—of the Deity, the devotees, the Lord’s prasādam, and so on—in a detached mood. We may lead any lifestyle, we may have a family life, a student life, a master’s life—any sort of life—but we must not be too attached to that. Even if we are a family man, we will have no difficulty with our family maintenance if we think that our family is a spiritual family. If we think in that way, no difficulty will come to us. Even if we lose everything materially, still there is no real loss for us because we can always engage ourselves in Kṛṣṇa’s service, no matter what our material condition is, through proper consciousness. We will think that our children are spiritual children and our flowers are spiritual flowers. Everything that we see we will consider to be Kṛṣṇa’s mercy coming to us. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj taught us in this way.

We will change our vision and we will serve. Then anything we do will be Kṛṣṇa’s service, so long as we do not forget that it is for His satisfaction and not our selfish enjoyment. If we proceed in that way then all benefit, and no loss, will come to us. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur showed us this mood. He prayed to the Lord,

tomāra saṁsāre, kariba sevana,
nāhiba phalera bhāgī
tava sukha yāhe, kariba yatana,
ha’ye pade anurāgī

(Śaraṇāgati: 16.3)

“I will live in Your house as a servitor of Your family, and everything I do will be solely for Your satisfaction.”

This is the mood of transcendental service. We must be very careful about maintaining the purity of that mood in our practising life, otherwise we will cheat ourselves.

It is not good to have too much affection for children. When children come into a family, they must be honoured, and the parents must consider that it is the Lord’s will and their good fortune that the children have come. But parents should not maintain their family with mundane attachment; they should not be overly involved in their family life. When we do something emotionally it may sometimes bring us a good result, but mostly it brings us bad results. We have to avoid emotional activity and continue our lives with fully devotional activities.

We must avoid cheating ourselves by carefully keeping our mood pure: “I shall use whatever circumstances I find myself in for the service of Kṛṣṇa.” If we can properly maintain this mood, then we can maintain our lives in any ashram—brahmachārī, gṛhastha, vānaprastha, or sanniyās. If we have a sincere mood of service and dedication, then there is no question about how we maintain our lives. There are many nice examples of this.

The sweet life of a poor brahmachārī

*By surrendering myself at Your
lotus feet, I have become
supremely joyful. All sadness
has gone away and I have
no anxiety. I see joy in all
directions.*

**ātma-nivedana, tuyā pade kari’,
hainu parama sukhi
duḥkha dūre gela, chintā nā rahila,
chaudike ānanda dekhi**

(Śaraṇāgati: 16.1)

This song from *Śaraṇāgati* reminds me of my early life as a brahmachārī when I took shelter at Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s lotus feet. How much was I dedicated! I forgot all of my material happiness and sadness—everything. So many things came to me, but I was dedicated to the Lord’s lotus feet and very happy. I didn’t think about my material lifestyle at all. I simply lived happily and easily according to Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s orders. I did not have a bed. I slept on a straw mat with a straw pillow. Sometimes red ants would bite me. I lived a very simple

life and I didn't think about it much. In the Maṭh we would not buy any vegetables. We would cultivate our own fruits and vegetables in our garden and happily offer the Lord what we grew in our Maṭh. We would not eat anything we did not grow except when we would sometimes buy some potatoes for Śrīla Guru Mahārāj from the market.

We had no heavy problems then. Our only disturbances would come from goats and cows coming inside our garden. Gradually our Maṭh has become prestigious, and more and more facilities have come to us. But my early time in the Maṭh was very tasteful. Now I am not getting that sweet taste of poor brahmachārī life. Now more disturbances have begun to come to our Maṭh from the outside, but those are also sweet problems because sacrifice is our lifestyle. One of Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur's songs in *Śaraṇāgati* explains everything for us very simply and sweetly:

**tomāra sevāya, duḥkha haya yata,
seo ta' parama sukha
sevā-sukha-duḥkha, parama sampada,
nāśaye avidyā-duḥkha**

(Śaraṇāgati: 16.4)

"The suffering I feel in my life of service to You is actually my greatest joy. Both the happiness and sadness I feel in Your service are my great fortune because they both remove the pollution of illusion from my heart."

**pūrva itihāsa, bhulinu sakala,
sevā-sukha pe'ye mane
āmi ta' tomāra, tumi ta' āmāra,
ki kāja apara dhane**

(Śaraṇāgati: 16.5)

"I have forgotten everything in the past now that I feel the great joy of Your service in my heart. I am Yours, and You are mine. You are my Master, and I am Your servant. Nothing comes between us."



শ্রীপাদ সখীচরণ রায় ভক্তি
শ্রীশ্রীরাধাগিরিধারীজীর প্রকটে



স্বামী প্রভুর উবনে
সকলে গৃহীত (১৩ ই আগস্ট
১৩৫৪)

Translation of the inscription: 'Taken on the appearance day festival of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gīridhārī in the home of Śrīpād Sakhī Charaṇ Rāy Bhakti Vijay Prabhu, 13 Āśvīn 1364 (30 September 1947)'. Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj is seated in the third chair from the right. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj is seated on the right holding a mṛdaṅga.



Sanātan Prabhū, commonly known as Mr Sānnyāl.

Kṛṣṇa is my life and soul

There is also a nice story about one of our devotees, a very rich householder devotee, who lost all his wealth, crores of rupees, because of his detached and surrendered mood of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. During the proceedings of a court case he was involved in he would go every day to worship the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Some government men and armed police had to accompany him, and because of this he had to spend thousands of rupees every day to maintain them. He lost maybe two to five thousand rupees every day due to the expenses of the guards. Still he would go daily to worship the Deity.

One day it was raining very heavily, and after travelling with him to the temple in the rain one of the senior policemen asked him, “O Mr Sānnyāl, every day you come here to worship the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but what does Kṛṣṇa give you? You have lost everything. You have lost nearly all of the nice things in your home, like your very nice carpet worth lakhs of rupees. You have lost your house and nearly all of your wealth. You have lost everything, so why do you worship Kṛṣṇa? What has Kṛṣṇa given you?”

Then that man, Mr Sānnyāl, gave a very nice answer. I have never forgotten it. He said, “I am worshipping Kṛṣṇa, but I do not ask Kṛṣṇa to give me anything. Whatever Kṛṣṇa decides to give me or not give me is His matter. I like Kṛṣṇa. I have love for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is my heart and soul. Because of that I come here every day to serve Kṛṣṇa. It is Kṛṣṇa’s matter whether He will give me something or not. I do not ask Kṛṣṇa for anything.” The policeman was stunned to hear Mr Sānnyāl’s answer.

I was also very impressed to hear this from him because this is the style of devotion in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhū. The mood and mentality of the devotee is to relate everything with the Lord and His service: “I smile because Kṛṣṇa likes my smiling face. I dress myself in nice garments because Kṛṣṇa likes to see them. I sleep so I can engage in

Kṛṣṇa's service; I sleep because Kṛṣṇa likes my sleep. I cook because Kṛṣṇa likes to taste my cooking. Whatever I do, I do for Kṛṣṇa, not for any other purpose. I like things because Kṛṣṇa likes them, and if Kṛṣṇa does not like something, it is not necessary for me to do it. I do not do anything which is not for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. Without Kṛṣṇa, I have no existence."

Transcending the mundane

Sometimes great hope comes to us in our lives, and sometimes hopeless situations come to us, but we do not become frustrated in any way, and we do not leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We only try to engage ourselves in Kṛṣṇa's service.

We cannot continue our lives without a roof, some shade, some pure water, some fruits and vegetables, and so on. Prabhupād Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur has taught us how to accept all of these necessities of life with a devotional spirit by first offering them to Lord Kṛṣṇa and then living on His remnants. Whenever we take anything we must first remember that it is the Lord's mercy coming to us. Then we can maintain our lives exclusively on His remnants. This is the advice and style of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī, Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj, and my Guru Mahārāj. We are all their followers, and through their teachings and this practice we can leave our mundane attachments behind and dedicate ourselves twenty-four hours a day to the Lord and His devotees in the transcendental service world.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Transcendental Vibration Form of the Lord

In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa clearly said,

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam
(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 9.27)

“Offer Me anything you do in your life.”

When someone lives in this consciousness, then they live in the transcendental service world. But to offer our actions to the Lord according to our own ideas and desires is not the highest standard of spiritual life. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu dismissed this verse from *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* in His conversation with Rāmānanda Rāy in *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* because He wanted to establish the mood and ideal of exclusive, pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s conception is that if Kṛṣṇa says to you, “I want a samosa; if you bring Me a samosa, I will be very satisfied”, and you bring Kṛṣṇa a samosa, then your activity will surely be pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. This is real Bhāgavat-dharma and the standard of devotion established by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Real Bhāgavat-dharma means

surrendering to Kṛṣṇa and serving Him according to His will by understanding the desire of Kṛṣṇa and trying to satisfy Him in that way—making offerings to Kṛṣṇa according to His desires and not ours.

When Kṛṣṇa Himself explains how you can satisfy Him and you follow that process, then you are following the best process to serve and satisfy Kṛṣṇa. It may be difficult for the ego to do this, but it is very simple, and it is certain that Kṛṣṇa will be satisfied by it.

Know Bhāgavat-dharma to be the means explained by the Lord for even the ignorant to easily attain Him.

**ye vai bhagavatā proktā upāyā hy ātma-labdhave
añjaḥ puṁsām aviduṣāṁ viddhi bhāgavatān hi tān**
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.2.34)

Kṛṣṇa says, “It doesn’t matter if you do not have any knowledge or intelligence or so many qualities and qualifications. If you follow the process that I say will satisfy Me, then I will be very happy with you and I will become your property.”

When Kṛṣṇa wants to give Himself, He can give Himself to anyone, and what He says is the most satisfying to Him is the supreme way to serve Him. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu established this as a higher, but also simple, standard of devotion for everyone. If we try to follow it in accordance with His desire, we will be supremely benefitted, and gradually all mundane desires will be ousted from our hearts.

The best form of bhakti-yoga

There are nine primary forms of bhakti-yoga. They give us the opportunity to engage our mind, senses, and body—everything—in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

**śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam
archanaṁ vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam**
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 7.5.23)

Śravaṇ means hearing Kṛṣṇa-kathā [glorification of Kṛṣṇa] from a Sādhu, Guru, or Vaiṣṇava. It means hearing about Kṛṣṇa

consciousness and Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name. *Kīrtan* means glorifying Kṛṣṇa, His devotees, and Their divine Pastimes; preaching about Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and chanting Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name. *Smaraṇ* means remembering the Lord and our spiritual life of service. *Pāda-sevana* means serving the Lord's lotus feet. *Archan* means worshipping the Lord's Deity form. *Vandana* means praying to the Lord. *Dāsyā* means becoming the Lord's servant. *Sakhyā* means serving the Lord as our best friend. *Ātma-nivedan* means fully surrendering oneself to the Lord. These nine forms of bhakti-yoga are described in the Prahlād-charitra of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and through these practices the Lord's devotees engage in the Lord's service twenty-four hours a day.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu commented that among the nine forms of bhakti-yoga, two are the best.

tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Antya-līlā, 4.71*)

“Among all the devotional processes to satisfy the Lord, Nāma-saṅkīrtan, that is, śravaṇ and kīrtan, hearing and chanting the Lord's glories and Holy Name, are supreme.”

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's conception is that śravaṇ and kīrtan are the vital activities of a spiritual practitioner's life. You can see the light of this conception everywhere within all religions. There are many different types of religious practices, but it is a practice in all religions to chant the Lord's Name. For example, in Islam they chant the name 'Allah'; in Christianity they chant the name 'God'; and in Buddhism they chant the name 'Buddha'. All religions have some spiritual connection with the Lord and want to take people to a higher level of consciousness through the Lord's Name.

The full form of the spiritual world and the jīva-souls' spiritual destiny have been manifested to some people in a covered way, to some in a slightly open way, and to some in a fully open way. Because of this there are different religions which have different opinions about the nature of our spiritual



*Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya
Mahārāj leading kīrtan in
Śrī Ekachakrā Dhām.*

destination and the path we should follow to reach it. Still, all religions want to take everyone from a material position to a transcendental position. This is the common purpose of all religions. Anyone can see that and also see that all religions use the process of chanting the Lord's Name. It is not so important whether they connect with the Lord, who is everyone's eternal Master, by saying, 'Allah', or 'God', or 'Son of God', or 'Lord Jesus Christ', or 'Buddha', or 'Brahma', or 'Śiva', or any other Name. What is important is that everyone feels, "There is power flowing within the wave of the Lord's Name."

Chanting the Lord's Name means connecting with the Lord's transcendental vibration form. Through śravaṇ-kīrtan, hearing and chanting the Lord's Name and glories, everyone can easily connect their mood of devotion with the transcendental wave of devotion, the flow of service to the Lord.

In the material world there are always two waves flowing: the waves of kāma and prema. They take us either up or down. Whenever we connect with the transcendental wave of prema, we are fully satisfied. Whenever we see people gathered together to hear and chant about the Lord according to the flow of that wave of the transcendental spirit of devotion, then we experience a manifestation of the atmosphere of Vaikuṅṭha, the Lord's transcendental abode. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself even says,

**nāhaṁ tiṣṭhāmi vaikuṅṭhe yogināṁ hṛdayena cha
mad-bhaktāḥ yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada**

(Padma-purāṇa: Uttara-khaṇḍa, 92.21-22)

"I am not really present in Vaikuṅṭhaloka or in the hearts of meditative yogīs. I am present where My devotees sing My glories."

In this way we can understand that the Lord's desire is that we chant His Holy Name, and that we can serve Him in the way most pleasing to Him by chanting His Holy Names in Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan.

The essential ingredient

We can also understand the supreme position of Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan through *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Vedavyās composed *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* after presenting the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, and so on, and in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* he presented his ultimate conclusion. So many scriptures can be found within the Vedic school and culture, and within them so many ṛṣis, munis, and scholars present their research. Vedavyās collected and presented the gist of all of this in his *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Lastly, he ended *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with his final advice:

nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ yasya sarva-pāpa-praṇāśanam
praṇāmo duḥkha-śamanas taṁ namāmi hariṁ param
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam's final verse: 12.13.23*)

“Chant the Lord’s Holy Name, trying to satisfy Him and His associates. Try to avoid all connection with material existence as you practise Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan. By doing so you will be freed from all sin and you will reach the supreme goal of your spiritual life: service to your Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the transcendental world.” In this way Vedavyās ended *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with his final prescription and conclusion: Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan is best for everyone.

Whenever anyone participates in any religious function it is necessary for them to understand why they are participating in it. Indian religion has its own customs; Muslim religion has its own customs; other Western religions have their own customs. All religious people follow those customs and the rules and regulations they prescribe, and through that everyone gets some auspicious connection in their lives. But what is the fundamental basis of that auspicious connection? It is always connection with the Lord through His Holy Name.

Before any Vedic sacrifice is performed a particular mantram is always recited to invoke auspiciousness.

maṅgalaṁ bhagavān viṣṇur maṅgalaṁ madhusūdanaḥ
 maṅgalaṁ hṛṣikeśo 'yaṁ maṅgalāyatano hariḥ
 viṣṇūchchāraṇa-mātrena kṛṣṇasya smaranād-dhareḥ
 sarva vighnāni naśyanti maṅgalaṁ syān na saṁsayaḥ

(*Bṛhad-Viṣṇu-purāna*)

“The Supreme Lord, who has many Names, like Viṣṇu, Madhusūdan, Hṛṣikeś, and Hari, is the abode of all auspiciousness. Simply by remembering Him and chanting His Names all obstacles are destroyed and all auspiciousness manifests. There is no doubt about this.”

madhura-madhuram etan
 maṅgalaṁ maṅgalānām
 sakala-nigama-vallī-sat-
 phalaṁ chit-svarūpam
 sakṛd api pariḡitaṁ
 śraddhayā helayā vā
 bhṛgu-vara nara-mātraṁ
 tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma

(*Skanda-purāna*)

“Kṛṣṇa’s Name, the sweetest
 of the sweet, the most
 auspicious of the auspicious,
 the eternal spiritual fruit
 from the vine of the Vedas,
 delivers a man if He is
 chanted even once, faithfully
 or neglectfully.”

This maṅgalācharaṇam, invocation of auspiciousness, reveals that everything will be auspicious if it is accompanied by chanting the Lord’s Holy Name. Auspiciousness means connection with the Lord, and that connection, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is what produces all actual auspiciousness. This is the fundamental basis of all religion. It is first of all necessary for everyone to understand that all religious functions will be supremely auspicious when they are based on chanting the Lord’s Holy Names. In that way everyone can understand the fundamental basis and purpose of all religious activity: satisfying the Lord.

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, the topmost guide for all Vaiṣṇava religious functions, says that there is a mantram to invoke auspiciousness not only for beginning, but also for ending all religious sacrifices.

yadāsaṅga kriyā karma jānatā vāpy ajānatā
 pūrṇaṁ bhavatu tat sarvaṁ śrī harer nāma kīrtanāt

(*Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*)

This ending mantram says, “Whatever offence I may have made during the performance of this religious sacrifice—knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly—will be removed and everything will be fulfilled by performing Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan.”

We know there are so many possible faults, both internal and external, in performing religious sacrifices, and we know it is

not possible to perfectly perform any religious function. We know we must make some mistakes and get insufficient results according to our karma. But all deficiency and offence can be removed by Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan. Through humble apology and prayer to the Lord in Nām-saṅkīrtan everything can be set right. Thus Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan is our only actual hope to satisfy the Lord. We must include it in everything we do.

The power of Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan

Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan is so powerful that it can even overcome the extreme influence of the current Age of Kali, the Age of Quarrel. This age is filled with so many bad qualities. There is always a sinful wave blowing throughout the material world in the Age of Kali, and there is almost no real religious practice left in the world because of it. In the Age of Kali three of the four primary religious principles—austerity, cleanliness, and mercy—are broken. Only the principle of truthfulness remains, and the influence of Kali is also trying to break this principle constantly. The jīva-souls must be hopeless and frustrated in this age because they do not have a good opportunity for religious practice.

To give relief to the conditioned souls suffering in the Age of Kali's disturbing environment, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu mercifully taught everyone how they can connect with the Lord and progress in their spiritual life through the Lord's Holy Name.

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā

(Bṛhan-Nāradaīya-purāṇa)

Mahāprabhu said, "You need relief from the wave of exploitation in this world, and you need to get back your real consciousness of being an eternal servitor of the Lord. So you must chant your Lord's Holy Name as your primary duty." *Harer Nāma Harer Nāma Harer Nāmaiva kevalam*: thrice Mahāprabhu said that in this Age of Kali only by chanting the Lord's Name can

you realise your spiritual position. And thrice Mahāprabhu said, “*Kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*: you have no alternative. There is no other way to proceed.”

The basis and significance of Mahāprabhu’s teaching is expressed very clearly in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ
kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-bandhaḥ param vrajet

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 12.3.51)

The Age of Kali is filled with so many faults. *Dyūtaṁ pānām striyaḥ sūnā* (SB: 1.17.38): in the Age of Kali gambling, intoxication, illicit sex, animal-killing, and money conquer the entire world. The Age of Kali is like an ocean of faults, an ocean of disturbances, an ocean of challenges to practising spiritual life. Everything in the Age of Kali is covered by Kali’s influence, and no one can cross over that influence. *Asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ*: yet there is one very good quality, one exception and opportunity found in the Age of Kali that will give everyone the facility to harmonise everything. There is one right within everything wrong there. There is one light that can remove all the darkness there. What is that? Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan.

kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-bandhaḥ param vrajet

Through chanting Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name—connecting ourselves with the Lord’s transcendental vibration form—we will be able to feel that Kṛṣṇa is living within our hearts. The Lord is present in everyone’s heart, and by chanting His Holy Name that will naturally be revealed to us. When we have a connection with the Lord’s transcendental form through His Holy Name, all inauspiciousness will leave us, and everything will be set right. The reactionary environment and the influence of Kali will leave us. We will get a positive connection with the transcendental world where love and affection, chastity and sincerity, everything beautiful and harmless exist within eternal life and eternal time. There, in the eternal realm where we will live with Kṛṣṇa, we will have no fear. Our life with Kṛṣṇa will always be

enriched with all beauty, love, and affection. It will be enriched with all good qualities and qualifications. Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan will reveal that Kṛṣṇa is within our heart. Then *mukta-bandha*: we will be liberated into pure and perfect, very, very happy life. We will cross the gravitational field of the mortal world and find an undisturbed peaceful life in the plane of dedication. Finally, *param vrajet*: there, according to our attachment, our transcendental relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti, the emporium of all rasa, will be revealed to us.

This is the simple method for spiritual realisation given in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. It was spread by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Guru Mahārāj: “Be surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and chant Kṛṣṇa’s Name. You will be super-benefitted in your life. When you chant Kṛṣṇa’s Name without offence, then Kṛṣṇa’s Name, Form, Qualities, and Pastimes—everything—will be revealed to you.”

This is our Guru-varga’s only preaching to general people. They simply taught people about Kṛṣṇa’s Name and the mood needed to chant Kṛṣṇa’s Name properly. They taught that everyone must start their spiritual life by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra in a mood of full surrender to the Lord. If anyone can chant the Lord’s Holy Name in pure śaraṇāgati then the higher stages of dāsya-rasa, sakhya-rasa, vātsalya-rasa, and madhura-rasa will automatically come to them. Before one can chant in a fully surrendered mood the higher stages of rasa wait for one to become qualified, and when one is qualified, one’s divine relationship with the Lord is naturally revealed. That is the actual way souls can realise and pursue their fortune in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This one verse, *Kaler-doṣa-nidhe Rājan*, gives us sufficient knowledge to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but it is necessary to learn it from a proper guardian. Then we will be worry-free and successful. We may live in the polluted atmosphere of Kali-yuga, but we will always be conscious about that environment of misconception and try to connect with

the Lord through His Holy Name. The material world is mundane, but Kṛṣṇa consciousness and Kṛṣṇa's Name are chetanā, spiritual.

nāma chintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś chaitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ
(*Padma-purāṇa*)

The Lord and His Holy Name are nondifferent. Our connection with Them is always a living matter, never a dead matter, and the result of that connection must come to us. By serving Kṛṣṇa's Name we will get direct service to Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa and His Name are nondifferent. Kṛṣṇa's Name is like a wish-fulfilling jewel; He can immediately give us anything we desire for His service if we are properly connected with Him. Kṛṣṇa's Name, Kṛṣṇa's fame, Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes—Kṛṣṇa's everything—are all transcendental. When we chant even once without offence, “Śrī Kṛṣṇa”, Kṛṣṇa will reveal Himself to us within that sound; He will reveal His transcendental vibration form.

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam
(*Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.1*)

Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and He is eternally manifested as the cowherd boy Govinda. His form, His Name, His fame—everything about Him—are transcendental and can be revealed anywhere and everywhere. As Paramātmā, Kṛṣṇa lives within everyone, within every atom of creation. The conditioned jīva-souls cannot feel that, but when they are liberated they are given that feeling. They feel, “Kṛṣṇa is with me.” This feeling comes to them through Kṛṣṇa's transcendental vibration form, His Holy Name.

Śabda-brahma

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu has explained that Kṛṣṇa, the Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti, the emporium of all rasa, mercifully appears in this world in two ecstatic divine forms to bestow

His mercy upon the liberated and conditioned souls. One form is His vāchya form: His personal form which His Holy Name indicates. The other form is His vāchaka form: the transcendental vibration form of His personal form—His Holy Name.

Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name is called *Śabda-brahma* in the Vedas. *Śabda* means sound vibration, but here *śabda* means transcendental vibration, not the vibration we can hear with our ears. *Brahma* means the Lord's full, divine, conscious form, with His potency—the Supreme Autocrat who can manifest as He likes any way, anywhere, anytime. Thus *Śabda-brahma* means the divine vibration form of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Brahma-svarūp, Parabrahma. It means the divine form of Brahma, whose Name, Form, Fame, Associates, Abode, Pastimes, and so on, are transcendental.

Śabda-brahma descends from the Lord's transcendental abode through the proper channel of Guru-paramparā. Everyone in this age who gets a connection with the Lord's transcendental vibration form, *Śabda-brahma*, is so fortunate, and when that Name dances in their clean heart, they realise their eternal fortune, and everything mundane leaves them.

It is not actually possible for the conditioned souls to immediately receive the Lord's Name with a clean heart. When the Holy Name descends into their hearts through Guru-paramparā, He appears with His own power and personally cleans everything within their hearts. In that way the jīva-souls gradually become qualified to chant the Name purely. Then they realise the supreme benefit of their spiritual lives.

Empowered to rescue

The Lord's Holy Name is also described in the scriptures as *Tāraka-brahma-nām*: the divine vibration form of the Lord, full with His power and mercy, which can rescue the conditioned souls from the lowest level of material existence and reveal the transcendental service world in their hearts. Through His

vāchyaṁ vāchakam ity udeṭi bhavato
nāma svarūpa-dvayaṁ
pūrvasmāt param eva hanta
karuṇaṁ tatrāpi jānīmahe
yas tasmin vihītāparādha-nivahaḥ
prāṇī samantād bhaved
āsyenedam upāsya so 'pi hi
sadānandāmbudhau majjati
(Śrī Nāmāṣṭakam: 6)

“O Holy Name! You appear in two forms: the Named (Your divine human-like form) and the Name (Your divine sound form). We know that Your second form is even more merciful than Your first: even one who has committed offences to the Named is immersed in an ocean of constant joy by chanting the Name.”

Tāraka-brahma-nām the Lord gives the conditioned souls entrance into His service in different loving relationships, which are always full of transcendental joy, beauty, and charm. The waves of kāma and prema are always flowing in this material world; the Lord's Tāraka-brahma-nām is the primary way the jīva-souls can connect with the wave of prema and leave the influence of the illusory environment.

In the mundane world there are four ages, which pass in a cyclic way like the seasons. They are known as the Ages of Satya, Tretā, Dvāpar, and Kali. Each age has particular qualities, and there is a special arrangement within each age to connect with the wave of prema through the Lord's Tāraka-brahma-nām. The Lord's Tāraka-brahma-nām is always complete with His potency, but there are different processes and formulations for chanting the Tāraka-brahma-nām in the different ages. The Vedas prescribe for each age a mahāmantra, a supreme mantram, of the Lord's Holy Names, that is best for that time and environment.

nārāyaṇa-para vedā nārāyaṇa-parākṣarāḥ
nārāyaṇa-parā muktir nārāyaṇa-parā gatiḥ
(Satya-yuga mahāmantra)

rāma nārāyaṇānanta mukunda madhusūdana
kṛṣṇa keśava kamsāre hare vaikuṅṭha vāmana
(Tretā-yuga mahāmantra)

hare murāre madhu-kaiṭabhāre
gopāla govinda mukunda saure
yajñeśa nārāyaṇa kṛṣṇa viṣṇo
virāśrayaṁ mām jagadīśa rakṣa
(Dvāpar-yuga mahāmantra)

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare
(Kali-yuga mahāmantra)

During each age everyone chants and meditates on these mahāmantras. Through them souls are liberated and enter into the transcendental service world. Whenever fortunate souls properly chant a mahāmantra they can proceed happily to their spiritual destination.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra

In the Age of Kali the transcendental vibration form of the Lord, the Lord's Tāraka-brahma-nām, appears as the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. Though the other mahāmantras are prescribed for the other ages, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is actually the supreme mantram for all the ages. Of all mantrams, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is the best, as it is both the highest and most powerful. Only in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra do we find Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the Powerful with His ecstatic Power. So only through the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra are we directly connected with full-fledged theism: the sonhood of Godhead and paramour love for the Lord. In this way we can understand the supreme position of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. Also, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is most powerful because only in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is there the full expression of self-surrender and the mood of calling to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to appear within our hearts and fulfil our heart's necessity for Their service. One of Rādhārāṇī's Names is Harā, and when *Harā* is called, it is expressed as *Hare*. *Kṛṣṇa* within the mahāmantra is also a vocative expression of Kṛṣṇa's Name. So chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa* actually means calling Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and praying for Their mercy.

In this way we can understand that through the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra we can best fulfil our life's goal of connecting with the transcendental wave of prema. Thus we are so hopeful that our lives and all of our activities will be successful by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra.

The gift of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu

The supreme gift of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra has come to us by the grace of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the divine form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined, who appeared in Nabadwīp Dhām to distribute this process of chanting His Holy Name. He is the worshippable Deity for the Age of Kali, and because He is the giver of the supreme gift—the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra—He is Parama-karuṇā, the most merciful Lord.

satyaṁ kali-yuga vipra śrī harer nāma maṅgalaṁ
paraṁ svastyayanam nṛnām nāsty eva gatir anyathā

(Padma-purāṇa)

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā

(Bṛhan-Nāradya-purāṇa)

Mahāprabhu taught everyone: “In the Age of Kali all auspiciousness can be found only in the chanting of the Lord’s Holy Name. Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan is the only way to attain the highest auspiciousness.”

In this age it is not necessary to read a Ganges full of scriptures. It is only necessary to chant the Lord’s Divine Name. Chanting the Holy Name is most appropriate for the conditioned souls in the Age of Kali. Especially during this age the mundane world is full of sorrow, and happiness only comes to the conditioned souls through chanting the Lord’s Holy Name. The Lord descends from Goloka Vṛndāvan—where His divine play is always flowing with all varieties of charming qualities—in the form of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra in the Age of Kali to connect everyone with His beauty and ecstasy. There is no alternative actually to trying to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra without offence, to happily trying to chant with faith, love, and affection. *Harer Nāmaiva kevalam*: it is necessary to *always* chant the Holy Name and to not do anything without

chanting. Chanting the Lord's Holy Name is the goal of life, and the soul is supremely benefitted by it.

Focus on the Name

Our only necessity is to connect with the wave of devotion descending from the transcendental world through the Lord's Holy Name and offer ourselves for its purpose. By chanting the Lord's Holy Name His transcendental form will be revealed in our hearts. The Lord's Name will firmly connect us with the Lord's sach-chid-ānanda-vigraha: His eternal, fully conscious, ecstatic form, which is seen and served by great souls like Brahmā, Nārada, and Vedavyās. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu has prayed,

nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-mālā-
dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-paṅkajānta
ayi mukta-kulair upāsyamānaṁ
paritas tvām hari-nāma saṁśrayāmi

(Śrī Nāmāṣṭakam: 1)

“O divine form of the Holy Name! Your lotus feet are worshipped by the Vedas, Vedānta, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā, and all the other scriptures. All these scriptures, along with all the liberated souls, offer ārati to Your lotus feet. Please be merciful and give me Your divine service. I fully surrender at Your lotus feet.”

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu glorified the Holy Name in this way, and there are so many more verses in the scriptures about the Lord's Name. Nothing, anywhere, compares with the position and power of the Holy Name. By chanting the Lord's Name our mood of devotion will increase, the illusory environment will leave us, and our feelings of transcendental ecstasy, charm, beauty, and love in our relationship with the Lord will increase in our heart. With those feelings we will be unable to leave the association of the Lord's Holy Name and service.

tuṅḍe tāṇḍavinī ratim vitanute
tuṅḍāvalī-labdhave
karṇa-kroḍha-kaḍamvinī ghaṭayate
karṇārbudebhyaḥ spṛhām
chetaḥ prāṅgaṇa-saṅginī vijayate
sarvendriyāṇāṁ kṛtim
no jāne janitā-kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ
kṛṣṇeti varṇadvayi

(Cc: Antya, 1.99)

“When they dance in my mouth, they produce the desire for countless mouths; when they enter my ears, they produce the desire for billions of ears; when they appear in the courtyard of my heart, they take control of all of my senses. I do not know how much nectar is produced by the two syllables *Kṛṣ-ṇa*.”

Attracting the Absolute Autocrat

Question: Mahārāj, why do many devotees recommend that we should concentrate on the sound vibration of the Holy Name when chanting? To me that seems to be like impersonal meditation. I feel that a mood of prayer must be present in our chanting. Why is focus on the Holy Name's sound vibration recommended?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Mental concentration is one kind of yoga practice. Through such yoga practice we can acquire some supernatural power (siddhi), but we cannot force the Holy Name to appear from the transcendental world in our hearts. The practice of mental concentration alone will not be fruitful for us.

The Lord and His Holy Name are fully autocratic. In the first verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* it is expressed, “*Ārtheṣv Abhijñāḥ Svarāṭ tene Brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ*: the Lord is an all-knowing Autocrat and everything depends entirely upon His will. He can appear in anyone's heart, and He can also bewilder anyone.” Only a mood of surrendered devotion and dedication is truly helpful in chanting the Lord's Holy Name. We can only try to attract His grace. We cannot force the Lord to appear.

Praying for a drop of mercy

There is a bird known as the *chātak* that drinks only water that falls from the clouds. The *chātak* bird does not drink water from any pond or river. It doesn't drink from anywhere on the earth. He depends only on rainwater that he catches as it falls from the clouds. When rain clouds appear in the sky the *chātak* bird loudly sings their praises, and when raindrops begin to fall, he runs this way and that way to catch them. The *chātak* bird is satisfied with the raindrops he catches, and he never accepts any water from anywhere else.



When a rain cloud appears in the sky, rain is not the only possible outcome. A rain cloud may produce a thunderbolt that can easily destroy a small bird. Still the chātak bird runs around in the middle of a storm catching raindrops and does not care about the danger. His mood is that the clouds are his only shelter and source of life, and he will never consider anything otherwise.

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu used the chātak bird as an analogy for the way we should pray to the Lord as we chant His Holy Name. His expression is very beautiful,

virachaya mayi daṇḍaṁ dīna-bandho dayāṁ vā
 gatir iha na bhavattaḥ kāchid anyā mamāsti
 nipatatu śata-koṭīr nirbharaṁ vā navāmbhas
 tad api kila payodaḥ stūyate chātakena

(Śrī Stava-mālā: 1.16.1)

“O my Lord Kṛṣṇa! I need a drop of mercy from You. Please bestow that upon me. I am waiting for Your mercy like a chātak bird who waits for drops of water to fall from the clouds. You can give me one drop of Your mercy or You can choose not to.

That depends on Your desire, but I will not accept anything from anywhere else. If You want to punish me like a cloud which may cast thunderbolts at a chātak bird, I can tolerate that. Still I will not go anywhere else; I desire only Your mercy.

“*Virachaya mayi daṇḍam Dīna-bandhu! dayām vā*: You may bestow Your mercy upon me or You may punish me. O Lord! I know that I am very poor and that I have no actual devotional property. You may send me a thunderbolt or a drop of water. It is Your decision. Regardless of Your choice, I will always chant Your glories and remain surrendered to Your lotus feet. I will never take anything from the ground: whatever grace I receive from You I will consider to be sufficient for me.”

This type of exclusive devotional mood in chanting the Lord’s Holy Name is necessary for everyone. It will super-benefit the conditioned souls, and liberated souls are always relishing that mood.

Finalising our relationship

In this way Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu shows us how to pray with an attentive and exclusive mood of devotion. It is necessary to chant the Lord’s Holy Name with this mood in order to draw the grace of the Lord to us. We must consider that whatever we need will come to us through our prayer and the Lord’s grace, and that through this mood of prayer the Lord will be inspired to bestow His mercy upon us.

When we chant the Lord’s Holy Name it is not necessary to think or focus on anything. We only need to chant in a prayerful mood of surrender, considering, “I am Yours, and You are mine.” Through this mood our relationship with the Lord will be finalised. At first it will not become final, but by chanting, chanting, and chanting, slowly the Source of our chanting, the Lord, will fully acquire our mind. Then *sarvāḥ sukhamayā diśaḥ* (SB: 11.14.14), we will see joy in all directions. The Lord’s Holy Name will enter our heart and give us full nourishment: supreme kalyāṇ, maṅgal, benefit, auspiciousness, and so on.

akiñchanasya dāntasya
śāntasya sama-chetasah
mayā santuṣṭa-manasaḥ
sarvāḥ sukha-mayā diśaḥ

(SB: 11.14.14)

“For a detached, controlled,
peaceful, equipoised
soul, whose heart is satisfied
by Me, all directions
are filled with joy.”

Appealing in the court of mercy

When devotees try to chant the Lord’s Holy Names they may feel, “I cannot attentively chant the Lord’s Holy Name. I do not have a pure mood of surrender and devotion. So who am I? What qualification do I have? Kṛṣṇa is so great; why would Kṛṣṇa bestow His merciful glance upon me?” Through this realisation and mood of self-examination the devotee will eventually conclude to pray: “The only hope I have is that I may receive Kṛṣṇa’s ‘causeless’ mercy. If His causeless mercy suddenly comes to me, I will consider that my greatest good fortune and I will get everything through that.”

If we bring ourselves before the Lord in the court of justice, we have no hope. But if we bring ourselves before the Lord in the court of mercy, we have so much hope. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī have expressed,

āpane ayogya dekhi’ mane pāñ kṣobha
tathāpi tomāra guṇe upajaya lobha

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 1.204)

“We are sure that we are unqualified and insignificant. There is no doubt about this. We are fallen souls with many disqualifications. But we are also sure that Kṛṣṇa is very merciful and highly qualified. There is also no doubt about that.”

When we hear these types of prayers and promises in the scriptures we become fully enthusiastic. Kṛṣṇa’s mercy is infinite and can easily take us into the transcendental abode of His service. Kṛṣṇa’s nature is to attract the jīva-souls and reveal His ecstasy—Kṛṣṇa-prema—in their hearts. Kṛṣṇa is so merciful and can do everything, so we can always be hopeful. Devotees who are very attached to Mahāprabhu’s teachings will try to chant the Lord’s Holy Name with this exclusive mood.

We have no other way but to chant the Lord’s Holy Name in humble surrender. Devotees may sometimes count while they chant, and they may sometimes chant without counting. They may sometimes chant quietly and sometimes chant loudly.



Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and Śrīla
Sanātan Goswāmī

In all circumstances, they chant with a mood of prayer, “Whether or not the Lord will see me or bestow His mercy upon me is His personal matter. I must simply chant His Holy Name and have faith that one day I may receive His causeless mercy.”

Hope for the hopeless

There is another expression of the devotees’ mood:

parama-kāruṇiko na bhavat-paraḥ
parama-śochyatamo na cha mat-paraḥ
iti vichintya hare mayi pāmare
yad uchitaṁ yadu-nātha tad āchara

(Padyāvalī: Bhaktānām-māhātmyam, 66)

“O Kṛṣṇa, I do not know my position, but You know who I am. I am feeling I am in an insignificant, unqualified, ignorant, lamentable, and sad position. I have no quality or qualification, and I feel I cannot actually do anything. Your position is Supreme. You are the supremely merciful rescuer of the fallen souls. You have promised that You will give special attention to the ignorant fallen souls who are in need, and rescue those who take shelter at Your lotus feet. I do not know if I can take full shelter of You or not, but I am offering myself to You with my all and everything. You can see me present before You, so please give me Your merciful glance.

“You are the supreme rescuer of the fallen souls, Patita Pāvan, and I am a super-conditioned soul (patita), so please do the needful. I will not tell You what to do. You can see everything perfectly. I only pray that You do what is necessary for me. I do not see any soul who is more fallen than myself; You bestow Your mercy upon the most fallen souls first, so I am very hopeful You will do the needful and rescue me.”

There are so many songs and expressions of prayer to the Lord which explain our position and the Lord’s position. We can see that everywhere the jīva-souls are in both a hopeless position and a hopeful position. Alone they must be hopeless,

but in connection with the Lord they must be hopeful. So lastly, through the Lord's grace, the jīva-souls can always be hopeful, and that is the mood of a devotee.

Arising from within the heart

Devotee: In the scriptures it says that we need to chant the Holy Name constantly to remove our offences against the Holy Name. I have also heard that we should chant only a small number of times with full concentration. Can you explain something about the importance of quality and quantity in chanting?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: It is not hard to understand the difference between quality and quantity in chanting the Holy Name. We need to satisfy Kṛṣṇa and His nondifferent form of the Holy Name. Chanting in a way that is satisfying to the Holy Name is quality chanting. That will draw down the revelation of the pure Holy Name in our hearts. When the Lord's Name is pleased with us, He will appear in His transcendental vibration form on our tongue.

We cannot see Kṛṣṇa's divine form, and we cannot hear Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name. What comes from our tongue when we chant is not transcendental because our tongue is not transcendental. But our tongue can attain a transcendental form when the Lord's Divine Name appears there. Quality chanting means making our tongue transcendental by attracting the Divine Name, the Lord's transcendental vibration form, to appear there.

The Lord made the special sanction in the Age of Kali, "I shall manifest in My transcendental vibration form in the heart of a surrendered soul who has purified consciousness." Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura explained,

hṛdaya haite bale, jihvāra agrete chale,
śabda-rūpe nāche anukṣana
(Śaraṇāgati: Śrī Nāma-māhātmya, 2)

“Hari-nām Himself will forcibly move from within the clean heart of a devotee to the tip of his tongue and dance there in the form of sound vibration.”

The Holy Name needs a proper place to reveal Himself. Without the atmosphere of a clean heart, a surrendered mood of prayer and devotion, the divine vibration of the Holy Name will not be attracted to manifest Himself. But someday, like lightning, the Name may appear in our heart and dance on our tongue. That will happen one day if we continue our meditation on the Holy Name. But it is not our meditation actually; it is our chanting service. Through our service mood the Holy Name will appear in our heart.

Sometimes the Name first comes to us in a mixed way. He may not first reveal His fully transcendental form. First He may come and go, come and go, come and go. But finally He will stay within us. Eventually that will happen if our mood is always directed towards the service of Kṛṣṇa and our Gurudev. With that mood both what is known to you and what is unknown to you will appear in your heart, and with that revelation you will understand what is light and what is darkness.

Everything depends upon our mood of chanting and mood of service. It is very good if you will think, “It is my service to chant. I know neither why I am chanting, nor what I should think, and it is not necessary for me to know.”

Transforming the mind's nature

For the transformation of the mind's nature (*cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*) it is necessary to remember the Lord constantly. Whoever is able to do this will experience a transformation. We have time, all twenty-four hours of the day, to chant the Lord's Holy Name. Chanting a minimum of four rounds or sixteen rounds in a day is for practice. Our Guru Mahārāj did not say we should chant for only four rounds once during the day. Rather, he taught us that we should chant all throughout the day. With beads or

without beads, the feeling should always come to us, “Now I shall chant the Lord’s Holy Name.”

We can even remember the Lord when we are sleeping. When a great difficulty comes before us in our life, we may have a dream about it at night. Similarly, if we are always trying to remember Kṛṣṇa, we will also see some form of Kṛṣṇa in our dreams. That is our mind’s nature.

In the Age of Kali it is only necessary to chant the Lord’s Holy Name without offence. The first directive is, “Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Later, chanting without offence will come to us. If people think that chanting “Hare Kṛṣṇa” is for their own benefit, then they will accept the process. But later when they find that they are not getting the full result of chanting and they think about why they are not getting the full result, they will search for the fault in their chanting. They will search through the ten offences to the Holy Name to find their fault and then try to leave that offence. They will see they have to chant for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction, not for their own satisfaction. They will see through personal reflection that they are chanting for themselves, and then they will try to correct their fault and chant for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction.

Still, no one should stop their chanting when they see there is some fault in it. Rather, they should continue to constantly remember the Lord and chant His Name. The Lord will reveal Himself to us when He is pleased with our service mood, which we can express by chanting constantly.

We can serve the Lord physically, verbally, and mentally. We should never stop our service mentally, but we should also serve the Lord with our body. Engaging the body in service does not only mean missionary service; we must change everything we do everywhere into service. That is service-life, and in that way we should try to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa constantly.

Mundane difficulties will come to us through our karma, but a devotee does not want to engage Kṛṣṇa in taking care of them. We will not ask Kṛṣṇa to clean our courtyard. It is the nature of

a devotee to always want to do something for others, especially Kṛṣṇa. This mood of quality chanting, of service, is necessary first, but we should not leave quantity in our chanting either. What is actually important and necessary is quality, but as much as possible we should also try to chant in quantity. If we leave quantity in our chanting, quality will not come. Chanting in quantity in a regular way is good. Because our mind does not want to chant regularly, we need to practise.

The mood of a devotee is to constantly chant his Lord's Name. You will see an example of this in the cleaning of the Guṇḍichā Temple. In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* it is described that everyone chants, "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa" while they are working with their hands. If someone needs a water bucket, he asks for it by chanting, "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa". Then another devotee gives him a bucket of water while chanting, "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa", and the devotee then throws that bucket of water while chanting, "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa".

The devotees will perform so many activities in their lives, but while they are doing their work they will always try to chant Kṛṣṇa's Name. Then, through their habit of chanting, their mood and mind will transform.

When that habit of remembering the Lord comes to us, we will not be able to leave it. We have many habits that we cannot leave. Someone may have an intoxication habit. Someone may have an eating habit. Many persons have so many habits, but if we make our habit only to chant, then we will always chant "Hare Kṛṣṇa" within our mind. It is not necessary to show our remembrance and chanting to others though. It is only necessary to chant the Holy Name with quality, that is, a mood of trying to satisfy the Lord.

The essence of all advice

vena tena prakāreṇa manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Pūrva-vibhāga, 2.4)

“Somehow or other engage the mind in Kṛṣṇa’s service. This is the only directive of all the scriptures.”

smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātuchit
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ

(Padma-purāṇa)

“The only prohibition is to never forget Kṛṣṇa, and the only injunction is to always remember Kṛṣṇa. Only these two things are necessary. All the rules and regulations in all the scriptures are actually servants of that purpose: satisfying Kṛṣṇa by always remembering Him and never forgetting Him.” This is the gist of all the Vedic scriptures’ advice.

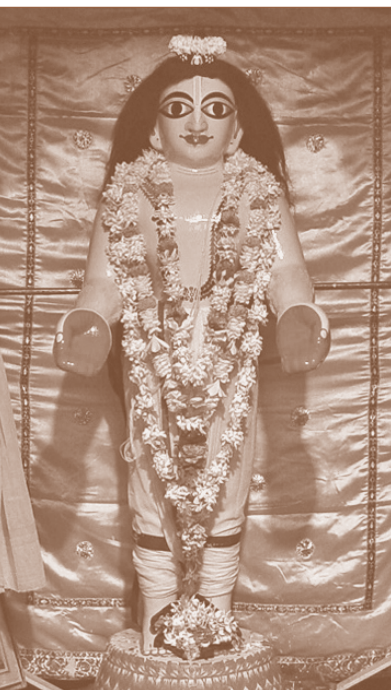
You can live anywhere in any position. It is not a question of your situation or lifestyle. It is only necessary that you remember Kṛṣṇa and try to serve Kṛṣṇa. Then the whole illusory environment will leave you, and you will immediately be promoted to life in the transcendental service world where you can satisfy Kṛṣṇa according to His desires. That transcendental service world is not existing in the sky or anywhere ‘above us’; it is existing within us. Our own internal environment must change. When there are changes of office within a government, all the office work and general activities continue. It is only the government officers and maybe some of the government’s rules that change. The soul’s transformation towards Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like that.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's Mood of Devotion

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave the process of chanting the Lord's Holy Names to everyone in the Age of Kali. Chanting the Lord's Name was started by many different religious experts long before Mahāprabhu's appearance. We can see that chanting the Lord's Holy Name is given in the Vedas and side by side in all religions. We can firmly say that the practice of chanting the Lord's Name is the religion of all jīva-souls. All holy books confirm this, though there are different Names of the Lord chanted within different religions. I am very satisfied to see that all the religious leaders and Avatārs of the Lord have given this one direction: "Chant the Lord's Holy Name."

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has clearly given the very gist of religious life to everyone through His teaching of the practice of chanting the Lord's Holy Names. Mahāprabhu has also shown everyone the proper mood necessary to perfect the practice. He has cautioned everyone that without the proper consciousness and mood the power flowing within the wave of the Lord's Holy Name will not be felt in the heart, and the full form of the Holy Name's transcendental existence will not be realised.



*The Deity of Śrīman
Mahāprabhu commissioned
and served by
Śrīmatī Viṣṇu Priyā Devī.*

Cleaning the mirror of the mind

In His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev explained the conception and mood needed to purely chant the Lord's Holy Name. In His first verse He glorified Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan and explained the effects of its power:

*cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyaḥ-kairava-chandrikā-vitaraṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-wardhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

Here Mahāprabhu explains very cleanly and clearly that the first necessity for everyone is *cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*: cleaning the mirror of the mind. When we look into a dirty mirror we cannot see our figure, but when it is cleaned we can see ourselves clearly. When the jīva-soul is conditioned by the illusory environment, he forgets himself and his transcendental form as an eternal servitor of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The dust of illusion covers the mirror of the jīva-soul's mind and stops him from seeing clearly. Mahāprabhu teaches that the first step in spiritual life is to realise our true nature. When all the dust of illusion is removed through the practice of Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan and the mirror of our mind is clean, we can clearly see our self and our proper existence. That is called ātma-sākṣāt-kār: self-realisation. When that comes to us we will see that we are eternal jīva-souls and that Kṛṣṇa is always living with us. We will see that we are members of the transcendental service world. Mahāprabhu says that by chanting the Holy Name we will get relief from the illusory environment, everything will be revealed to us, and we will realise our self's natural property: full connection with the ocean of nectar that is the Lord's eternal service.

This is a very clean conception and the gist of religious advice: "*Param vijayate Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*: Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan is the supreme practice and will be glorious everywhere. If we can practise Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan under the guidance of a real Vaiṣṇava, it will be the best path and opportunity to reach our

spiritual destiny. Through Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtan we will get everything, so chant the Lord's Holy Names and clean your heart."

The Lord's infinite Names

In His second verse Mahāprabhu said,

nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smarāṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ

Here Mahāprabhu taught us, "All of the Lord's power is present in His Divine Name (*nija-sarva-śaktis tatrārpitā*). The Lord has manifested Himself for the benefit of the conditioned souls in the form of His Holy Name (*Nāmnām akāri*) and given the conditioned souls a connection with Himself through His Name. *Bahudhā*: the Lord has so many Names, and all of Them are empowered."

When Mahāprabhu began His saṅkīrtan movement with His students, He did not use the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. He first instructed His students to chant:

'hari haraye namaḥ, kṛṣṇa yādavāya namaḥ
gopāla govinda rāma śrī-madhusūdana'
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 17.122)

O Hari! O Kṛṣṇa! O Yādava!
O Gopāl! O Govinda! O Rāma!
O Madhusūdan! I offer my
obeisance to You again and again.

For primary practitioners He taught that anyone can chant any Name of the Lord if they have honour, respect, and good feelings for that Name. Mahāprabhu Himself used to chant many different mantrams of the Lord's Names.

kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa he!
rāma rāma rāma rāma rāma rāma rāma he!
kṛṣṇa keśava kṛṣṇa keśava kṛṣṇa keśava rakṣa mām!
rāma rāghava rāma rāghava rāma rāghava pāhi mām!
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 7.96)

The Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is the supreme mantram, no doubt. It has the highest and most exclusive position, and is

best for the Age of Kali. Mahāprabhu specially distributed the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra to the world and wanted everyone to chant in that way. But He also taught that the Lord bestows His grace through all of His Names, and that anyone can chant any Name of the Lord and purify themselves.

The Lord has so many different Names:

viṣṇur nārāyaṇaḥ kṛṣṇo vaikuṅṭho viṣṭaraśravāḥ
dāmodaro hṛṣīkeśaḥ keśavo mādavaḥ svabhūḥ
daityāriḥ puṅḍarīkākṣo govindo garuḍadhvajāḥ
pītāmbaro 'chyutaḥ sārṅgī viṣvakṣeno janārdanaḥ
upendra indrāvarajaś chakrapāṇiś chaturbhujāḥ
padmanābho madhuripur vāsudevas trivikramaḥ
devakī-nandanaḥ śauriḥ śrī-patiḥ puruṣottamaḥ
vanamālī bali-dhvaṁsī kamsārātir adhokṣajāḥ

(*Amara-kośa: 1.1.37-44*)

Mahāprabhu taught that the Lord has manifested unlimited different Names of Himself in this world and has empowered all of Them with the power to rescue the conditioned souls. He explained that the Lord and His Holy Names are nondifferent, and that if anyone chants Them without offence, they will be liberated. *Niyamitaḥ smarāṇe na kālaḥ*: Mahāprabhu did not give any restrictions regarding the time and place of chanting the Lord's Holy Name. His only rule was that we must remember and chant the Holy Name at all times.

Spiritual misfortune

Then Mahāprabhu prayed,

etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ

(*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam: 2*)

“O Lord, You have bestowed Your great mercy by appearing in this material world in the form of Your Holy Names, but I

am very unfortunate: I still do not feel eagerness to chant Your Holy Names.”

Mahāprabhu had full attachment and attraction to Kṛṣṇa and His Holy Name. Mahāprabhu felt the full association of Kṛṣṇa through His Holy Name. So why does Mahāprabhu express that He does not have any attraction to Kṛṣṇa? Because He was so deeply connected with Kṛṣṇa through His Holy Name that He felt ever-increasing hankering for Kṛṣṇa; He felt He needed more and more attachment to Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name. In divine ecstasy Mahāprabhu felt unsatisfied with the Lord’s revelation and His own position. He considered Himself unfortunate because He did not have a deeper connection with Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name. We can understand Mahāprabhu’s mood in this way, and we can understand that His expression in this verse is also a very important lesson for us.

With this verse Mahāprabhu also teaches the conditioned souls that the Holy Name is all-powerful—that the Holy Name has full ability to reveal Himself in our hearts—and that we will immediately feel the result of our chanting if we chant the Holy Name purely. Therefore, if we are not experiencing such revelation, if we are not feeling joyful progress in our hearts and minds, if our faith is not becoming firm, if everything is not being fulfilled through our devotional mood, and if we are not getting the association of the Lord through His Divine Name, then we must consider that our *durdaiva*, our great misfortune.

Melting our stone-like hearts

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura explained that *durdaiva* means aparādh, offensive mentality. He explained that Mahāprabhu’s teaching for the conditioned souls in His second verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* is that the Lord’s all-powerful Holy Name will not reveal Himself in our hearts if we have an offensive mood. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura gave this explanation of Mahāprabhu’s expression with this verse from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

tad aśma-sāram hṛdayam batedam
yad gṛhyamāṇair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ
na vikriyetātha yadā vikāro
netre jalam gātra-ruheṣu harṣaḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 2.3.24)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur put great emphasis on this verse. His explanation was, “One who hears the glories of the Lord’s Holy Name and chants the Lord’s Holy Name, but does not develop love and affection for the Holy Name, is a great offender with a stone-like heart. There must be something offensive in their heart, otherwise they would automatically feel love for Kṛṣṇa and chant His Holy Name purely.”

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur explained the phrase *aśma-sāram*, ‘stone-like heart’, by saying that the heart becomes stone-like when someone has a strong materialistic mentality: “I am my mundane body and everything that belongs to me is mine.” When someone has the materialistic mentality of “I, me, mine” their devotional practising life and chanting of the Lord’s Holy Name is mixed with offence. As there are different varieties of stone, some of which are harder than others, so the hearts of people are not equally hard; some persons’ hearts will melt sooner, and some persons’ hearts will melt later, though gradually everyone’s heart will melt, and everyone will feel love for the Lord’s Holy Name.

Avoiding offence

It is certainly true that the Holy Name delivers anyone who once offencelessly calls, remembers, or hears Him, regardless of whether they pronounce the Name correctly or incorrectly, in separated parts, or as a single word. If, however, the Name is used for the body, wealth, prestige, greed, or evil, He does not produce any (spiritual) result quickly (though He does eventually).

nāmaikaṁ yasya vāchi smaraṇa-patha-gataṁ śrotra-mūlam gataṁ vā
śuddhaṁ vāśuddha-varṇaṁ vyavahita-rahitaṁ tārayaty eva satyam
tach ched deha-draviṇa-janatā-lobha-pāṣaṇḍa-madhye
nikṣiptaṁ syān na phala-janakaṁ śīghram evātra vipra

(Padma-purāṇa)

The scriptures explain: “If anyone once hears, chants, or remembers the Lord’s Divine Name without any offence, they will be delivered from material existence immediately. If someone maintains their material connections and pursues mundane

ends while they chant the Lord’s Holy Name, then the result of their chanting does not bear fruit quickly; it gradually comes to them.”

This verse gives us necessary consciousness about our practising life by showing us that our offensive mentality is our only obstacle in our chanting of the Holy Name, and that until we can avoid all offences we will not get the proper result of chanting the Holy Name. No one should be hopeless after hearing this caution. In this verse it is indirectly expressed that even if we chant with offences we will eventually get a good result from our chanting.

nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmāny eva haranty agham

(Padma-purāṇa: Svarga-khaṇḍa, 48.49)

“If we are chanting Nām-aparādh, chanting the Holy Name with offence, we should never stop our chanting because the Holy Name Himself will remove our offences by His divine influence.”

It is necessary to eagerly chant the Lord’s Holy Name and always be hopeful. We can always be hopeful because the Lord’s Holy Name is always joyful and merciful like Kṛṣṇa Himself. In this way we can understand Mahāprabhu’s teaching that if you want to chant the Lord’s Holy Name purely and fully satisfy the Lord through your chanting, then you will have to chant the Lord’s Holy Name constantly without making offences. Kṛṣṇa will be happy with us when we practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness and chant His Holy Name without offence. If we have love for Kṛṣṇa, then we must try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by practising and chanting without offence.

In the *Padma-purāṇa* the ten offences which must be avoided to chant the Lord’s Holy Name purely are explained. We have already published these offences with the original verses and whenever anyone has taken initiation we have given them that book and requested them, “Read these offences*, memorise them, and avoid them.” That is necessary for everyone.

**Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj’s poem explaining the ten offences to the Holy Name, Daśa-Vidha Nāmāparādha, is included as an appendix to this book.*

Curing our offensive mentality

In the third verse of His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has explained the qualifications needed to avoid the ten offences and attract the Lord’s Divine Name to reveal Himself in our heart with His full power:

ṭṛṇād api sunīchena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

“Constantly chant the Lord’s Divine Name with a mood of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others, and without desiring honour for yourself. Then you will become qualified to chant the Lord’s Holy Name without offence.”

Here Mahāprabhu expresses His conception that a real practitioner of Kṛṣṇa consciousness must be humble, be tolerant, give honour to others, and have no desire for honour for themselves. These are the essential qualities of a Vaiṣṇava, and anyone who truly has these qualities is qualified to chant the Lord’s Holy Name purely.

Mahāprabhu’s advice is very simple, and by following it sincerely we will easily avoid all offensiveness; no offence will be able to touch us. Mahāprabhu’s formula of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others is the perfect remedy for our misfortune of offensiveness towards the Lord’s Name, which He explains in His second verse (*Nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis*).

Smashing the ego

Mahāprabhu gave us this perfect formula because everyone has some ego, and all our offences to the Lord’s Name come from ego. Mahāprabhu’s teaching is that it is first of all necessary to oust the ego from our mind (*cheto-darpaṇa-marjanam*). We must try to completely remove all mundane egotism from ourselves, but Mahāprabhu also explains that we must keep our spiritual ego. “*Jīvera svarūpa haya Kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa*: we will

always consider ourselves to be Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servants and maintain our transcendental connection with Him.”

Through this process of self-realisation, Mahāprabhu taught us that we all need to go back to our home in the transcendental world where we can serve Kṛṣṇa and feel the happiness, joy, ecstatic mood, and blessings of His service. In addition He showed us that through chanting the Lord’s Holy Name without offence our transcendental form, which we cannot see when we are bound by the illusory environment, will gradually be revealed in our heart. So Mahāprabhu has given us the perfect process for smashing our mundane ego and discovering our real ego, our eternal form as a servitor of Kṛṣṇa.

My main advice

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam explained the four directives for isolating ourselves from the influence of Kali.

dyūtaṁ pānaṁ striyaḥ sūnā yatṛādharmāś chatur-vidhaḥ

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 1.17.38)

“Gambling, intoxication, illicit sex, and meat-eating are sinful activities and must be avoided.”

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam gave this advice. It is necessary for our practising life, but it is not a service; it is a regulation. Mahāprabhu’s directive to be humble, be tolerant, and give honour to others is our service; it explains how we should practise our spiritual life. Without humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others no one will be successful in chanting the Lord’s Holy Name, even if they follow the scriptural rules and regulations. Only following Mahāprabhu’s directives for our practising life—to be humble, be tolerant, and give honour to others—will ensure that we are successful.

I have tested this thousands of times, and it is completely sure. Almost every day I advise my friends and everyone I meet to follow this directive of Mahāprabhu. What I say may sound like a memorised set of English words, but it is not only that.



*Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj lecturing
in St Petersburg, Russia.*

With my heart I am saying it every day, and I am feeling it also. I want to see that everyone's practising life—their śravan, kīrtan, and so on—continues happily in good association.

If there is anything I want to distribute to the Western world it is this, which is my first and best advice: "Avoid the ten offences to the Holy Name and Vaiṣṇava-*aparādh* by practising Mahāprabhu's formula of being humble, being tolerant, and giving honour to others." This is my preaching and my practising life. I have received this consciousness from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj, and I can see that it is completely necessary for everyone everywhere. Without humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others no one can maintain their devotional mood, and with these qualities everyone can proceed very easily to their spiritual destiny.

Pure devotion and divine mercy

In the first verse of His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, Mahāprabhu explained the relationship between Kṛṣṇa, His Holy Name, and the jīva-

soul. In His second verse He explained how powerful Kṛṣṇa and His Holy Name are, and also how much of an offender we are. In His third verse He gave us the remedy for our offensive condition, which can reveal to us the Holy Name’s power and our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Then in His fourth verse Mahāprabhu prayed,

na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmanisvare
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi

[“O Lord, I do not desire wealth, followers, beautiful women, or liberation. I pray only for unconditional devotion to You birth after birth.”]

Once someone enters into practising life by following Mahāprabhu’s formula of chanting the Lord’s Holy Name with a mood of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others, then the only target and desire of their life becomes ahaitukī-bhakti, eternal devotion free from material motivations. A practitioner does not want any of his energy to be taken by offensive activity, and he desires that his full energy be engaged in service that pleases the Lord.

When a practitioner has entered into exclusive devotional life in this way, he can understand Kṛṣṇa’s position and see that his own position in the mundane world is an ugly, impious platform from which to serve the Lord. To express this mood of a practitioner, Mahāprabhu prays in the next verse of His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*,

ayi nanda-tanuja kinikaram
patitam mam visame bhavambudhau
krpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūli-sadṛśam vichintaya

(Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam: 5)

“O Lord, I am Your eternal servant, but because of my misfortune I have fallen into this terrible ocean of birth and death.

mad-guṇa-śruti-mātreṇa
mayi sarva-guhāśaye
mano-gatir avichchinnā
yathā gaṅgāmbhaso ‘mbudhau
lakṣaṇam bhakti-yogasya
nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam
ahaituky avyavahitā
yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottame

(SB: 3.29.11-12)

“The primary characteristic of supramundane devotion is that simply by hearing of My glory one’s thoughts uninterruptedly flow towards Me, the Lord who resides within the hearts of all, just as the waters of the Ganges naturally flow towards the ocean. Such pure devotion to Me, the Supreme Lord, is unconditional and unobstructed (self-manifest and unalloyed).”

I pray that by Your causeless mercy You will accept me as Your own and I will be connected with You like a particle of dust on Your lotus feet.”

Mahāprabhu’s prayer to Kṛṣṇa means, “If You give me Your merciful glance, I and everything I possess will become purified and useful for Your service. *Sthita-dhūli-sadyśam vichintaya*: my existence will enter the transcendental service world, and I will be able to serve You purely there for Your satisfaction.”

If the Lord will give even a little bit of His attention to a devotee then the devotee will be completely purified. As the sparking light of a match can remove 100 years of darkness from a closed room, so everything can be cleaned and cleared from anyone’s heart by the Lord’s divine influence.

Praying to chant without offence

In the sixth verse of His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* Mahāprabhu prays,

nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā
pulkair nichitam vapuḥ kadā
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati

[“O Lord, when will tears stream from my eyes, my voice falter, and the hair of my body stand on end as I call Your Name?”]

These are the symptoms of a servant who purely serves the Lord and chants His Holy Name without offence. Mahāprabhu prays in this way to express His hankering to chant the Lord’s Holy Name without offence.

If we can purely chant the Lord’s Holy Name we will get His direct service and feel ecstatic joy in our life. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* concluded,

nāma-saṅkīrtanam yasya sarva-pāpa-praṇāśanam
praṇāmo duḥkha-śamanas taṁ namāmi hariṁ param
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam’s* last verse: 12.13.23)

“Nām-saṅkīrtan is supreme.”

*I offer my obeisance unto the
Supreme Lord, Hari. Chanting
His Name absolves all sin,
and offering obeisance to Him
dispels all sorrow.*

But Mahāprabhu commented,

tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Antya-līlā, 4.71)

“Nām-saṅkīrtan is the supreme form of bhakti-yoga, but only if we chant the Lord’s Holy Name without offence will Kṛṣṇa-prema appear in our hearts.”

The Holy Name’s purifying power

Mahāprabhu wants everyone to chant the Holy Name purely, without offence. Offences are very difficult to avoid and dangerous, but we must avoid them because they are our obstacle in chanting the Lord’s Holy Name. Mahāprabhu shows us His mood of prayer to the Holy Name to help us attract the Holy Name’s grace, which is what will truly free us from offences. With the proper mood of prayer and regular chanting, we can be hopeful that we can receive the Holy Name’s grace.

nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmāny eva haranty agham
aviśrānti-prayuktāni tāny evārtha-karāṇi cha

(Padma-purāṇa: Svarga-khaṇḍa, 48.49)

“When the Holy Name sees our heartfelt desire to try to chant Him purely, then He will be merciful to us; we will get the qualifications we need to chant properly, and all of our difficulties will go away by His grace.”

This is Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī Prabhu’s realisation from the scriptures: “We cannot avoid making offences, but the Holy Name Himself will give us good nourishment and relieve us from our offences if we have love, affection, and a little connection with Him.” This is the main thing. If our desire is heartfelt, then we must always continuously try to chant the Lord’s Name. Continuous, attentive chanting will attract the grace of the Holy Name to mercifully clean our hearts, remove all our obstacles, and excuse our offences. Through His Śikṣāṣṭakam



Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī Prabhu.
Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj
described him as the greatest
philosopher in the history
of Vedic culture.

we can see that Mahāprabhu’s first expression and teaching, *cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*, cleaning the mirror of the mind, comes by the grace of the Holy Name to the practitioner in the last stage.

Mahāprabhu’s next prayer in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* is:

yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa chakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ
 śūnyāyitaṁ jagat sarvaṁ govinda-viraheṇa me

(*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam: 7*)

[“O Govinda! In separation from You a moment seems like forever, tears pour from my eyes, and the whole world feels empty.”]

When one chants the Holy Name purely then one’s consciousness is purified (*cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*), and all the effects of the Holy Name Mahāprabhu described in His glorification of Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan—*bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam*, and so on—appear in one’s heart. Then, in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one feels viraha, separation from the Lord, and thinks, “I am chanting the Lord’s Name but still I am not chanting in the proper way.” One then desires to chant the Holy Name more and more purely.

The Lord of our heart

Mahāprabhu ends His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* with this prayer:

āśliṣya vā pāda-ratāṁ pinaṣṭu mām
 adarśanān marma-hatāṁ karotu vā
 yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampaṭo
 mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ

(*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam: 8*)

“Kṛṣṇa may embrace me or break my heart by denying me His darśan. Kṛṣṇa the Gopa-vadhū-lampaṭ [enjoyer of the cowherd men’s wives] may do whatever He likes; He will always be the Lord of my heart.”

When a servitor will enter into his service life with this type of mood he will have the mood of full dedication to the Lord.

cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-
 dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
 śreyaḥ-kairava-chandrikā-vitarāṇam
 vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
 ānandāmbudhi-varhdhanam prati-padaṁ
 pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanaṁ
 sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate
 śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam
 (*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam: 1*)

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtan cleanses the
 mirror of consciousness,
 extinguishes the raging forest
 fire of material existence,
 shines moonlight on the
 evening lotus of good fortune,
 is the life of the wife of
 divine knowledge, expands the
 ocean of ecstasy, is the taste
 of full nectar at every moment,
 and soothes the entire self.
 May Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtan be
 supremely victorious!”

Different kinds of examinations, sometimes painful examinations, will come to him in his spiritual life, but he will not be able to leave the Lord's lotus feet. He will not see anything except the Lord's service and will not be able to leave the Lord's connection in any way; his only target will be Kṛṣṇa and His service.

The mood of Mahāprabhu's final expression is, "Kṛṣṇa can do anything and everything with Me. He has full right over me. I will always be His servitor's servitor's servitor. I have no other ego or ideal." This verse also has a deep, a deeper, and a deepest meaning, and all of them will automatically be revealed in our hearts through our service mood. We will naturally be able to see, feel, and embrace those ideals when they are revealed to us.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu did not write many verses or give many instructions. He simply gave the gist of all instructions in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*. There is no way to proceed in our spiritual life or in our chanting of the Lord's Holy Names without following the directives of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu given in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's *Śikṣāṣṭakam* is our life and soul. We will try until death to proceed according to its instructions and we must be benefitted to the utmost by that.

Serving Under Proper Guidance

Question: Mahārāj, when chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra, how should we consider the position of Gurudev? Should we chant to please Guru? Should we chant because it pleases Guru? Should we pray to Guru to help us chant?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: We can understand the proper ideal for practitioners through the example of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. His example shows us the importance of both following the order of Gurudev to chant and satisfying him through our practice of chanting.

Mahāprabhu's bright and exalted form

When Mahāprabhu was in Kashi [Varanasi] He came to the assembly of the māyāvādī sannyāsīs headed by Prakāśānanda Saraswatī. When He arrived He sat in the place where all the sannyāsīs would wash their feet before entering the assembly room. When Mahāprabhu arrived He washed His hands and feet, and then sat down in the washing area. While He was sitting there He also revealed His glory by showing a great effulgence from His divine form.

prabhāve ākarṣiḷa saba sannyāsira mana
uṭhila sannyāsī saba chhāḍiyā āsana

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 7.61)

When all the sannyāsīs saw this effulgence, which appeared like that of Brahma, they were very attracted and surprised: “Oh! He is as bright as the sun!”

Prakāśānanda Saraswatī was also surprised. Prakāśānanda Saraswatī had heard that Śrī Chaitanyadev had come to Kashi and was turning all the Kashi-vāsīs, the residents of Kashi, into Vaiṣṇavas. Prakāśānanda was very angry about this and had told all his disciples, “Don’t associate with that Chaitanya!”

Without Prakāśānanda’s knowledge, a brāhmaṇ had invited Mahāprabhu to his assembly. Mahāprabhu did not actually want to go there and join the company of the māvādīs, but He felt He needed to distribute His mercy to Prakāśānanda Saraswatī for the satisfaction of His devotees. For that purpose He went there.

When Prakāśānanda saw Mahāprabhu’s divine effulgence and then His divine form sitting in a dirty place, he was stunned and thought, “Oh! How beautiful and attractive is the form of this boy!” He could not stay in his chair. He got up and said to Mahāprabhu, “Why are You sitting there? You are very nice-looking and Your form is very exalted. Please come inside. We are all gathered here. You are a sannyāsī of our sampradāya. You are a little young but You are very bright. Why are You sitting outside? Please come in and take a seat.”

Mahāprabhu said, “No, no, no. I am very insignificant and inferior. You are the sampradāya’s guru and everyone here is a very great paṇḍit. I am not qualified to join you.”

When Prakāśānanda saw Mahāprabhu’s great humility his mind softened. He took Mahāprabhu’s hand and said, “O Śrīpād! Please come inside and take a seat.”

After they came inside Prakāśānanda began to very affectionately question Mahāprabhu, “I have heard Your name. I know that You are a great paṇḍit and that You are a sannyāsī

of our sampradāya. You have taken sannyās from the line of Bhāratī. That is not a high-class line of sannyās. It is a middle class, but You are certainly a member of our sampradāya. Why don't You come to visit us? You should practise jñāna-yoga, read the *Vedānta-darśana*, and discuss it with us. That is the duty of a sannyāsī. You should regularly hear the *Vedānta-darśana* and preach Śaṅkar Āchārya's teachings. You do not do that. Why? We cannot understand why You only chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra and dance. You are always chanting, dancing, crying, and laughing. Why do You always show Yourself in this way? Why are You always simply performing saṅkīrtan?"

Chant 'Hare Kṛṣṇa' and be happy

Mahāprabhu very humbly replied to Prakāśānanda Saraswatī, "O sir, what can I say? My mind was not good when I took sannyās. I needed relief from the mundane environment; My mind went in a very renounced way, and I could not stay in the grhastha-āśram. I came to My Guru and prayed, 'Give Me sannyās.' Also, when I was initiated I asked, 'What is My duty?' My Guru said,

mūrkha tumi, tomāra nāhika vedāntādhikāra
 'kṛṣṇa-mantra' japa sadā,—ei mantra-sāra
 (Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 7.72)

"You are foolish and unqualified. It is not necessary for You to read anything. You have no qualification to hear or read the *Vedānta-darśana*. You will not be able to understand its meanings. But You are coming to me for some advice, so I must tell You something. What can You do? You can do simply what is necessary in this Age of Kali:

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
 kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā
 (Bṛhan-Nāradya-purāṇa)

"No one can achieve liberation in this Age of Kali without chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. Chanting the Hare

Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is the only way to discover Your true nature and serve Kṛṣṇa eternally. If You can chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra without offence You will get a very good result. You will feel Kṛṣṇa-prema and get everything. Purely chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra is the goal of human life. You have a renounced nature, and You have fortunately taken a human birth. So chant ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ and be happy. That is sufficient for You. It is not necessary for You to read the *Vedānta-darśana* or anything else.”

Dancing, chanting, crying, and roaring

Mahāprabhu continued His explanation to Prakāśānanda Saraswatī, “Then on the order of My Guru I began chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. I did not know what I was doing, and I did not feel that I was chanting, or dancing, or crying. I was simply following the order of My Guru to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. For his satisfaction I was chanting. As I chanted in this way power came to Me from My Guru, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra automatically appeared in My heart. I felt the presence of Kṛṣṇa within Me, and I felt many different things about Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa began to dance in My heart and then dance upon My tongue in the form of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra.

“I do not dance actually, or chant, or cry. From within My heart, Kṛṣṇa dances, and then His Name takes control of Me. You may see Me dancing, chanting, crying, roaring and doing so many things, but they are all the movements of Hari-nām. It is not actually My desire to do all these things. I am very shy to act in that way. But what can I do? I am following the order of My Guru Mahārāj. By his power this type of result is coming to Me and giving Me this type of mood.

“When this began happening to Me I thought I had become mad. I went back to My Gurudev and asked,

kibā mantra dilā, gōsāñi, kibā tāra bala
japite japite mantra karila pāgala

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 7.81)

“What kind of mantram have you given Me? I did not know how powerful this mantram was. When I chant it I become like a madman.’

“My Gurudev replied, ‘This is the actual result of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. All mundanity stops if You chant this mantram properly. You are very fortunate that You have become filled with such transcendental knowledge and the full ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa.’

“My Gurudev encouraged Me in this way and also told Me to try to spread this consciousness to others. So what can I say?

nāma nāche jīva nāche nāche prema dhana
jagata nāchāya māyā kare palāyana

(Hari-nāma-chintāmañi: 1.2.58)

“When someone chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra without offence Kṛṣṇa will dance in their heart and then upon their tongue.”

“When I began to follow the order of My Gurudev the Divine Name of Kṛṣṇa began dancing within My heart. As I continue to chant and dance by the will of Hari-nām whoever hears that dance of Kṛṣṇa in the form of sound vibration from My tongue also begins to dance. Then Kṛṣṇa enters their hearts and begins dancing there. And not only this, the wealth of Kṛṣṇa-prema that appears in everyone’s heart, that prema-dhana, also dances. I Myself do not know anything, but I am seeing that now the whole world has automatically begun dancing with Me by the will of Hari-nām and the wave of Kṛṣṇa-prema. Hari-nām has begun dancing and chanting from within My heart and automatically the attention of everyone’s mind has been overcome by that dancing movement. I am simply following the order of My Gurudev and all of this is happening. I do not actually know what is what.”

Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s Guru
Śrī Īśvar Puri quoted this
verse:

evam-vrataḥ sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā
jātānurāgo druta-chitta uchchaiḥ
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmāda-van nṛtyati loka-bāhyaḥ
(SB: 11.2.40)

“Chanting the Name of their beloved Lord, those who have dedicated their lives to Him develop deep loving attachment to Him. Their hearts melt and they loudly laugh, cry, shout, sing, and dance like madmen, unconcerned with the public.”

The power of Brahma

Mahāprabhu expressed Himself in the assembly of sannyāsīs to Prakāśānanda Saraswatī in this way. Then Prakāśānanda argued, “Yes. This is good. But you must hear *Vedānta-darśana*.”

Mahāprabhu humbly replied, “Yes sir. You are master. You can read it, and I will hear from you.”

Prakāśānanda began to speak about the *Vedānta-darśana*, and while he spoke Mahāprabhu did not say anything. Finally Prakāśānanda asked, “Can You understand anything I am saying?”

Mahāprabhu replied, “By the mercy of My Gurudev I can understand the meanings of the sūtras from the *Vedānta-darśana* that you are reading. But I cannot understand the commentary you are giving.”

Prakāśānanda said, “What? You cannot understand my commentary?”

Mahāprabhu said, “No. I cannot understand, that is, I think what you are saying is wrong.”

Prakāśānanda began to debate, “Why? Why do You think it is wrong?”

Mahāprabhu said, “You are saying that the final attainment given in the *Vedānta-darśana* is nirākār, nirviśeṣ Brahma—formless, impersonal Brahma. But this is not true. I feel in My heart that Brahma has power, form, and beauty. And not only do I feel this in My heart; everyone who mixes with Me also feels it. So I must conclude that Brahma has a divine form and divine qualities. I also think that if Kṛṣṇa is merciful to you, then you will feel it also.”

In this way Mahāprabhu expressed His heart and through that explained to Prakāśānanda Saraswatī how Śaṅkar Āchārya’s interpretation of the *Vedānta-darśana* is wrong. After this Prakāśānanda was defeated. He held his tongue and the debate was finished. Even though he was defeated by Mahāprabhu, after the debate was finished, Prakāśānanda thought, “Oh! Mahāprabhu, how humble He is.”

“Why am I sitting on this throne?”

The meeting of Mahāprabhu and Prakāśānanda Saraswatī passed in this way. Another day Prakāśānanda saw Śrī Chaitanyadev going to take His bath in the Ganges. Mahāprabhu was dancing on His way, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with a crowd of people dancing along behind Him. Prakāśānanda was stunned to see Mahāprabhu’s saṅkīrtan. From far away Prakāśānanda saw Mahāprabhu dancing in Kṛṣṇa-prema with so many pious souls in saṅkīrtan in the middle of the road. He was very attracted, and thought, “Oh! I need this actually! What have I been doing my whole life? I have been a sampradāya guru for so long, but I see now that I need what this young man has. He is following His Guru’s order and has become intoxicated with a mood of divine ecstasy. He dances and chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra as tears pour from His eyes. His whole body trembles and He perspires. All ecstatic symptoms appear in His body. He is so happy and joyful. What am I doing sitting in the chair of an āchārya?”

The supreme wealth

After seeing Mahāprabhu’s divine form in saṅkīrtan Prakāśānanda was heavily convinced that he could not remain in his position. Prakāśānanda thought that he would talk to Chaitanyadev when he saw the Lord again. Later when he saw Mahāprabhu coming down the road again chanting in a dancing mood, Prakāśānanda fell at Mahāprabhu’s lotus feet and took Mahāprabhu’s foot dust on his head. He said, “Oh! I am very foolish. You have everything and I have nothing. All ecstasy, joy, and happiness abide in Your body, and Your eyes show that. I have been practising jñāna-yoga for so long, but what have I got? Nothing. I have got nothing. I need Your mercy. You are the embodiment of Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan. You must be that, otherwise my mind could not have been attracted to You. And You must be Kṛṣṇa. You are distributing Kṛṣṇa

consciousness to everyone, and it is not possible for anyone to do this except Kṛṣṇa Himself. Only Kṛṣṇa has the power to do that, so You must be nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa.” In this way Prakāśānanda took shelter at the lotus feet of Mahāprabhu.

Mahāprabhu said, “What are you doing? You are a sampradāya guru.”

Prakāśānanda prayed, “Prabhu, please do not cheat me now. I feel it is necessary to surrender to You, and I feel You are distributing the supreme wealth to all jīva-souls. Please do not deceive me now.”

Inconceivable conversion

There is a verse of Śrīla Bilvamaṅgal Ṭhākura which expresses the heart of Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī at this time:

advaita-vīthī-pathikair upāsyāḥ
svānanda-simhāsana-labdha-dīkṣāḥ
śaṭhena kenāpi vyaṁ haṭhena
dāsī-kṛtā gopa-vadhū-viṭena

(Śrīla Bilvamaṅgal Ṭhākura)

“I was a Brahma-jñānī, and I was following the conception of so ‘ham: ‘I am Brahma.’ No one could defeat me or convince me of anything otherwise. I was happily situated with full regard in the conception of advaita-mārg [monism]. I was the worshipped headmaster of advaita-mārg, the guru of the sampradāya. I held the highest chair, and I sat on my throne in great satisfaction. But then all of a sudden Kṛṣṇa, the Gopavadhū-lampaṭ (cunning playful cowherd boy) attracted my mind with His qualities, beauty, glory, and love. By attracting my mind (śaṭhena) He tricked me and made me His maidservant. Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that He forcibly took my heart and engaged it in the service of the gopīs. He has not only made me His maidservant; He has captured my heart with His divine Pastimes and made me fall flat on the ground.”

This is Bilvamaṅgal Ṭhākura’s heart expression, and Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī’s heart expression is very similar: “Suddenly

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came to Kashi and attracted my mind. He smashed my advaita (monistic) conception and made me His servant.”

It is greatly inconceivable to think that Prakāśānanda Saraswatī was transformed by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in this way, but already it has happened. Prakāśānanda Saraswatī clasped the lotus feet of Mahāprabhu and apologised: “I have made a great offence to You. You are doing what is actually necessary for everyone. Please give Your Hari-nām to me.” In this way Prakāśānanda Saraswatī re-took initiation (dikṣā) from Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

Through this example we can understand that it is not necessary to read the Vedānta or the Vedas or anything, and that it is not necessary to imagine or focus on anything external. In Kali-yuga it is only necessary to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa without offence under the guidance of our Gurudev. The proper and best ideal for everyone is to follow the order given by our Gurudev. We may not know how much we will be able to do that, but with our full energy—heart and soul—we must try. If we can proceed in that way without offence a good result will come to us. There is no doubt.

Service beyond surrender

In His conversation with Rāmānanda Rāy in *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu rejected the famous verse from *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66): *sarva-dharmān parityajya Mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explained to Arjuna many things on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. For our benefit He explained karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, abhyāsa-yoga, bhakti-yoga, and so on. Then at the conclusion of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa said,

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ
(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*: 18.66)

“You must avoid non-religion, and religion also. Exclusively take shelter at My lotus feet. If any sinful reactions come to you I will take care of them. Have no fear.”

This is the first and main task of our spiritual life. If we can take shelter at Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet then Kṛṣṇa will fully take our charge. Everyone generally thinks that this is the supreme, conclusive verse of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. But when Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu summarily rejects this verse, we are confused. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu asked Rāmānanda Rāy about the ultimate goal of life, and step by step Rāmānanda Rāy offered progressive conclusions: varṇāśram-dharma, karma-miśra-bhakti, jñāna-miśra-bhakti, yoga-miśra-bhakti, and so on. Mahāprabhu summarily rejected them all, including this celebrated verse of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*. Who can explain the cause of this? Only an expert like Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. I once asked Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, “Why did Mahāprabhu summarily reject this verse?”



Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained, “This verse advises one to take shelter at Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Up to this point it is very nice advice, but what will one do once one has surrendered at Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet? That is not explained in this verse. Mahāprabhu taught

exclusive devotion—surrendered life with service—but in this verse of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* there is no explanation of how to lead a life of service. For that reason Mahāprabhu rejected it.”

Surrendered and alive with mercy

Later in their conversation Rāmānanda Rāy presented another verse to Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu which offered an explanation of how one can begin to actively lead a life of surrendered service to Kṛṣṇa:

jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir
ye prāyaśo 'jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyām

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 10.14.3)

This verse explains, “Throw away whatever knowledge you have acquired prior to surrendering! *Jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā!* Your mundane knowledge has no place in the plane of transcendental devotion. A surrendered soul should throw out not only his previous knowledge but also all attempts for acquiring any further mundane knowledge. Then he can submit himself fully and live a life of real devotion. This is the vital point, ‘*Namanta eva jīvanti*: be surrendered and alive with mercy. Fully surrender to Kṛṣṇa and chant His Holy Name.’

“*Sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir*: you can stay in the jungle, or a house, or an ashram or the ocean, or anywhere; that is not a problem. Anywhere at any moment you can engage yourself physically, mentally, and verbally in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s service. This means chanting the Lord’s Holy Name, and through that *ye prāyaśo 'jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyām*: the Lord Himself will be attracted and bestow His mercy upon you.

“But *san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām*: the source of your spiritual connection with Kṛṣṇa and your practice of service to Him is the *satām* (sādhu), and without the sādhu’s connection you cannot connect with Kṛṣṇa, satisfy Kṛṣṇa, or fully attract

His mercy. What you hear from the pure devotee, the sādhu, is the food with which you are alive in Kṛṣṇa consciousness; what you receive from the sādhu is your very spiritual existence.”

Nectar spilling everywhere

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj composed a verse that beautifully explains how we connect with the Lord and His service through the sādhu. This verse is the dearest and highest verse for me in life. Still so much light comes to me from this verse, and with that I am fully satisfied.

śrī-śrīmad-bhagavat-padāmbuja-madhu-svādotsavaiḥ ṣaṭ-padair
nikṣiptā madhu-bindavaś cha parito bhraṣṭa mukhāt guñjitaiḥ
yatnaiḥ kiñchid ihāhṛtām nija-para-śreyo ’rthinā tan mayā
bhūyo-bhūya ito rajamsi pada-samlagnāni teṣaṁ bhaje

(Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam: 10.14)

When Śrīla Guru Mahārāj composed and finished his *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam* he wrote this verse confessing, “What I have presented in *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam* is not my own property. I have actually only collected this ecstatic property from the devotees.”

His expression is: “The super devotees are like bees always tasting the ecstatic, honey-like nectar of the lotus feet of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the cause of all causes (*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*), the Supreme Controller (Parameśvar), the origin who has no origin (*anādi-ādīḥ*). As a lotus is always full of nectar, so bee-like devotees are always collecting the nectar from the unlimited ocean of nectar that is the Lord’s lotus feet and tasting that through their super mood of devotion. As they taste that nectar they sing the glories of that nectar and their Master, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

“If anyone tastes honey and sings at the same time, then naturally a few drops of honey must fall down from his mouth as remnants. Devotees who ecstatically glorify their Lord—who are always drinking, and drinking, and drinking, and intoxicatedly glorifying their Lord—always spill many drops of nectar from their mouths in all directions as they dance and sing.



“Here in this book, *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam*, I have collected those many drops of eternal, transcendental ecstasy that are falling from the mouths of the Lord’s devotees as their mercy. For both myself and you all I have collected those falling drops of nectar and made a plate for everyone to taste that nectar and be supremely benefitted. I am so grateful and indebted to all the devotees who glorify their Lord and taste the nectar of His lotus feet that here at the conclusion of my work, *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam*, I now bow down to all of them again and again. *Bhūyo-bhūya ito rajaṁsi pada-saṁlagnāni teṣaṁ bhaje*: again and again I glorify the lotus feet of all of these devotees: the devotees who collect nectar directly from the Lord’s lotus feet, the

devotees who drink the nectar collected from the Lord’s lotus feet, the devotees who catch and distribute the drops of nectar which fall from the mouths of the devotees drinking the nectar collected from the Lord’s lotus feet, and the devotees who accept that nectar which is offered to them after it has been collected, tasted, dropped, caught, and distributed. I take upon my head the dust of the feet of all of these sincere devotees, whose hearts are filled with divine hankering.”

In this way Śrīla Guru Mahārāj finished his composition *Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam*. More explanation of this verse is possible, but shortly I have explained something. Through this you can understand the explanation of śaraṅāgati that Śrīla Guru Mahārāj has given in his book, as well as the conclusion of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in His conversation with Rāmānanda Rāy: *jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām* (SB: 10.14.3), surrendered devotional life means living on the remnants of the devotees who live on the Lord’s remnants, living on the mercy of the devotees who live on the mercy they receive from the Lord.

vande nanda-vraja-strīṅām
pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśaḥ
yāsām hari-kathodgītām
punāti bhuvana-trayam

(SB: 10.47.63)

“I constantly offer my obeisance
to the Vraja-gopīs, whose
singing of Kṛṣṇa’s glory purifies
the three worlds.”

Satisfying Kṛṣṇa’s devotees

The Lord’s devotees are not only worshippable; they are most worthy of our service. Lord Śiva has explained the significance of serving the Lord’s devotees.

ārādhnanānām sarveṣām viṣṇor ārādhanam param
tasmāt parataram devi tadiyānām samarchanam

(Padma-purāṇa)

Once Parvatī Devī asked her Lord, “Who is supremely worshippable?”

Lord Śiva said, “Viṣṇu is supremely worshippable. What question is there about that?”

Parvatī Devī thought, “I am not worshipping Lord Viṣṇu, I am serving my Lord, Śiva.” A little doubt came to her, “Is what I am doing right or wrong?”

Lord Śiva saw her face and said, “I am not saying I am a devotee of Viṣṇu, but that *is* actually who I am. So you have nothing to fear.”

Parvatī Devī thought, “My Lord, Śiva, is undoubtedly worshipping Viṣṇu. I am worshipping him. So that is the best for me.”

Tasmāt parataram Devī Tadiyānām samarchanam: Lord Śiva’s expression was, “Satisfying Viṣṇu’s devotees is even better than worshipping Viṣṇu Himself.”

Kṛṣṇa personally explains that service to His devotees is the best way to serve Him:

ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha na me bhaktās cha te janāḥ
mad-bhaktānām cha ye bhaktās te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ
(Ādi-purāṇa)

Kṛṣṇa says, “I do not consider someone who thinks, ‘I am Kṛṣṇa’s devotee’ to really be My devotee. He is My devotee, but I do not consider him so much. I consider someone who is a devotee of My devotee to be My real devotee.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj very nicely explained Kṛṣṇa’s mood in this verse. Kṛṣṇa’s feeling is, “The flow of My mercy is always going everywhere to all of My devotees, but My devotees are constantly serving Me twenty-four hours a day and never giving Me a chance to worship or satisfy them. I always feel I am indebted to My devotees for their loving service, and when I do not get a chance to serve them I feel hopeless. When I see My devotees’ devotee serving My devotees I specially bestow My mercy upon them, and in that way I am able to serve My devotees.

“I also consider the service of My devotees’ devotee most valuable; the conditioned souls are suffering so much in the material world, and My devotees’ devotees try to collect those suffering souls and engage them in My service through their Gurudev, My devotee. I am always sad to see the conditioned souls’ sadness, and I am eager to serve My devotee. So I am



Lord Śiva and Parvatī Devī

especially interested in bestowing My mercy upon My devotees' devotees, to nourish them in their distribution of the service of My devotee. That dispels all the suffering of the conditioned souls and satisfies My own desire to satisfy My devotees."

In this way we can understand that serving Kṛṣṇa's devotees is the best way to serve, and that our service to Kṛṣṇa's devotees easily reaches Kṛṣṇa. If we are real worshippers of Kṛṣṇa, then we must try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by serving His devotees.

The key to revelation

Devotee: Gurudev, what do you expect from me as your disciple?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: As possible by you, always chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra without offence and try to serve Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Gāndharvikā Giridhārī. If you have the opportunity to serve Them, do not waste that. Always remember your spiritual life by practising the nine forms of bhakti-yoga given in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*,

śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam
archanaṁ vandanam dāsyam sakhyaṁ ātma-nivedanam

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23)

iti pumsārpitā viṣṇau
bhaktiś chen nava-lakṣaṇā
kriyeta bhagavaty addhā
tan manye 'dhītam uttamam
(SB: 7.5.23-24)

"Hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, worshipping, praying, considering oneself a servant, considering oneself a friend, and surrendering the self—if devotion consisting of these nine practices is first offered to the Supreme Lord and then directly performed I consider that the greatest learning."

Among these, the process of śravaṇ-kīrtan is best: hear from Guru-Vaiṣṇava and chant the glories of Guru-Vaiṣṇava, the Lord, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. Serve your Gurudev and your Śikṣā-gurus, the Vaiṣṇavas around you. If you proceed in that way you must be benefitted. *Śravaṇa-kīrtana-jale karaye sechana* (Cc: Madhya, 19.152): śravaṇ-kīrtan in the association of the devotees will best nourish us. If we hear and chant the Lord's glories in the association of the sādhus, the illusory environment will not be able to attack us. But we must hear from a proper Vaiṣṇava and chant without making Vaiṣṇava-aparādh. If we can proceed in that way with good association the result of our practice will increase ten times more, or maybe a hundred times more.



Śrī Govinda Mahārāj installed Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Gāndharvikā Giridhārī at Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Sevā Ashram in Soquel, California, and revealed that They are nondifferent from the Deities Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur installed at Śrī Chaitanya Maṭh in Śrī Dhām Māyāpur.

Our practice in devotional life is always under the instruction of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur. Sometimes there is a little difference between Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur and Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur, but Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave us our method according to Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur’s line. We follow that. What method others may follow I cannot say, but we follow the method given by our Guru Mahārāj.

ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Pūrva-vibhāga, 2.234)

“Kṛṣṇa’s Name, Form, Qualities, and Pastimes cannot be grasped by our mundane senses, but They can be revealed to us through our service attitude.”

In this verse we find the key to Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur’s method, which Śrīla Guru Mahārāj followed and I am the example of and witness to. Prabhupād Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur gave us the line that a service attitude (*sevonmukhe*) means the service of Guru–Vaiṣṇava. His line is that Kṛṣṇa’s Divine Name and



Prabhupād Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur

so on will be revealed in your heart (*svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*) through the service of Guru and Vaiṣṇava. Many Vaiṣṇavas may read many śāstras and follow many different religious processes in their life, but our line is that nothing is necessary except a life of service to Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of a proper Guru and Vaiṣṇava. We need only to try to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness heart and soul under the guidance of a proper Guru or Vaiṣṇava. In that way we will proceed to our destiny in the plane of dedication, beyond the planes of exploitation and renunciation. Serving under the guidance of Guru-Vaiṣṇava brings us into that plane of dedication.

The Supreme Lord is immediately bound within the heart by the fortunate souls who desire to hear Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (from the mouth of the Vaiṣṇava).

sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.1.2*)

Through surrender to Kṛṣṇa's devotee gradually all property will come to us. Very easily and very suddenly all spiritual quality and qualification, which is very rare to receive, will appear in your heart. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.80.34) says, "Guru-śuśrūṣayā yathā: service to Guru-Vaiṣṇava is our line of progress." When we have the proper mood of surrender then we will engage in the practices of devotion under the guidance of a proper sādhu.

Connecting with the pure flow

Ataḥ Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-Nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ: we cannot see Kṛṣṇa's divine form or hear His Divine Name. If we try to go to Kṛṣṇa directly, overstepping the sādhu, we will never see Kṛṣṇa's real form. We will only go down into the garbage of illusion (sahajiyāism) again and again. It is necessary to understand what the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa is, and what it is not, if we actually want to chant the Holy Name. From our mundane position we do not understand Kṛṣṇa, but He can reveal Himself in our heart if we try to connect with Him with love, affection, chastity, and sincerity through the proper channel of His devotee.

The Holy Name appears in this world as the transcendental vibration form of the Lord, and that transcendental vibration appears through the channel of Guru-paramparā, through the heart of the Sādhu-Vaiṣṇava. Only a pure mood of devotion can inspire the Holy Name to descend, so if we connect ourselves with a devoted servitor of the Lord who has the pure mood of chanting, we can also come into connection with the Lord's Holy Name.

If we can receive the Holy Name from our Gurudev and remember the mood and process in which our Gurudev and the great Vaiṣṇavas chanted the Holy Name, then the Holy Name will gradually reveal Himself in our hearts. On our own we are not qualified to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra, but through the connection, inspiration, and guidance of the sādhu the mood and qualification to perfectly chant the Holy Name will come to us.

Proper conception

Śrīla Gaura Kiśor Dās Bābājī Mahārāj was a very highly elevated sādhu with a very renounced mentality. He was always deeply connected with the Lord's eternal Pastimes in the transcendental world and feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa. He lived in isolation from society and sometimes would call out to the Lord spontaneously. He was a pure Vaiṣṇava who chanted the pure Holy Name.

Once someone heard the glories of Bābājī Mahārāj and began to imitate him. That person built a hut near Bābājī Mahārāj and began copying the practices and activities of Bābājī Mahārāj. When Bābājī Mahārāj heard of this he said that this man should not become an imitationist. He said to him, "You are chanting the Lord's Name and living in a hut, but you are not really chanting to please the Lord. You are seeking name and fame (pratiṣṭhā) in this world. You are trying to become famous as a perfected saintly person (siddha-mahāpuruṣ), and for that purpose you are chanting and showing yourself in this way.



Śrīla Gaura Kiśor Dās
Bābājī Mahārāj

Your activities will neither be successful nor give you proper devotional results.

“If an unmarried woman goes to a labour room to produce a child and shows so many symptoms of giving birth, will a child be born? Never! First a woman is married, then she mixes with her husband, then she becomes pregnant, then a baby begins to grow in her womb, and then, after 280 days, she will produce a child. When the time comes for the woman to give birth it will not be necessary to tell her, ‘Now you should go to the labour room.’ Like an unmarried woman going to a labour room you have foolishly moved into a hut and begun to show to others that you are chanting, ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa.’ You may show many symptoms of ecstasy or renunciation, but your activities will not produce anything real. You don’t have any real connection with Kṛṣṇa or Kṛṣṇa-nām: you have not served any of Kṛṣṇa’s devotees or understood their devotional mood of chanting. You are only pursuing your mundane fame.”

This is a very hard but also very clear example for us. If we are sincere and actually want to satisfy Kṛṣṇa through our devotional life, then we will always try to serve Him under the guidance of our Gurudev in the association of sādhus.

Following versus imitating

We must approach Kṛṣṇa and chant His Holy Name in the proper channel. There is a systematic way for us to proceed in our spiritual life:

ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā
tato 'nartha-nivṛtṭiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā ruchis tataḥ

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Pūrva-vibhāga, 4.15)

First firm faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness (śraddhā) is necessary. Through our sincerity and śraddhā we will get the association of a proper sādhu, not an imitation sādhu. If we do not serve a real Guru or a real Vaiṣṇava we will be cheated sometimes.

athāsaktis tato bhāvas
tataḥ premābhyudañchati
sādhakānām ayam premṇaḥ
prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ

(Brs: 1.4.15–16)

First faith, then association with
sādhus, then engagement in
service, then the eradication of
evils, then constancy, then
taste, then attachment, then
ecstasy, and then love. These are
the stages in the awakening
of a practitioner’s love.

A real sādhu serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, and through a real sādhu's association our faith, service attitude, and devotional property will increase. We will be inspired by the sādhu to serve Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day. But *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* instructs us that we should not immediately serve the Lord in the same way that the sādhu does:

īśvarāṇām vachaḥ satyaṁ tathaivācharitaṁ kvachit
teṣāṁ yat sva-vacho-yuktaṁ buddhimāns tat samācharet

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: 10.33.31)

“Do not imitate what the sādhu does. A sādhu may do something that is helpful for someone in a higher stage but not helpful for someone in a lower stage. Sādhu-saṅga means trying to practise our spiritual life under the guidance of a sādhu. Sādhu-saṅga means following the instructions given by the sādhu, not imitating the sādhu's behaviour.”

Love and affection

If someone can properly follow the sādhu's instructions and proceed under the sādhu's guidance, then they will be engaged in bhajana-kriyā, real spiritual practising life. Through proper bhajana-kriyā we will come to the stage of anartha-nivṛtti, the removal of our unwanted habits. In the stage of anartha-nivṛtti our hankering for mundane things will leave us, our senses will become controlled, and our conditioned nature will be removed. Anartha-nivṛtti will not happen, however, unless we proceed in our bhajana-kriyā with strong faith, love, and affection.

For anartha-nivṛtti to come to us, love and affection for other practitioners is necessary. Practising life is ‘suffering life’—practising life is not an easy life. If we do not have love and affection for other practitioners it will be too painful and we will not be able to proceed successfully. Why should we suffer more than we already are in this mundane world? We should be humble, be tolerant, give honour to others, and make everyone our

friend. In this way we can proceed happily in our practising life. Someone may come and abuse us, “Oh! You are Vaiṣṇavas. You are very bad. You are doing this and that.” But we will not be influenced by their comments if we have love and affection for our practising life and other practitioners. Someone may make comments, but we will proceed systematically through sincere and chaste service with love and affection.

Beyond māyā’s jurisdiction

If we engage in our spiritual practices of chanting the Holy Name, serving the sādhus, cleaning the temple, doing parikramā of the temple, and so on, with the desire to fulfil the instructions of our guardians—Sādhu, Guru, and Vaiṣṇava—with love, affection, and faith, then anartha-nivṛtti will automatically come to us. That is real exclusive devotional practice. Thereafter the stages of niṣṭhā (firm service), and ruchi (taste) will come to us.

Until the stage of ruchi no one is in a safe position; there is still possibility of falling down. During the stage of bhajana-kriyā we cannot say someone is really qualified. And even after the stage of anartha-nivṛtti, when material attachment has gone, we are still bound by the reactions to our previous sinful activities. Only when ruchi comes is everything cleared. Māyā thinks, “Aho! I must run away. He is not under my jurisdiction.” When ruchi, loving attachment for the Lord’s service, comes into our heart, then we will be safe.

Seeing the Supreme, a wise soul’s taste for the mundane disappears.

raso ’py asya param dṛṣṭvā nivartate

(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 2.59)

When we come to the stage of ruchi we will feel, “Oh! This is very beautiful and without this I cannot live.” When such taste will come to us we will be fully situated in devotion. Then all the auspicious symptoms of bhāva, prīti, prema, and so on will gradually appear in our heart.

In this way we understand the teachings of our Guru Mahārāj and Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur: “Serve Kṛṣṇa, serve Guru, serve

the Vaiṣṇava, and serve the Mission of our Gurudev. Gurudev gives us service that is satisfying to Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is satisfied when we serve Guru-Vaiṣṇava.”

Emotion and devotion

Question: Can you please explain how we can avoid confusing emotion with devotion?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Sometimes we are practising and serving emotionally. That means we are blindly following our mind’s idea of what is good and bad. Sometimes our mind tells us something is good and we follow that idea of our mind. Acting in that way we do many things emotionally, but those activities may only be śubha-karma (pious acts). They will not be actual devotion.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave an example: Gurudev may perform pūjā and order us, “Bring some water.” We will then bring some water to Gurudev, but Gurudev may suddenly change his order and say, “Oh, water is not necessary now. Bring some flowers.”

If we say to Gurudev, “You ordered me to bring some water. I have followed your order to bring you water” and we give Gurudev that water, then our action will be śubha-karma. It will not be devotion (bhakti).

With primary enthusiasm we may want to do more and more service to Guru-Vaiṣṇava. But in the primary stage we won’t be attentive to see whether our service is appropriate, to see whether it is actually pleasing to Guru-Vaiṣṇava, to see whether it is what they actually want. In the primary stage we do not consider these things and only think that our own activity will take us to a higher position. We do not consider how and why the advice of Guru-Vaiṣṇava is coming to us.

Actual devotion means trying to satisfy Guru-Vaiṣṇava according to their instructions. A proper and attentive mood of devotion is to always keep our eyes open to see if what we are doing is really satisfying to our Master or not. Gurudev has told us, “Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.” But if I am in a place where Gurudev

is discussing something important with some Vaiṣṇavas, and I begin making noise, “Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare” then that is not chanting in a mood of devotion. Devotional mood means considering whether Gurudev is happy or not with our activity. It is true that Gurudev has ordered us, “Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa loudly”, but it is always necessary to consider the place, time, and circumstances, and then wisely try to do service. This is devotion.

Heart-melting association

A proper Guru or Vaiṣṇava has no self-interest or self-satisfying tendency. Such a real devotee has no interest in being served. Rather he is always engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service. If we follow the service-order and guidance of a proper Vaiṣṇava to engage in service of Kṛṣṇa or His devotees, then our action will enter the category of devotion through that proper Vaiṣṇava’s qualification. Devotion begins by offering ourselves to Kṛṣṇa by taking a vow that we will not do anything that is not in service to Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa is transcendental, and we cannot offer anything to Him directly. We do not have that capacity or qualification. We must offer our service to Kṛṣṇa through Guru–Vaiṣṇava—through the devotees who have the capacity to directly serve Kṛṣṇa. When you serve Kṛṣṇa under their guidance all responsibility for Kṛṣṇa’s service goes to them, and all the proper results of service come to you. Kṛṣṇa knows you are serving Guru–Vaiṣṇava for His satisfaction, not for their personal interest, so Kṛṣṇa must be satisfied with you.

Sometimes we may be going on in our practising life but feel that we are not progressing. We may be engaged in service and chanting the Lord’s Holy Name but feel that our faith is not becoming stronger, joy is not coming into our heart, and our mind is not becoming fulfilled by our devotional mood. At that time we must try to get the association of a good Vaiṣṇava.

We must search for a real practitioner who is practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness twenty-four hours a day and get his association.

dadāti pratigṛhṇāti guhyam ākhyāti pṛchchhati
bhuṅkte bhojayate chaiva ṣaḍ-vidhaṁ prīti-lakṣaṇam

(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta: 4)

Sādhu-saṅga means associating with the sādhu like he is our own relative, associating with him in an affectionate, regardful way. This means giving him gifts (materials for service),



feeding him, asking him questions, taking his advice, and so on. Through this type of affectionate association with the sādhu we will be able to understand and feel why we are not inspired in our practising life. If there is any offensive mood within us, the good association of the sādhu will wash it away. The association of a great sādhu can melt our hard heart and inspire us with a mood of real dedication. When we see the sādhu engaged in the Lord's service twenty-four hours a day, our hearts will become joyful. We will feel much inspiration to follow him and connect with the devotional plane ourselves.

Although Kṛṣṇa's Name, Form, Qualities, and Pastimes cannot be grasped by the material senses, They manifest themselves on the tongue and to the other senses through one's service attitude.

sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: Pūrva-vibhāga, 2.234)

Devotion is so sweet, and gradually in the finest, most affectionate, and lovely way it will reveal itself in our heart by the grace of the Lord's devotee. Through the service and grace of the Lord's devotees we will see the Lord's divine play expressed everywhere. Through our tendency to serve, and our service to Guru-Vaiṣṇava, we will be cleanly and clearly qualified. Nowhere will we not see the sweet, affectionate, and lovely movements of the Lord's transcendental service world.

Recognising Devotion

Question: How can we recognise a Guru or Vaiṣṇava? How can we know who we should serve under and take guidance from?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: It is very difficult to recognise a Vaiṣṇava.

vaiṣṇava chinite nāre devera śakati
mui kona chhāra śiśu alpa-mati

“Even the demigods cannot recognise a Vaiṣṇava. So how shall I ever recognise one?”

It is very difficult to recognise a Vaiṣṇava, but we can have some idea about who Vaiṣṇavas are through the definitions of a Vaiṣṇava given in the scriptures. *Viṣṇur asya Devatā iti Vaiṣṇava*: someone whose worshippable Lord is Viṣṇu is a Vaiṣṇava. This is a standard definition. In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave a variety of definitions of a Vaiṣṇava:

“ataeva yāra mukhe eka kṛṣṇa-nāma
sei ta' vaiṣṇava, kariha tāhāra sammāna”

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 15.111*)



*The 1932 Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭh
Vraja Maṇḍal Parikramā
party, led by Śrīla Bhakti
Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.*

“Someone who has once chanted Kṛṣṇa’s Name is a Vaiṣṇava.
He should be respected.”

**“kṛṣṇa-nāma nirantara yāhāra vadane
sei vaiṣṇava-śreṣṭha, bhaja tāhāra charaṇe
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 16.72)**

“Someone who constantly chants Kṛṣṇa’s Name is a great
Vaiṣṇava. He should be served.”

**yāhāra darśane mukhe āise kṛṣṇa-nāma
tāhāre jāniha tumi ‘vaiṣṇava-pradhāna’
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 16.74)**

“Someone whose association makes others chant Kṛṣṇa’s Name
is the greatest Vaiṣṇava.”

After Prabhupād Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura travelled throughout all of Vṛndāvan on parikramā, he slapped his forehead and said, “I am so unfortunate. I have come to Vṛndāvan to see the Vaiṣṇavas, but I have not seen even one Vaiṣṇava.”

How could he say this? Everyone in Vṛndāvan is a Vaiṣṇava; everyone there worships Kṛṣṇa and at least sometimes says, “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa”. There is some Vaiṣṇavism within everyone there. Through Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākur’s expression we can understand that it is necessary to realise that there is a gradation among Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākur meant that he did not see a pure Vaiṣṇava on his Vṛndāvan parikramā.

If we see that someone has any of the qualities of a Vaiṣṇava, then we must consider that he is a Vaiṣṇava and give proper honour to him. We can first consider that anyone who leaves the association of other persons and joins in the association or ashram of the Vaiṣṇavas practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness has some Vaiṣṇava quality. And if someone who comes is recognised by Gurudev or an authority as a Vaiṣṇava, then we must consider that he is a Vaiṣṇava. Whenever Gurudev says that someone is a qualified Vaiṣṇava, then we must believe that and surrender to that qualified Vaiṣṇava.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj also explained to us other ways of practically understanding who is a Vaiṣṇava. He gave many examples: someone whom the Vaiṣṇavas are happy to see is a Vaiṣṇava; someone who is happy to see the Vaiṣṇavas is a Vaiṣṇava; someone who is happy to serve Vaiṣṇavas is a Vaiṣṇava, and so on. There are many varieties of definitions of a Vaiṣṇava.

Recognition and respect

There is a very nice story in the *Mahābhārata* about the difficulty of recognising a Vaiṣṇava and the practice of respecting someone who is recognised as a Vaiṣṇava by an authority. After the great Rājasūya sacrifice, Kṛṣṇa, as well as many munis and ṛṣis, took prasādam at the mansion of the Pāṇḍavas. Lastly, Kṛṣṇa told the assembly, “When this Rājasūya sacrifice has been properly completed, a bell will ring.”

Bhīmasen heard Kṛṣṇa’s statement and took it seriously. When the sacrifice seemed to be finished and everyone had been satisfied with prasādam, the bell did not ring. Bhīmasen

asked Kṛṣṇa, “Why is the bell not ringing? You said it would ring automatically when the sacrifice was successfully completed. Have we done something wrong?”

Kṛṣṇa said, “You have served prasādam to so many people, but you have not served all the Vaiṣṇavas. There is a Vaiṣṇava who lives in the jungle under a tree not too far from your mansion. He was not invited to the sacrifice, and he has not taken prasādam. Because he has not been served, there is some fault in your sacrifice, and it cannot be considered fully complete.”

Bhīmasen and Arjuna understood that they needed to serve this Vaiṣṇava, but they knew that on their own they could not recognise him. Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa, “We cannot recognise who this Vaiṣṇava is on our own. Please come with us and show us who he is.”

Kṛṣṇa accompanied Bhīmasen and Arjuna to the jungle and showed them, “A great Vaiṣṇava lives near that tree in that broken thatched hut. He lives near you, but he does not come to your festivals. He has no hankering for anything mundane, even food.”

Arjuna and Bhīmasen went up to his hut and with folded palms said, “O Prabhu, please come and take prasādam at our sacrifice.”

The Vaiṣṇava said, “Oh! You are Arjuna and Bhīmasen. You have come to invite me, and it would be very offensive for me to not accept your invitation.”

He responded very humbly in this way. Bhīmasen and Arjuna said, “Kṛṣṇa Himself has said that you are a Vaiṣṇava. Please come and accept something from us.”

That Vaiṣṇava never went anywhere or took anything from anyone, but when he was invited by Arjuna, Bhīmasen, and Kṛṣṇa Himself, he accepted and came to take prasādam.

Draupadī was a very expert cook, and she prepared many varieties of food. She offered the Vaiṣṇava very opulent

prasādam. Others fanned him and gave him much nourishment. When he took the prasādam, he mixed all the different preparations together and took them all at once.

After he left, the bell still did not ring. Bhīmasen again asked Kṛṣṇa, “What happened? You said that if we fed that Vaiṣṇava, everything would be finished and fulfilled.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “You must have made some offence. You have called him and fed him, but you must have somehow made an offence to him.”

Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna, “When you called him and fed him did you make any offence to him?”

Arjuna said, “No. I do not remember making any offence.”

Bhīmasen also said, “No. I do not remember making any offence.”

Yudhiṣṭhir and everyone else present also said, “I do not remember seeing any offence made to him. I don’t know what offence has been made.”

Finally, Kṛṣṇa asked His dear friend Draupadī, “Draupadī, have you done anything?”

Draupadī confessed, “I cooked so many varieties of prasādam for him, and when I saw him mix all of them together, I thought that he did not know how to properly accept this opulent prasādam. My thinking in this way may have been an offence.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “Yes. You are right. This was the offence. He should be called and fed again.”

The next day Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna went and called the Vaiṣṇava again. They brought him to the mansion and fed him again. When he took prasādam the second time, the bell began to ring, and the sacrifice was complete. This story shows us that it is very difficult to recognise a Vaiṣṇava, and that it also may be difficult to respect him even when we are told that he is a Vaiṣṇava.



Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura

Praying to the Vaiṣṇavas

It is very essential to follow a pure Vaiṣṇava and happily try to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness under his guidance. Through our mundane knowledge we cannot understand who is a Vaiṣṇava and who is not. So we must pray to Kṛṣṇa, to Nityānanda Prabhu: “I do not know who my Guru is. I do not know who the Vaiṣṇavas are. Please reveal them to me. Please give me the association of a proper Guru and real Vaiṣṇavas.”

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura gave us very important advice about the position of the Vaiṣṇava in one of his songs. He explained how to recognise the Vaiṣṇava and receive his mercy:

āmi ta’ durbhaga ati vaiṣṇava nā chini
more kṛpā karibena vaiṣṇava āpani

(*Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru: Maṅgalāccharaṇa, 6*)

“I am so unfortunate, unqualified, and insignificant: I do not have the qualification to understand who is a Vaiṣṇava or Guru. I do not have the capacity to discover who is a Vaiṣṇava and who is not. This is a very difficult situation for me. My only hope is that the Vaiṣṇavas are merciful; they are oceans of mercy (*kṛpā-sindhubhya eva cha*) and can give me proper consciousness of who is a Vaiṣṇava and who is not: they can reveal themselves to me. If the door of my good fortune will open, then the real Vaiṣṇava will be merciful to me, and I will be able to understand his position. If I am a good boy, a good man, and I am humble and tolerant, and I give honour to others, then I will automatically attract the real Vaiṣṇava and receive his mercy and blessings. If I proceed with humility and tolerance, and give honour to everyone, then I will automatically honour the real Vaiṣṇava, and he will choose me to be a servitor of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

It is through the quality of our own practice that we can attract the vision of the real Vaiṣṇava and receive his mercy, affection, and service connection.

Self-knowledge

The question of how to recognise a Vaiṣṇava is a very important question, and it is actually everyone's question. Here we find the answer in Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura's song, and it shows us that self-realisation is the best for us. If I want to be a Vaiṣṇava and associate with real Vaiṣṇavas, then I must ask myself, "Am I a Vaiṣṇava or not? Am I actually capable of associating with Vaiṣṇavas?" This type of self-examination is best for us.

Ātmānam viddhi: it is necessary to know your own self, to understand whether what you are doing, eating, and giving are really for the satisfaction of Guru and Vaiṣṇava. Self-knowledge, self-realisation, is best for us, and through that we will be promoted. If we are fully dedicated to the Lord, then help will come to us from His side. We must examine our own level of dedication. There is an Urdu or Arabian word, *sāltamāmi*, which means a calculated account of a year's debit and credit transactions. We must make a *sāltamāmi* of our own life: "Every day the sun rises and sets. What am I doing and giving each day during that time? Day by day is my practising life increasing or decreasing? Am I dedicated externally or internally?"

We must scrutinise what we are doing from morning to evening every day and make an account of that. It is necessary for us to realise how much good and bad was present within us in our previous days, and also to realise that whatever others are doing or will do is not so important for us. The biggest question for us must be what *we* are doing and what *we* are giving. If we can analyse ourselves in this way with a *sāltamāmi* every day, then we will become more perfect.

It is necessary for us to realise that we will get proper results in our spiritual life if we perfectly try to do our practice. It is no doubt difficult, but there is no other way to get out of the illusory environment. We must try as much as possible by us. It is necessary to see what is happening in our own lives. If we are not careful about our own activity, then we will be cheated.

Arise! Awake! Find a master and
learn from him. The wise say
the path is sharp as a razor's edge,
difficult to traverse, and
arduous (impossible to traverse
without a Guru).

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata
kṣurasya dhārā nīṣitā duratyayā
durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti

(Kaṭha-upaniṣad: 1.3.14)

We must awaken, arise, and practise our own spiritual life, even if the path may seem like a razor's edge. *Durgam pathas* means that our spiritual path may not be very easy to pass through and may even seem to be impassable. But we have no other alternative. So we must try and proceed.

Revitalising association

Question: Sometimes we get discouraged for one reason or another in our spiritual life. How can we best keep our enthusiasm strong?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: We must always follow the directions of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Then we will be enriched with humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others, and more and more our searching spirit will increase. It is necessary to develop within ourselves the qualities and qualifications for association with sādhus. Without humility we will not receive anything from others, without tolerance we will not be benefitted by others, and without giving honour to others we will always be disturbed. If we will try to cultivate these three qualities within ourselves, then quickly proper results will come to us.

bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta-
saṅgena parijāyate
sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ
sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅchitaiḥ
(Bṛhan-Nāradya-purana)

“Devotion arises through
the association of the Lord's
devotees. The soul attains
the association of devotees
through his previously
acquired sukṛti.”

Whatever spiritual wealth you have, that is your property. And whatever spiritual wealth I have, that is my property. If I want to increase my spiritual property then I will have to look to you and find what more you have than I. In this way the tendency to associate with and learn from others will grow within us through the quality of humility. This is the best process to get association.

If we can sincerely practise in this way we will get proper association with the Lord's servants. By the grace of Sādhu, Guru, and Vaiṣṇava our enthusiasm in spiritual life will increase more

and more. They are always giving us hope; they are never making us hopeless. Any situation may come before us, or we may commit any offence, but they are always giving us some hope and some service to the Lord. Our enthusiasm will grow through their association. Association is the best thing for conditioned souls to get more enthusiasm in their practising life.

We should not be frustrated. The ego is very bad. Ego destroys so many things. But our ego will go down if we cultivate and increase within ourselves the qualities of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others. I am seeing that ego destroys our enthusiasm. What can I do? I can only give advice. If anyone will follow it they must be benefitted. Ego is very dangerous for everyone, and to leave ego is very difficult.

Controlling ego

Question: Mahārāj, how can we recognise when we are suffering from false ego? How can we see ourselves under that influence? How do we know when we are displaying our false ego?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: It is only possible to recognise it through realisation. Suppose someone says to you, “This is your ego.” Your ego will not want to give that chance to them. But at that time if you will try to realise what they said and why they said it, if you try to realise how much there is something positive and beneficial for you in their statement, and how much is perhaps negative opposition, then you will be able to control your ego.

We have established ourselves within an egoistic position, so there is no other way our ego can be controlled than by our own realisation. Since the time when we were growing up we have chosen our own path and established ourselves upon our egoistic mountain. Only our own realisation can solve our problem, and it is best when our own realisation will come to us. Otherwise, if you have some faith in a particular person whom you consider superior to you, you can go to him and take his

advice. If you can take his advice wholeheartedly, then also your ego will go down. There is no other way. Good association is always beneficial for everyone. But our 'good association' must really be association that is good for us.

Realisation, faith, and prayer

Question: How do we know who we should associate with? How can we recognise good association?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: This is a very good question and a difficulty for everyone. We must consider that we have some realisation and that our realisation has some power. Through that we will try to understand what will be good for us and whose association will be beneficial for us.

First we will try to know about someone, "Does he have affection for me or not? Does he have love for me or not? Does he consider what will be good for me or not? Is he sober in his relations with others or not?" In this way we will try to understand something about someone from our side. But at the same time we will pray to our Lord, "Give me good association. I have no capacity to discover who will be very good association in my life." It is necessary to both pray to the Lord and have some realisation from within our own self. In this way, from both sides, we will try to recognise good association. Also, in another way, if you have full faith in someone, you can ask him directly, "Is this person good association for me or not? Is that person good association for me or not?" Then from him you will also get some help. These are the general guidelines.

Devotee: Mahārāj, I read that Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said, "My relationship with someone should be seen by that person's relationship with the Centre and the Centre's relationship with that person. That is, if my Gurudev has much affection for that person and that person has much affection for my Gurudev, then I will think that that person is good association for me."

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: A little difficulty will come from that idea when someone wants not temporary but permanent

association. Based on that idea someone's choice will not be perfect. Sometimes through illusion we are misguided, and we need to take advice from an affectionate and wise friend. He may be a Guru or a Vaiṣṇava, but he must have a neutral personality and pure Vaiṣṇava qualities. He must not be envious. He must always be trying to help others and not be trying to misguide others or pursue personal interests. A person of that type will be most helpful for us.

If we have full faith in Guru then we can ask Guru directly, "Will this be good for me or not?" If the Guru has a good idea about that, then that is very good. But we are not always in the association of Guru. So we also have to try to realise and understand what will be good and what will be bad for us. In this way, many are misguided, and in this way also, many are benefitted.

Non-enviousness

The main obstacle on our spiritual path is enviousness. Envy is very bad. I always see this, feel this, and am disturbed by it also. What shall I do? In the second verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* there is a short expression that is very important, sweet, and suitable for conditioned souls: *nirmatsarāṇām satām*. This expression gives light to everyone: "Be pure and free from enviousness. Appreciate others." This advice does not mean we should become pure like alloyed steel, but that we should become pure like gold. If we can make ourselves into generous, non-envious persons, then we will become pure like gold.

In this material world everything is moving up and down; everything is always shifting its position. Someone is becoming rich, someone is becoming poor; someone is becoming wise, someone is becoming foolish. Everything everywhere continues to move up and down in this world, but we must try to isolate ourselves from that and avoid being envious of anyone. We may not be able to understand how it will be possible, but we still must try. There is no other way to proceed in our spiritual life.

dharmāḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra
paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām
(SB: 1.1.2)

"*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* teaches the supreme dharma, which completely rejects all cheating and is for sādhus who are non-envious."

We will be able to harmonise everything when we truly take shelter at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Kṛṣṇa is Reality the Beautiful, and with His connection we have the chance to feel the full form of His qualities and beauty. When we have the opportunity to get everything through our connection with the Lord, then we do not need to be envious of anyone else.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj trained me from my childhood: "Serve the Vaiṣṇavas without enviousness." If we see a devotee doing our job better than we are, then we must consider that he is doing good for us. We should not be envious of him. When a devotee is doing so much that I cannot do, I praise him for that. I do not criticise him.

We know that whenever anyone does something there must be something right and something wrong in their action. No one has full knowledge or is completely wise. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj used the phrase, "To err is human" in one of his articles. All the Vaiṣṇavas want to be right; they want to do things right, and they try heart and soul. We should always consider their service efforts and overlook their faults. This is necessary for our society.

If according to our knowledge it seems to us that someone is not serving perfectly, then we should not be angry with him, and we should not be envious of him. Rather, we should look at our own self. If we feel the desire to criticise others, then we should first try to criticise our own self and find our own faults.

ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (6.5) explains that I can be my own worst enemy and I can be my own best friend. When I criticise others, then I act as my own worst enemy. When I criticise myself, then I act as my own best friend. If we can continue our practising life in that way, then we will get a good result. "He may be bad, but why should I not be good? I see some bad quality in him, but I cannot correct him. So why should I not try to be good and correct myself? I shall be good; whether he is good or bad

is another thing. First of all I shall be good, knowing that I will be benefitted if I proceed in that way." We should look after ourselves in this way. That is very good for the continuation of our practising lives.

See the positive

We must try to proceed in this way, otherwise we have no hope. There are so many practitioners around us who are not perfect. Everyone has some imperfections. If we act like a drain inspector, always looking for the faults of others, then we will be offenders, and we will not properly honour the devotees. Who is a perfect devotee? It is very difficult to find a devotee who is fully dedicated to the Lord's service. Still, we can think that every devotee has some devotion.

Once one of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur's disciples, Śrīpād Siddhāntī Mahārāj, came to speak with Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. When they were speaking in a relaxed mood, Śrīpād Siddhāntī Mahārāj said to Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, "Mahārāj, I consider that all of our godbrothers are Vaiṣṇavas. Because they were all servitors of Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur they have some Vaiṣṇava quality. But, side by side, I have seen that all of our godbrothers have difficulties, faults, and bad qualities. I have decided to put our godbrothers into some categories. Someone is a foolish Vaiṣṇava, someone is a wise Vaiṣṇava, someone is an envious Vaiṣṇava, someone is a simple Vaiṣṇava, and so on." Śrīpād Siddhāntī Mahārāj explained many different categories of Vaiṣṇavas, and Śrīla Guru Mahārāj laughed so much to hear that.

Everyone is a Vaiṣṇava. This is correct. But how much? It is very good to use the idea of percentage. Someone may be five per cent Vaiṣṇava, someone may be ten per cent Vaiṣṇava, someone may be twenty per cent Vaiṣṇava, and someone who is 100 per cent dedicated to the Lord is a real Vaiṣṇava. If we consider all of the devotees in this way, that will be perfect.

We should not hate others. Everyone has some quality, and with that quality they are enjoying. I also have some quality, and I live in my own zone with that. Internally I may know something about someone's behaviour, but externally I will see the Vaiṣṇavas' qualities and proceed carefully. Otherwise I will be the loser, and I may become an offender. It is true that some persons may do wrong, and it is also true that it is not good to follow someone who is doing wrong. Still, when I see someone doing something wrong in front of me, I should not hold any grudge against him or be envious of him. I can ignore that wrong while I try to make myself a perfect servitor. This is the only way to live harmoniously in society. I have considered this many times, and in this way we must be careful about Vaiṣṇavas and non-Vaiṣṇavas. Otherwise we will be cheated and may become an offender.

The formula for harmony

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has given us the supreme formula to collect the good qualities of others, properly relate to everyone, and harmonise everything:

The Lord's Name is to be chanted constantly with more humility than a blade of grass, tolerance like that of a tree, respect for everyone, and without desire for respect from anyone.

**ṭṛṇād api sunīchena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ**

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 17.31)

Within His formula Mahāprabhu gave us three very nice rules. *Ṭṛṇād api sunīchena*: be humble and do not disturb anyone. If we are humble, then we will not be a cause of anger for others, and everyone will be merciful to us. *Taror iva sahiṣṇunā*: tolerate everything going on in this mundane world. We are insignificant souls; we should not demand so much for ourselves. If we are tolerant, then we will not make any unnecessary disturbances for ourselves or others; in that way we will avoid the sinful, reactionary environment. *Amāninā mānadena*: give honour to everyone without desiring honour for yourself. Everyone has some ego, and we do not want to disturb others' egos.

We should humbly give honour to everyone, even to persons who are not honourable. Everyone has some good qualities, so why should you not give honour to them? What is the difficulty for us? If we give honour to everyone, then everyone will be happy with us, and not only will they not disturb us, but they will help us in our practising life.

The conditioned souls always think that they are already qualified. That is their misfortune. When someone sees himself as the biggest he cannot see anything beyond himself. He can only see tiny things like ants and insects. When someone sees himself clearly and feels himself to be small, then he can see the highest and biggest things around him. It is hopeful for us to see ourselves not as the best or greatest, but as the least and smallest: to see that we have a great need for improvement. Whatever good qualities we may have are already our property which no one can take away from us. If we see good qualities anywhere in others, we should try to collect them. We can always collect goodness from wherever we find it through our practice of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others.

Smooth progress

Mahārabhu's formula states that anyone who is humble and tolerant, and gives honour to others without expecting honour for himself can properly practise Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan. This teaching of Mahārabhu gives us the proper spirit of spiritual life. When we follow the practice of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others, we will not do anything wrong to anyone, and we will not make offences to anyone. If we give honour to everyone, then we will never be in danger of making an offence to a Vaiṣṇava (Vaiṣṇava-aparādh). It is completely necessary to avoid making offences to Vaiṣṇavas because the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra descends to us from the upper level through the Vaiṣṇavas.

Mahārabhu gave us His formula because we cannot recognise Vaiṣṇavas. What can we do when we cannot recognise

a Vaiṣṇava? We can give honour to everyone, even to persons who do not appear honourable to us. If we do so, then we will always give honour to the Vaiṣṇava, even though we may not recognise him. Generally, we can understand that we should honour a Vaiṣṇava; there is no question about that. But because it is difficult to recognise a Vaiṣṇava we should give honour to everyone, even to someone who appears to have nothing. The Lord resides in the heart of everyone, and everyone is a Vaiṣṇava by nature. We must honour everyone; then we will always proceed clearly in our spiritual life. This is very important.

I always say that this procedure given by Mahāprabhu is the best procedure for practising spiritual life. Why? Because we are always doing something wrong, and we must avoid that. All souls have a very high prospect and property—they are all actually eternal servants of the Lord. Someone may be a tiny, insignificant soul who has not realised his own wealth, but we must give honour to everyone, no matter who they are. That way everyone will be merciful to us. If we do not make any enemies and rather make everyone our friend, then our practising life will proceed smoothly. We must proceed to our destiny, and for that we need the blessings of everyone, especially all the Vaiṣṇavas, in our practising life.

We need everyone's help and goodwill, and if we proceed to our destiny according to Mahāprabhu's formula, then everything will be very beautiful, fair, and good. We should be merciful to ourselves by giving honour to others. Then the whole world will become our friend, and all of the Lord's servants will be merciful to us.

Our hope and challenge

Even when we understand the idea and mood given by Mahāprabhu in His formula *tryād api sunīchena*, it is still very difficult for us to follow. I have spoken about Mahāprabhu's formula my whole life, and so many people have heard about

it from me. It is very easy to hear about it. And it is very easy, and very good, to speak about it with others also, no doubt. The difficulty is focusing on it in our own lives and following it properly. What Mahāprabhu has given as the aim and objective of Vaiṣṇavism is actually very difficult to follow. Some persons have spent a long life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years—but not become enriched with the three qualities of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others. There is an expression in Bengal,

vaiṣṇava haba bali' chhila mora sāda
tṛṇād api śloke paḍi gela vāda

“I had a strong desire to become a Vaiṣṇava, but when I heard that I needed to follow Mahāprabhu’s prescription of *tṛṇād api sunīchena* ... then I felt very hopeless: ‘How will I ever become a Vaiṣṇava?’”

Everyone struggles to remember Mahāprabhu’s formula and practise it properly. Sometimes we easily forget it and do something wrong. But when we come back to our good sense, we can immediately begin practising it again. Every time we can start again anew, and there is no problem with that. We forget, our sense comes back to us, and then we can again do good with our life. In that way we must try to go on and make ourselves perfect.

Faith is our first necessity in this practice, and under the guidance of faith we can proceed properly in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So many disturbances may come to us, but we can cross over them by faithfully trying to practise Mahāprabhu’s simple formula: humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others. We are not always successful, but we are trying to do that. We should not be disappointed or frustrated. We must see that whatever situation comes to us has been given to us by Kṛṣṇa, and we will try to harmonise that situation through our practice of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others. If we are not able to harmonise something and practise properly,



then we can faithfully pray to our Master: “You see everything, and You properly look after everyone; please do whatever is best for me.” This type of faith in the Lord’s protection over us is necessary to have behind our practice of Mahāprabhu’s formula.

The quality of our existence

If we chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra with the qualities of humility, tolerance, and giving honour to others, we will certainly get a proper result. Mahāprabhu has promised us this, and even Kṛṣṇa will not be able to check our result because our result will come to us through His devotee’s devotee. Humility, tolerance, and the offering of respect are the essential qualities of a devotee. Everyone must maintain those qualities in their devotional lives. If anyone is successful in practising Mahāprabhu’s procedure, then they will be very, very close to liberation, and after liberation they will see and feel how everything is transcendental and all right, by the will of the Lord.

How humble we are, how tolerant we are, and how much we give honour to others is the quality of our existence in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the teaching of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī, Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura, Prabhupād Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and my Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.

SECTION SIX

Kṛṣṇa-prema

Daśa-mūla-tattva

Truth Ten:

sādhyaṁ tat-prītiṁ

Love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the goal.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Inconceivable Glory

Everywhere throughout the scriptures Kṛṣṇa is glorified beyond all other Gods and demigods as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who lives eternally in His divine abode of Goloka Vṛndāvan.

virajāra pāre śuddha-paravyoma-dhāma
tad upari śrī-gokula-vṛndāraṇya nāma

(Gītāvalī: Rādhāṣṭakam, 2.1)

“Beyond Virajā, the river that divides the material and spiritual worlds, is Paravyoma Dhām, the spiritual sky, and the supreme, original abode within the spiritual sky is Goloka Vṛndāvan, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s eternal residence.”

In Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental abode everything moves according to Kṛṣṇa’s will for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction. We cannot conceive how much beauty, ecstasy, and love play in the Pastimes of the Sweet Absolute in Śrī Vṛndāvan Dhām. In Vṛndāvan, time, space, and everything within the environment move, expand, and contract according to Kṛṣṇa’s will. But Kṛṣṇa Himself is not directly concerned with anything; He simply enjoys. Kṛṣṇa’s immediate expansion Saṅkarṣaṇ Balarām is the actual manager

of the transcendental world. He makes all the arrangements for Kṛṣṇa's play and satisfaction through His potency Yogamāyā. It is Yogamāyā, Kṛṣṇa's delegated power, who actually arranges all of Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes.

Through her power Yogamāyā can understand all the desires that appear in the hearts of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī, the sakhīs, the mañjarīs, and all the servitors in that abode. She can understand in which way Kṛṣṇa wants to play with the gopīs, in which way Kṛṣṇa wants to play with Rādhārāṇī, where He wants to play, and so on. She can understand everything. Kṛṣṇa only wishes in His heart, "I want this", or "I want that", and Yogamāyā arranges everything. When Rādhārāṇī wants to worship Kṛṣṇa in Rādhā Kuṇḍa, Yogamāyā arranges everything there. So, under the guidance of Yogamāyā and Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa's supreme servitors who fulfil all of His desires to the extreme, everything and everyone within the transcendental abode is engaged in satisfying Kṛṣṇa.

Wish-fulfilling servitors

The glory of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode has been very beautifully described in *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*, the prayers of Lord Brahmā. Through meditation (dhyān) upon the gāyatrī-mantram, everything was revealed in Brahmā's heart. In *Brahma-saṁhitā* he expressed his divine vision of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's divine abode.

śriyaḥ kāntāḥ kāntāḥ parama-puruṣaḥ kalpa-taravo
drumā bhūmīś chintāmaṇi-gaṇa-mayi toyam amṛtam
kathā gānaṁ nāṭyaṁ gamanam api vaṁśī priya-sakhi
chid-ānandaṁ jyotiḥ param api tad āsvādyam api cha
sa yatra kṣīrābdhiḥ sravati surabhībhyaś cha sumahān
nimeṣārdhākhyo vā vrajati na hi yatrāpi samayaḥ
bhaje śvetadvīpaṁ tam aham iha golokam iti yaṁ
vidantas te santaḥ kṣīti-virala-chārāḥ katipaye

(*Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*: 5.56)

Śriyaḥ kāntāḥ: all the ladies in Goloka Vṛndāvan are like Lakṣmī Devī. Their ankle bells are made of wish-fulfilling gems, and they are full with all wealth, beauty, love, charm, and so on. They play with their beloved Kṛṣṇa, who is their only enjoyer. *Kāntaḥ Parama-Puruṣaḥ*: the sole enjoyer in Goloka Vṛndāvan is Kṛṣṇa, and He enjoys all the different moods of devotion present in the hearts of all His associates in His divine abode.

Kalpa-taravo drumā: all the plants in Goloka Vṛndāvan are also wish-fulfilling. All living entities in Goloka Vṛndāvan, all of the trees, bees, deer, and so on, are fully conscious servants of the Lord eager to be engaged in His service. No one in Kṛṣṇa's abode has any selfish desire for anything. Everyone there is a liberated soul who is permanently inspired to live in that transcendental service world, where everyone's happiness increases hundreds and hundreds of times by engaging in the Lord's service. Because all the living entities there have pure service inspiration, the Lord gives them infinite capacity to serve.

The plants of Goloka Vṛndāvan possess unlimited wealth and can produce anything for anyone, according to the necessity of service. Whatever anyone desires to prepare for the enjoyment of their Lord can be provided by any tree in Vṛndāvan. If you ask any tree there, "Give me an apple", then that tree will be able to give you an apple. If you ask a banana tree, "Give me a ripe mango that has no skin or seed", then the banana tree will give you that mango. When the Lord or His devotees eat that mango, they will be very satisfied, and when that mango is being eaten, that mango will also be very satisfied. This is achintya, inconceivable, but it is true. It is possible because everything in Goloka Vṛndāvan is transcendental.

If you ask a friend, "Give me a glass of water", your friend will bring you that glass of water from nearby or from far away. There, anything can be provided from anywhere. When you say, "Water", water will come before you. When you say, "Fruit", fruit will come before you. Anything you desire there is

also a servitor eager to be engaged. Whatever you conceive of immediately comes to you. This is the meaning of *chintāmaṇi* [wish-fulfilling]. All of Goloka Vṛndāvan is *chintāmaṇi*. The land there is made of *chintāmaṇi* gems: *bhūmiś chintāmaṇi gaṇamayī*. Everything you will ever need will always be there for you in that abode. All the plants and trees, and even the land itself, can give you anything and everything you require for Kṛṣṇa's service.

The expansion and contraction of space

Once, when I was a young boy, I went on *parikramā* with Śrīla Guru Mahārāj in Vṛndāvan Dhām. After we visited many different places we came to Varshana, and there I asked Śrīla Guru Mahārāj: “Rādhārāṇī's father's house is here in Varshana, but her husband Abhimanyu's house is located eight kilometres away in Yavat. Externally Rādhārāṇī goes to worship Sūrya every morning with Her associates and then comes back to Her house to cook and take care of Her household work. She also travels to Rādhā Kuṇḍa, which is thirty kilometres away, for Her play with the Sweet Absolute. How is this possible for an innocent fourteen-year-old girl? Where does She get the time and energy necessary for all this travelling? Even if She had a helicopter or a motorcycle, She would hardly have time to travel back and forth every day in this way.”

Later in my life I studied a variety of subjects and learned something about ghost theory. If we are sitting in Govardhan and I ask a ghost, “What is going on right now in my room in Kolkata?” The ghost can answer me from Govardhan very quickly, “Your room is now locked, and someone is cleaning just outside your door.” But if I ask a ghost, “Can you see if Pavitra Sevan Prabhu is seated here before me?”, the ghost will say, “Please wait.” Then after some time the ghost will tell me, “Yes, I can see Pavitra Sevan Prabhu, Śrīpād Āśram Mahārāj, and Kṛṣṇachandra Prabhu sitting with you.” If you ask the



*Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj
speaking to devotees at
Śrīla Śrīdhara Swāmī Sevā
Ashram in Govardhan.*

ghost, “Why can you immediately tell me what is going on in Kolkata but need to ask me to wait before you tell me who is sitting right in front of me?”, the ghost will say, “I cannot see what is close to me, but I can see things that are very far away, and can travel across the earth very quickly. I need to quickly go a little distance away and look before I can tell you who is next to you.”

This is ghost theory, but ghost theory is not transcendental theory. The devotees in Goloka Vṛndāvan are not like ghosts.

After I asked Śrīla Guru Mahārāj my question about Rādhārāṇī's service in Vṛndāvan he replied, “*Bhūmīś chintāmaṇi*: the land is made of wish-fulfilling gems. When Rādhārāṇī thinks, ‘I am going to Rādhā Kuṇḍā’, the earth contracts, and within five minutes She immediately arrives in Rādhā Kuṇḍā. This is the transcendental quality of Kṛṣṇa's abode: it can expand and contract according to Kṛṣṇa's desire and the service of His devotees. If anyone there thinks, ‘I shall go to Mathurā’, then they will see, ‘I am in Mathurā’. If anyone thinks, ‘I shall go to Varshana’, they will arrive there immediately even though it is thirty kilometres away.”

The nature of Vṛndāvan is *chintāmaṇi*: whatever devotees think of comes to them. In the material world a ghost may be able to see great distances and travel great distances very quickly in pursuit of its desires. But in the transcendental world the environment itself expands, contracts, and adjusts according to the desires of the Lord and His devotees.

In this way we can understand that everything in Vṛndāvan is transcendental. In Vṛndāvan *toyam amṛtam*: the water is like nectar. *Kathā gānam*: the talking is like singing. *Nāṭyam gamanam api*: the walking is like dancing. *Vaṁśī priya-sakhi*: Kṛṣṇa's flute-song is heard everywhere. *Chid-ānandam jyotiḥ*: whenever it is necessary, inconceivable light appears everywhere coming from everything, and whenever it is not necessary, it is hidden.

Unlimited cows with unlimited milk

Sa yatra kṣīrābdhiḥ sravati surabhībhyas cha sumahān: in Kṛṣṇa's abode oceans of milk flow from millions of Surabhi cows for nourishing Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. Surabhi is a cow who can give you whatever you desire. There is a story in the *Mahābhārata* that shows the glory of the Surabhi cow. Once, when Viśvāmitra was a kṣatriya king, he was travelling with his army and came to the dwelling of Vaśiṣṭha Ṛṣi. Vaśiṣṭha Ṛṣi insisted on feeding Viśvāmitra's entire army, and within two hours he gave good nourishment to all Viśvāmitra's soldiers.

Viśvāmitra was surprised, “How have you supplied food to thousands of my soldiers and satisfied my whole army within only two hours?”

Vaśiṣṭha Ṛṣi said, “I have one cow, and she gave me everything I needed to nourish everyone. My cow, Nandinī, will give me anything I ask from her.” Nandinī is the daughter of Surabhi, and she was mercifully staying in the house of Vaśiṣṭha Ṛṣi.

Viśvāmitra said, “I want to take this cow with me. I am a king, and I want to enjoy with this cow.”

Vaśiṣṭha said, “No. It is impossible. This cow is a wish-fulfilling cow who has come down from heaven. Wherever she lives, heaven appears. She is mercifully staying in my home, but she is a heavenly cow and cannot stay in any mundane house.”

Viśvāmitra objected, “I want to take her with me. I will take her forcibly with the help of the thousands of soldiers I have with me.”

Vaśiṣṭha Ṛṣi said to Nandinī, “I cannot resist Viśvāmitra. I have no power. But you mother, you can resist yourself.” Then Nandinī immediately produced thousands of soldiers for fighting, and Viśvāmitra was stunned as all of his soldiers were defeated.

Finally Viśvāmitra said, “*Dhiḡ balaṃ kṣatriya-balaṃ brahma-tejo-balaṃ balam*: now I can see that the power of the brāhmaṇs is supreme in this world. I must become a brāhmaṇ.” Viśvāmitra then left his kingdom and began performing austerities (tapasya) to become a brāhmaṇ. That is another history, but through this story we can understand how much abundance can be produced by millions of Surabhi cows and how opulent the environment of Vṛndāvan Dhām must be.

The service-flow of time

Nimeṣārdhākhyo vā vrajati na hi yatrāpi samayaḥ: in Vṛndāvan time follows Kṛṣṇa’s sweet will. According to Kṛṣṇa’s desire time passes or stands still. *Vrajati na hi* means *na gachchhati*:

time, *samayaḥ*, does not pass but stands by waiting to follow Kṛṣṇa's order. This means that every day, night, and moment in Vṛndāvan expands and contracts according to Kṛṣṇa's desire. One second, one blink of an eye, does not pass without notice and without bringing happiness to Kṛṣṇa.

When I first heard this expression, I was stunned. In the mundane world time is always passing. We are always saying, "Everything in this world is a passing show." But in the transcendental environment time does not pass without being engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. Time may become infinitely long or short according to Kṛṣṇa's desire.

I once saw an advertisement, "All time is teatime." This is true in one sense in Vṛndāvan: there every moment is the best time. In Vṛndāvan, time is eternally present; there is no past or future. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* it is described that when Kṛṣṇa would perform *rāsa-līlā* with the *gopīs*, the night would last the length of a night of *Brahmā*. That means that the *rāsa-līlā* Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* went on for billions and billions of years within one night. In this way we can understand how and why time flows in Vṛndāvan.

The transcendental environment

Bhaje Śvetadvīpaṁ tam aham iha Golokam iti yam: Kṛṣṇa's divine abode is known as Śvetadvīp or Goloka Vṛndāvan. *Vidantas te santaḥ kṣīti-vīrala-chārāḥ katipaye*: in this world it is known only to a few saints who are clean-hearted, exclusive servitors of Kṛṣṇa. Only very clean-hearted persons can feel and understand Kṛṣṇa's transcendental world from within the material environment. If you give transcendental knowledge entrance and a clean position in your heart through prayer, then it will reveal itself in your heart. When transcendental knowledge wants to reveal itself in your heart, then it must be revealed; even you will not be able to check it. When Vṛndāvan Dhām is revealed in your heart, you will automatically feel everything.

From our mundane position we cannot gauge or feel the nature of Vṛndāvan. If we try to feel that abode from here, what we feel will be mundane. It is not necessary for us to discuss the matters of the transcendental world so much. That abode is not revealed through lectures or reading actually. It is revealed through dedication, devotion, determination, and divine grace. When one is fully enriched with those qualities, one will get everything automatically. We should only try to keep our faith. We will simply try to believe in what *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*, and the other scriptures have expressed about the Lord's Pastimes with His liberated devotees in His divine abode.

We use this word *devotee* often, but in the Lord's abode no one is actually a devotee in a way that we would recognise. Everyone there is an affectionate lover of Lord Kṛṣṇa. A 'devotee' means someone who always follows the instructions of Kṛṣṇa. But following orders only goes up to *dāsyā-rasa*, a service relationship with the Lord. In Vṛndāvan, Kṛṣṇa's associates are in the relationships of *sakhya-rasa* [friendship], *vātsalya-rasa* [affectionate guardianship], and *madhura-rasa* [paramour love]. Sometimes they push Kṛṣṇa, "Go and do this. Eat and enjoy that." Kṛṣṇa's lovers sometimes have a mood that is completely the opposite of Kṛṣṇa's.

We cannot gauge from the mundane plane anything about Kṛṣṇa's transcendental world. No one in the mundane environment can understand or feel Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode without His mercy.

Kṛṣṇa's flute-song

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu has written a very nice verse describing the transcendental, attractive power of the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute:

rundhann ambu-bhṛtaś chamatkṛti-param kurvan muhus tumburum
dhyānād antarayan sanandana-mukhān vismāpayan vedhasam

autsukyāvalibhir balim chaṭulayan bhogīndram āghūrṇayan
bhindann aṇḍa-kaṭāha-bhittim abhito babhrāma vamśī-dhvaniḥ

(Vīdagdha-mādhava: 1.27)

Bhindann aṇḍa-kaṭāha-bhittim abhito babhrāma: when Kṛṣṇa plays His flute, the sound travels not only everywhere throughout His divine abode but throughout all universes. The sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute travels through sky after sky, across all times and spaces. *Rundhann ambu-bhṛtaś:* the clouds within all the skies scatter. *Chamatkṛti-param kurvan muhus tumburum:* the Gandharvas, the singers and musicians of the heavenly planets, as well as Indra, Chandra, Vāyu, and so on, are astonished to hear the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute and cannot understand where it is coming from. The four kumāras—Sananda, Sanaka, Sanātan, and Sanat—who are always in meditation, cannot believe they are hearing Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song. They are never aware of anything in their external environment, and they wonder, “Where has this sound come from? How has it captured our attention?”

Vismāpayan vedhasam: Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe, is very astonished to hear the flute’s sound: “This sound is not my creation. Where is it coming from?”

Autsukyāvalibhir balim chaṭulayan: Bali Mahārāj, who lives in Pātāloka [the underworld], hears the flute’s sound and becomes chañchal [excited]: “Where is this sound coming from?”

Bhogīndram āghūrṇayan: Satyarāj Vāsuki, Lord Ananta Śeṣa, who holds the earth on His heads, is struck by that sound and His heads shake.

In this way the tune of Kṛṣṇa’s flute makes the whole transcendental and material universe mad and attracts everyone everywhere.

Within Kṛṣṇa’s divine abode of Goloka Vṛndāvan, His flute-song is the very life of everyone (*vamśī priya-sakhī*). Through the transcendental sound vibration of His flute, Kṛṣṇa communicates with the hearts of all His devotees. All of Kṛṣṇa’s associates find their existence in the sound of His flute (*vamśī-dhvani*).

By Kṛṣṇa’s sweet will, everyone hears His flute-song and is inspired by it according to their relationship with Him. All the devotees—in their relationships of śānta, dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya, and madhura rasas—are filled with affection and given instruction by Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song; they are inspired as to how they can next serve Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa’s mother Yaśomatī hears Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song and begins preparing many opulent foods that Kṛṣṇa likes. Kṛṣṇa’s friends become inspired to play with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa’s girlfriends become inspired to meet Him. Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song simultaneously reveals Kṛṣṇa’s desires to everyone, according to their relationship with Him.

The source of Kṛṣṇa’s power

Kṛṣṇa is irresistibly attractive as He plays His flute. Kṛṣṇa’s devotees become completely charmed by His attractive power as He plays His flute and cannot separate their existence from their desire for Kṛṣṇa.

śrī-kṛṣṇa-rūpādi-niṣevanam vinā
vyarthāni me ’hāny akhilendriyāṅy alam
pāṣāṇa-śuṣkendhana-bhārakāṅy aho
bibharmi vā tāni katham hata-trapaḥ

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 2.28)

Kṛṣṇa’s devotees feel, “If we cannot serve Kṛṣṇa’s divine form, then all of our senses are useless. Why do we have eyes if we cannot see Kṛṣṇa?”

vaṁśī-gānāmṛta-dhāma, lāvṇyāmṛta-janma-sthāna,
ye nā dekhe se chāda vadana

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 2.29)

As Kṛṣṇa plays His sweet song on His flute, His moon-like face blooms with unlimitedly attractive attachment and heartfelt affection.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj has explained why Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song is so attractive. We know that the gāyatrī-mantram comes from

What are the use of eyes that do not behold Kṛṣṇa’s moon-like face, which is the origin of the nectar of all beauty and the songs of His flute?



the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. So through the gāyatrī-mantram we can understand the mood and intention of Kṛṣṇa as He plays His flute.

gāyatrī muralīṣṭa-kīrtana-dhanaṁ rādhā-padaṁ dhīmahī

(Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj)

Gāyatrī means muralī-dhvani, the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. *Muralīṣṭa-kīrtana*: muralī wants kīrtan; through His flute Kṛṣṇa performs His desired kīrtan. *Muralī-iṣṭa*: *iṣṭa* means Kṛṣṇa wants to perform kīrtan of His dearmost: Rādhārāṇī. Through His flute-song, gāyatrī, Kṛṣṇa calls the Name of Rādhārāṇī,

“Rādhā Rādhā Rādhā Rādhā”, and expresses His glorification of Rādhārāṇī. *Dhanam*, the real wealth of Kṛṣṇa, the real wealth of His play and the source of His attractive power, is Rādhārāṇī’s lotus feet, and only Rādhārāṇī’s lotus feet. *Rādhā-padam dhīmahī*: Kṛṣṇa plays His flute-song in meditation upon Rādhārāṇī’s lotus feet.

Rādhārāṇī’s divine qualities

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes are not ordinary human activities. They are not found within the material environment. They are called *līlā* (divine Pastimes). They are not material in any way; they are transcendental. Rādhārāṇī is Kṛṣṇa’s supreme Power, His Parā-śakti. She is also known as His Hlādinī-śakti. *Hlādinī* means ‘She who always gives joy to Kṛṣṇa’. It means that all of Her activities create great joy in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s heart. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī explained,

hlādinīra sāra ‘prema’, prema-sāra ‘bhāva’
bhāvera parama-kāṣṭhā, nāma—‘mahābhāva’
mahābhāva-svarūpā śrī-rādhā-ṭhākuraṇī
sarva-guṇa-khani kṛṣṇa-kāntā-śiromaṇi
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.68–69)

The acme of pleasure is love; the acme of love is ecstasy; and the acme of ecstasy is Mahābhāva. The embodiment of Mahābhāva is Śrī Rādhā Ṭhākuraṇī, the mine of all good qualities, the crest jewel of Kṛṣṇa’s lovers.

All qualities and qualifications; all beauty, love, charm, and ecstasy; all the wealth of service—everything—is in the hand of Rādhārāṇī. With everything She satisfies Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is fully satisfied with Her.

Rādhārāṇī’s names have special qualities and beauty. We know a very sweet and beautiful verse about Rādhārāṇī’s names.

devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā rādhikā para-devatā
sarva-lakṣmī-mayī sarva-kāntiḥ sammohinī parā
(Bṛhad-Gautamīya-tantra)

This is a Sanskrit verse, and Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī has given an explanation of it in Bengali:

kṛṣṇa-mayī—kṛṣṇa yāra bhitarē bāhire
yāhā yāhā netra paḍe tāhā kṛṣṇa sphure

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.85)

“Rādhārāṇī’s name is *Kṛṣṇamayī* because Her within and without are Lord Kṛṣṇa, and She sees Lord Kṛṣṇa wherever She casts Her glance.”

Kṛṣṇa is always present within, and in front of, Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa is within Her, and She sees Him wherever She looks. She does not see anything apart from Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa plays wherever Her eyes go. Rādhārāṇī’s name *Kṛṣṇamayī* has been described in Vidyāpati’s *Padyāvalī* in poetic form:

yadi nayana muḍe thāki’, antare govinda dekhi,
nayane khulile dekhi śyāme

[Rādhārāṇī says:] “If I close My eyes, I see Kṛṣṇa playing in My heart. If I open My eyes, I see Kṛṣṇa playing before Me.”

She who cannot see anything apart from Kṛṣṇa is called *Kṛṣṇamayī*.

Kavirāj Goswāmī also explained that Her name is *Rādhikā* because She satisfies Kṛṣṇa’s desires with all of Her senses, because She knows nothing other than constant worship of Kṛṣṇa.

Para-devatā means She who serves as the proprietor of the best of all the Gods: Kṛṣṇa. All administration and property in the transcendental service world are in Her hand. Thus She is known as *Para-devatā*. Because She is the wholesale proprietor of everything for Kṛṣṇa’s service, She is known as *Sarva-lakṣmī-mayī*. This name means ‘She from whom all beauty and fortune flow’, ‘She who is the fountain of all wealth, beauty, and qualities, the fountain of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes’.

Rādhārāṇī can enchant Kṛṣṇa with Her mood and divine form. Thus She is known as *Sammohinī*. Śuka and Śārī, the male and female parrots of Vṛndāvan, playfully quarrel:

śuka bale, “āmāra kṛṣṇa madana-mohana”
śārī bale, “āmāra rādhā vāme yata kṣaṇa”

Śuka says, “My Kṛṣṇa can attract Cupid.”

Śārī replies, “As long as my Rādhā is by His side.”

Cupid is known as Bhuvana Mohan, ‘he who attracts the whole world’. Kṛṣṇa is known as Bhuvana Mohan Mohan, ‘He who attracts Cupid’. Rādhārāṇī is known as Bhuvana Mohan Mohan Mohini, ‘She who attracts Kṛṣṇa, who attracts everyone in the whole world away from Cupid’. If Kṛṣṇa is separated from Rādhārāṇī, He becomes attracted by Cupid (lust). In this way we can understand Rādhārāṇī’s name Sammohinī, ‘She who is supremely attractive’.

‘devī’ kahi dyotamānā, paramā sundarī
kimvā, kṛṣṇa-pūjā-krīḍāra vasati nagarī
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.84)

Here in his explanation of Rādhārāṇī’s names Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī miraculously revealed the meaning of the Sanskrit word *devī*. Normally we think *devī* refers to a beautiful heavenly goddess, ‘she from whom all beauty comes’. Śrīla Kavirāj Goswāmī explained that *devī* comes from the root *div*, which means play (*div dhātu krīḍāyām*). He explained that *devī* also means ‘She in whom Kṛṣṇa plays in full’, ‘She in whose body there is nothing other than the worship and play of Kṛṣṇa’. Kṛṣṇa is satisfied by the full existence of the full form of Rādhārāṇī. He is fully satisfied with His play in madhura-rasa-līlā with Rādhārāṇī. Because Rādhārāṇī’s body is the supreme abode of Kṛṣṇa’s service and play, She is called *devī*. No one could conceive of this meaning of the Sanskrit word *devī*, but Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī revealed it.

Rādhārāṇī’s divine guidance

The divine play of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is eternally going on in Vṛndāvan Dhām. Everything in Vṛndāvan exists to give joy to Kṛṣṇa. There Rādhārāṇī distributes Her power to everyone, and Kṛṣṇa enjoys with everyone. There Kṛṣṇa tastes divine love through Rādhārāṇī. Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur very simply expressed this in his song:



Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madan Mohan,
the Deities worshipped by
Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī Prabhu.
Śrī Madan Mohan was orig-
inally established by Kṛṣṇa’s
grandson Vajranabha.

rādhā-bhajane yadi mati nāhi bhelā
kṛṣṇa-bhajana tava akāraṇe gelā

(Gītāvalī: Rādhāṣṭakam, 8.1)

“If you do not worship Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī, everything you do will be lost. You will not get any ecstasy from the emporium of all ecstasy (Kṛṣṇa). You will not taste anything. *Akāraṇe gelā*: you can worship Kṛṣṇa, but no benefit will come to you if you do not worship Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī.”

Mirabai is an example of a famous devotee who did not approach Kṛṣṇa through Rādhārāṇī. We offer our daṇḍavat praṇām to all devotees of Kṛṣṇa, and we offer our daṇḍavat praṇām to Mirabai, but from a distance. We do not have a real connection with Mirabai, and we do not offer our affection or service to Mirabai. There are many devotees like Mirabai. We are not attached to them. If someone worships Kṛṣṇa without Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa gives them something, maybe He gives them five per cent. But if someone serves Kṛṣṇa under Rādhārāṇī’s guidance, they get everything. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself openly confessed,

*Your meeting with Me is
irreproachable. You have served
Me, completely severing
yourselves from the difficult-to-
overcome bondage of
family life. I cannot compensate
you for this even within
the lifetime of a demigod.
May your own virtuous acts be
your compensation.*

na pāraye ‘ham niravadya-saṁyujāṁ
sva-sādhu-kṛtyaṁ vibudhāyusaṁyujāṁ
yā mābhajan durjaya-geha-śṛṅkhalaḥ
saṁvṛśchya tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhuṇā

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 10.32.22)

“I cannot reciprocate the love and affection that I have received from Rādhārāṇī.”

Thus when Kṛṣṇa sees His devotees serving Rādhārāṇī, He enriches them with His full mercy.

Rādhārāṇī manages and distributes all service to Kṛṣṇa. All of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes happen through Her power. Her hlādinī-śakti is the source of all of Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure, and Her potency form of Yogamāyā manages the whole environment of the transcendental world.

Once when Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was explaining this point, someone said to him, “You are actually tantrics. You are always saying, ‘Under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī you are serving Kṛṣṇa’, so you are following the conception of prakṛtivād (energy worship).”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj replied, “Yes. We are tantrics. But we are viśuddha-tantrics, pure unalloyed tantrics. ‘Under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī’ means that under the guidance of Her transcendental energy we are serving Kṛṣṇa. Our service goes directly to Rādhārāṇī, not to Kṛṣṇa, and Rādhārāṇī arranges everything for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa with our service energy. So our service is present as Rādhārāṇī gives full nourishment to Kṛṣṇa, and in that way we fulfil the most important necessity of our existence: purely satisfying Kṛṣṇa.”

An enchanting breeze

We can understand how much love and attachment Kṛṣṇa has for Rādhārāṇī, how supremely She satisfies Him, and how extremely valuable the service of Rādhārāṇī is, through an expression of Prabodhānanda Saraswatī Ṭhākur:

yasyaḥ kadāpi vasanañchala khelanotthadhanyātidhanya-pavenena kṛtārthamānī
yogindra-durgama-gatir madhusūdano 'pi
tasyāḥ namo 'stu vṛṣabhānubhuvo diśe 'pi

(*Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi: 2*)

This is Prabodhānanda Saraswatī’s praṇām mantram for Rādhārāṇī. In this verse he expresses, “When Kṛṣṇa feels the breeze of Rādhārāṇī’s sari as She distributes food to Kṛṣṇa and His friends, Kṛṣṇa feels, ‘I am fully satisfied’. *Dhanyātidhanya-pavenena kṛtārthamānī*: just by feeling the breeze of Rādhārāṇī’s sari Kṛṣṇa feels, ‘I am so fortunate. I am fully satisfied’. *Yogindra-durgama-gatir Madhusūdano 'pi*: all the munis, ṛṣis, and yogīs—everyone—are trying to get the dust of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, but Kṛṣṇa thinks, ‘The breeze from Rādhārāṇī’s cloth gives Me full nourishment.’”



Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead:

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.1)

Kṛṣṇa is not only an īśvar; He is the Parameśvar, who is the origin of everything, the Creator of all creation, and the universally worshippable, eternal Lord. Yet Kṛṣṇa thinks, “Oh ho! I am very fortunate that I have felt the breeze from Rādhārāṇī’s cloth.”

When we understand the identity of Kṛṣṇa and we hear that Kṛṣṇa is becoming maddened by feeling the breeze of Rādhārāṇī’s sari, then we can understand something about Rādhārāṇī. We can understand that Kṛṣṇa gets full satisfaction from Her, and that no one can satisfy Kṛṣṇa the way She can. We can also understand that even Kṛṣṇa Himself wants to serve Rādhārāṇī. So Rādhārāṇī’s position is supreme.

Prabodhānanda Saraswatī has also given us a very helpful caution in his verse: “We are not so expert. We are not qualified to take the Name of Rādhārāṇī. Actually we are not qualified to think about Her divine Pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. But what we can do is pay our daṇḍavat praṇām to the direction of Varshana, where Rādhārāṇī appeared and played in Her early age.”

The queen of Kṛṣṇa’s homeland

We can also understand how high and exalted the position and Name of Rādhārāṇī are through *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Śukadev Goswāmī did not want to take the Name of Rādhārāṇī in the public meeting described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* because he understood that the ṛṣis there were not qualified to hear Her Name. Śukadev Goswāmī heard Rādhārāṇī’s glories from his Gurudev, Vedavyās, and through that he understood everything. But he did not want to give that knowledge to the ṛṣis in the public meeting. Ātreya Ṛṣi and many great, stalwart ṛṣis were there.

atrir vaśiṣṭhaś chyavanaḥ śaradvān
ariṣṭanemir bhṛgur aṅgirās cha
parāśaro gādhi-suto 'tha rāma
dvaipāyano bhagavān nāradaś cha

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.19.9–10)

All the dignitaries of the spiritual world were seated there: Śukadev Goswāmī's grandfather, Parāśar, Śukadev's father, Vedavyās, Nārad Ṛṣi, and so many others. Everyone was present for the meeting during Parikṣit Mahārāj's final seven days. There Śukadev Goswāmī expressed everything, but He did not take the Name of Rādhārāṇī because He did not want to expose the harem of Kṛṣṇa in the middle of that meeting. Not everyone there could properly understand Kṛṣṇa's private life. To protect them from making any offences he did not take the Name of Rādhārāṇī.

Rādhārāṇī's position is supreme, but She is only known to those who have consciousness about Kṛṣṇa's private life. Kṛṣṇa is famous everywhere; everyone all over the world has heard of Kṛṣṇa. But only in Vṛndāvan will you hear the Name of Rādhārāṇī everywhere. If you go to Vṛndāvan even today, you will find that you will not hear the Name of Kṛṣṇa so much. There everyone only calls, "Rādhe Rādhe! Rādhe Rādhe!" Everywhere you go in Vṛndāvan you will hear, "Rādhe Rādhe!"

Vṛndāvan is Rādhārāṇī's zone, and there everyone always sings Her glories. Kṛṣṇa's position is secondary there. Kṛṣṇa is like a big administrator; He is known far and wide. But Rādhārāṇī is the Mistress of His exclusive private life, and She is supreme within Kṛṣṇa's homeland of Vṛndāvan.

The controller of Kṛṣṇa's heart

Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa's relationship is completely transcendental. We cannot understand Their intimate Pastimes from our mundane position. So we do not show our mood of devotion for Them as though we are residents of Vṛndāvan. Rather we respect Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā from the proper distance.

brahmā śiva nārada śruti nārāyaṇī
rādhikā-pada-*raja* pūjaye mānī'

(*Gītāvalī: Rādhāṣṭakam, 8.6*)

Śukadev, Śiva, Brahmā, Nārad—all the great persons in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*—worship Rādhārāṇī, but we always feel from them some caution: “You can worship Rādhārāṇī, but be careful.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj fully explained the glorious and worship-pable position of Rādhārāṇī very carefully and cleverly through his verse about *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

*“I surrender to the lotus feet
of the fountain of madhura-rasa,
Śrī Rādhā. Though their name
is not found within the
narrative of the glorious, nectarean
Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,
Śrī Rādhā’s lotus feet are present
within every word of it and
are the basis of the Pastimes of the
Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti, Śyām.”*

yad amiya-mahimā-śrī-bhāgavatyaḥ kathāyām
pratipadam anubhūtam chāpy alabdhābhidheyā
tad akhila-rasa-mūrti-śyāma-līlāvalambam
madhura-rasa-dhi-rādhā-pādapadmaṁ prapadye

(*Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj*)

“Every word in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* glorifies Rādhārāṇī, but Her Name is not specifically taken there. Kṛṣṇa is the *Akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*, the emporium of all rasa, and Rādhārāṇī is *Śyāma-līlāvilamba*, the reservoir in which Kṛṣṇa plays and tastes the full ecstasy of madhura-rasa. Rādhārāṇī is the controller of Kṛṣṇa’s heart, the madhura-rasa adhikāriṇī. Her service is the source of all of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s madhura-rasa prema.”



Mahārāj Pratāparudra, pictured in front offering his obeisance, commissioned this painting by Vakreśvar Paṇḍit's disciple Murāri Dās, which depicts Gadādhara Paṇḍit reading Śrīmad Bhāgavatam for (from left to right) Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī, Govinda Dās, Rāmānanda Rāy, Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Advaita Āchārya, Soarūp Dāmodar, Śrīvās Paṇḍit, and Haridās Ṭhākura.

The Next Edition of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes

Divine love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the supreme wealth and goal of our lives (*premā pumartho mahān*). Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu preached this conception all over India, and now it has spread all over the world. Through that divine love everyone will get entrance into the Lord's divine abode, Śvetadwīp, which has two divisions: the mādhyura-līlā of the Divine Couple Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvan and the audārya-līlā of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu in Nabadwīp. *Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanya Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa nahe anya*: Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is nondifferent from Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He also has His own divine realm in the transcendental world, where He lives eternally with His associates and engages in inconceivable Pastimes of divine love.

The twofold appearance of Kṛṣṇa

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā, and other scriptures have described for everyone in this world Kṛṣṇa's divine appearance and mādhyura-līlā in Vṛndāvan.

aṣṭāviṁśa chatur-yuge dvāparera śeṣe
vrajera sahite haya kṛṣṇera prakāśe
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 3.10)

“At the end of the Dvāpar-yuga in the twenty-eighth millennium of Vaivasvata Manu, Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears in this world with His eternal abode, Vṛndāvan.”

**īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sach-chid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam**

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.1)

Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa means ‘He who is the origin of everything transcendental and mundane’, ‘the cause of all causes’, the ‘Supreme Personality of Godhead’. This Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago and showed His mādhyura-līlā to the world. Then He withdrew with His associates, abode, paraphernalia, and so on.

When Kṛṣṇa appeared in this world, two forms actually appeared within Him.

*Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa
is different from the Kṛṣṇa who
appeared in the Yādu dynasty. He
never leaves Vṛndāvan.*

**kṛṣṇo ’nyo yadu-sambhūto yaḥ pūrṇaḥ so ’sty ataḥ paraḥ
vṛndāvanam parityajya sa kvachin naiva gachchati**

(Śrī Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta: Pūrva-khaṇḍa, 165)

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu explained that one form was the Yuga-avatār (the Avatār for the age), who came to demolish the demoniac activity going on and harmonise everything on the earth. The other form was Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, who lives eternally in Vṛndāvan Dhām as the ever-playful Reality the Beautiful. That Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is actually Avatārī Kṛṣṇa, the original Kṛṣṇa, who is the source of all Avatārs (*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*). During His Pastimes on earth, the Yuga-avatār form of Kṛṣṇa came out of Vṛndāvan to fulfil His mission on the planet, but the original Kṛṣṇa, Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa—*īśvaraḥ Paramaḥ Kṛṣṇaḥ*—never took one step out of Vṛndāvan. He stayed in Vṛndāvan through His Pastimes of union in separation with His devotees in Vraja Dhām. Then, when His Pastimes with the residents of Vṛndāvan and the Pastimes of the Dvāpar-yuga Avatār were completed, that original Kṛṣṇa, with His Yuga-avatār form, withdrew from the universe.

Love and magnanimity

After the appearance of Kṛṣṇa the time came on the earth for the Kali-yuga-avatār, the Avatār who distributes the dharma of the Age of Kali: Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan. At that time the Lord appeared as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

śrī kṛṣṇa chaitanya prabhu jīve dayā kari
sva-parṣada svīya dhāma saha avatari
(*Śaraṇāgati: 1.1*)

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu descended from the transcendental world with His associates and divine abode. He revealed His audārya-līlā and bestowed His mercy upon all the fortunate souls of this world. But like Kṛṣṇa, inside Mahāprabhu there are two forms: one is the Yuga-avatār, who came to distribute Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan, and the other is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-milita-tanu: Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined—Avatārī Kṛṣṇa manifest with the heart and halo of His eternal consort, Rādhārāṇī.

The Lord's audārya-līlā (Pastimes of magnanimity), give the jīva-souls entrance into His mādhyura-līlā (Pastimes of sweetness). As Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord could show His Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā like a jewel; He could reveal all of its facets and glory. During His appearance as Kṛṣṇa, the Lord enjoyed His mādhyura-līlā personally; He did not distribute entrance into His mādhyura-līlā to the jīva-souls. But in His audārya-līlā as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord actively distributes His mādhyura-līlā everywhere. Because of this Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's audārya-līlā is honoured by the devotees as more than Kṛṣṇa's līlā.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam describes how Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu distributes Himself and His gift of Kṛṣṇa-prema, as well as how He gives the souls entrance into His mādhyura-līlā.

kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam saṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.5.32*)



Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurachandra,
the presiding Deity at
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Mission
in Salt Lake City, Utah.

“Kṛṣṇa will take form as Lord Gaurāṅga to distribute divine love and His divine form through His Divine Name. He will distribute everything through the saṅkīrtan mahāyajñā, the great sacrifice of chanting the Lord’s Holy Names in congregation. He will be *Kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam*: He will always chant the Holy Name ‘Kṛṣṇa’, and His form will have a golden effulgence. *Sāṅgopāṅgāstra pārṣadam yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana*: with His associates—Nityānanda Prabhu, Advaita Āchārya, Gadādhara Paṇḍit, Śrīvās Thākura, and so on—He will chant, dance, and engage everyone in the sacrifice of Hari-nāma-saṅkīrtan. *Yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*: all the fortunate souls will practise the procedure He distributes and feel Kṛṣṇa-prema in their hearts.”

Meeting with Rāmānanda Rāy

During His Pastimes, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu first revealed His true identity as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined to His dear devotee Rāmānanda Rāy on the bank of the Godāvārī River. Mahāprabhu chose to bestow His divine mercy upon all conditioned souls through Rāmānanda Rāy. Within their conversation, which you can find in *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, Madhyalīlā, Chapter 8, the full conception and gift that Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came to give to the world is presented. Everything is explained there. If you read it, then you will understand how people will enter Kṛṣṇa consciousness, how they will proceed in their practising life, how they will offer themselves to Kṛṣṇa, and how Kṛṣṇa will accept their service—you will understand everything.

In the final portion of their meeting, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu revealed His internal identity and hidden Pastimes to Rāmānanda Rāy. Mahāprabhu began their conversation by asking Rāmānanda, “*Paḍa śloka sādhyera nirṇaya* (Cc: Madhya, 8.57): please recite a verse that reveals the ultimate goal of our lives.”

Rāmānanda replied with a verse, but Mahāprabhu said, “*Eho bāhya, āge kaha āra*: this is external. Go deeper.”

Rāmānanda recited another verse, but Mahāprabhu rejected it: “Oh! You are cheating Me! *Eho bāhya, āge kaha āra*: this is not the answer. Tell Me more.”

Mahāprabhu rejected one, two, three, four answers of Rāmānanda in this way: “*Eho bāhya, āge kaha āra*: this is not appropriate. You know more, so tell Me more.”

By rejecting his verses Mahāprabhu was teaching Rāmānanda, but Rāmānanda was also testing Mahāprabhu. Rāmānanda was suspicious about whether a sannyāsī would accept Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā as supreme, and did not want to mention it right away. He first glorified varṇāśram-dharma, and other elementary stages.

In this way Mahāprabhu examined Rāmānanda, and Rāmānanda examined Mahāprabhu. Finally, when they found very good relations between each other, they discussed the very essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Rāmānanda described and supported rāga-mārg-sevā to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as supreme and Mahāprabhu was very, very happy. Rāmānanda said, “*Īhāra madhye Rādhāra prema—‘sādhyā-siromaṇi’*: real service to Kṛṣṇa is given by Rādhārāṇī, and Rādhārāṇī’s prema, which is the greatest amongst all the gopīs, is the topmost perfection.”

Mahāprabhu was so satisfied to hear this, and after Rāmānanda described many things about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s madhura-rasa-līlā, He said, “Yes. What you are describing is supreme, but is there anything more?”

Rāmānanda replied, “I cannot conceive that anyone could ask about anything more than this. I cannot find any verses from the scriptures that go beyond this, but if You like, You can hear something from me that may be satisfying to You.” Then Rāmānanda began to recite one of his own compositions:

pahilehi rāga nayana-bhaṅge bhela
anudina bāḍhala, avadhi nā gela
nā so ramaṇa, nā hāma ramaṇī
dūhu-mana manobhava peṣala jāni’

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.193)

[Rādhārāṇī sings:] Our attachment first arose through eye contact. It has increased daily and reached no limit. He is not man, and I am not woman. Understanding this, Cupid pressed our hearts together.

This is the most extreme expression of madhura-rasa, and Mahāprabhu finally covered Rāmānanda’s mouth with His own hand when He heard this expression. In this way, lastly, Rāmānanda surrendered to Mahāprabhu, and Mahāprabhu surrendered to Rāmānanda.

Bewildered by love

Student: Can you explain a little bit about Rāmānanda Rāy’s poem? Is it impossible for us to understand?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: It is not for public discussion actually. That poem is Rāmānanda Rāy’s superlative answer to Mahāprabhu’s question about the goal of life. Chaṇḍī Dās also gave us one of Rādhārāṇī’s songs:

Who caused Me to hear Śyām’s Name? Entering through My ears into the core of My being, Śyām’s Name overwhelmed My heart. I do not know how much nectar is present within Śyām’s Name. My heart is unable to leave Him. As I chant His Name, I am overcome. O friend! How shall I meet Him? The power of His Name affects Me so. What will the touch of His body do? If I see where He lives, how shall I maintain my vow of chastity? I decided to forget Him, but it was impossible. What shall I do? What is the solution? Dvija Chaṇḍī Dās says, ‘A chaste girl thus dishonours Her family and offers Her youth.’

kebā sunāila śyāma-nāma
 kānera bhitarā diyā, maramē paśila go,
 ākula karila mama prāṇa
 nā jāni kateka madhu, śyāma-nāme āchhe go,
 parāṇa chhāḍite nāhi pāre
 japite, japite nāma, avaśa karila go,
 kemane pāiba sai, tāre
 nāma-paratape yāra, aichhana karila go,
 aṅgera paraśe kibā haya
 yekhāne vasati tāra, nayane heriyā go
 yuvatī dharama kaichhe raya
 pāśarite kari mane, pāśarā na yāya go,
 ki kāribe ki habe upāya
 kahe dvija chaṇḍī-dāse, kulavatī kula-nāśe,
 āpanāra yauvana yāchhāya

After hearing Kṛṣṇa’s Name Rādhārāṇī is moved. Inspiration to dedicate oneself comes through Kṛṣṇa’s Name. That is the meaning of this song.

In Rāmānanda Rāy’s song Rādhārāṇī says, “When Kṛṣṇa and I first saw each other, We became attracted to each other.”

Rādhārāṇī is naturally attracted to Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is naturally attracted to Rādhārāṇī. The Power and Powerful cannot be differentiated, yet Kṛṣṇa is the Powerful, and Rādhārāṇī is the Power. They exist eternally in two forms, but They can become so attracted to one another that They cannot differentiate Themselves from one another. This song explains that this situation comes to Them. Rādhārāṇī wonders, “How is it that Kṛṣṇa is in Mathurā and I am here?” She tells a friend, “Today this situation has come: I cannot differentiate Myself from Kṛṣṇa. So, I am sending you as an ambassador to Kṛṣṇa to ask Him, ‘What is this? Is it real love? Real attachment?’”

Many things are inside this song of Rāmānanda Rāy. Rādhārāṇī wonders, “I do not know if I am woman and Kṛṣṇa is man, or I am man and Kṛṣṇa is woman. What is the truth? I have forgotten everything because such strong love, beauty, and charm have taken possession of Me.”

Student: Is this song saying that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s identities merge?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: So many things are inside this song, but they are not for public discussion. Here māyāvādīs take the opportunity to say, “That is our situation”, but it is not. Simply we can say that strong love and affection can make a person blind and unable to see anything except some positive light, just as very bright light blinds the eye.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s hidden identity

After hearing from Rāmānanda Rāy, Mahāprabhu was so happy that He could not hide His internal form from Rāmānanda. When their discourses were almost finished, Rāmānanda became very surprised by how Mahāprabhu’s divine form appeared to him. He knew what he was seeing, but he could not believe it. He asked Mahāprabhu:

pahile dekhilū tomāra sannyāsi-svarūpa
ebe tomā dekhi muñī śyāma-gopa-rūpa

tomāra sammukhe dekhi kāñchana-pañchālikā
tāra gaura-kāntyē tomāra sarva aṅga ḍhākā

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.268–269)

“Prabhu, what is this? What am I seeing? It is Your form, but I cannot believe it. At first I saw You as a sannyāsī, a glorious sannyāsī no doubt. But now I am not seeing You as only a sannyāsī: inside You I am seeing Kṛṣṇa Himself, and He appears to have the heart of Rādhārāṇī and to be covered by Her halo. What is this?”

Mahāprabhu first tried to hide Himself from Rāmānanda. Mahāprabhu said, “Oh! You are a great Kṛṣṇa-bhakta! You have so much love for Kṛṣṇa that you see Kṛṣṇa’s presence everywhere. Now you are looking at Me, and because you see Kṛṣṇa everywhere, you are seeing Me as Kṛṣṇa. Why would you not see Kṛṣṇa within Me?”

Rāmānanda Rāy replied very strongly:

rāya kahe,—prabhu tumi chhāḍa bhāri-bhūri
mora āge nija-rūpa nā kariha churi

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.278)

“Prabhu, why are You trying to cheat me? I understand who You are; You cannot hide Your identity from Me. I can see that You are the divine form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined, and it is not an illusion. Please do not cheat me. Tell me the truth. You have come here to see me and show me Your divine form. Why are You now hiding Yourself?”

Mahāprabhu said, “*Bhakti-bale pāra tumi brahmāṅḍa śodhite*: you know everything; what can I say? The power of your devotion can purify the whole universe. You are My very exclusive devotee, and I cannot hide Myself in front of you. Really, I am what you are seeing.”

tabe hāsī’ tāre prabhu dekhāila svarūpa
‘rasa-rāja’, ‘mahābhāva’—dui eka rūpa

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.282)



Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Gāndharvā
Govindasundar Jīu, the
presiding Deities at Śrī Chaitanya
Sāraswat Maṭh, Nabadwīp.

Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī
Ṭhākur established worship of
Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-
Kṛṣṇa on the same altar, in
accordance with Śrīla Rāmānanda
Rāy's vision.

Mahāprabhu smiled and showed Rāmānanda His full divine form as Rasarāj-Mahābhāva—Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—combined: as the emporium of all rasa combined with the reservoir of all divine ecstasy.

dekhi' rāmānanda hailā ānande mūrchchhite
dharite nā pāre deha, paḍilā bhūmite

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.283)

When Rāmānanda saw Mahāprabhu's form as Kṛṣṇa fully manifested with Rādhārāṇī's heart and halo, he could not stand; he fainted to the ground unconscious. Mahāprabhu touched Rāmānanda's body, and Rāmānanda returned to his normal consciousness. Rāmānanda then saw Mahāprabhu as a sannyāsī again and became puzzled. Mahāprabhu said,

āmi—eka bātula, tumi—dviṭīya bātula
ataeva tomāya āmāya ha-i sama-tula

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.291)



Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu wrote books, established worship at the sites of Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes in Vṛndāvan, and set the example of pure devotional practice for all followers of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

"I am crazy, and you are also crazy. No one else has seen this divine form of Mine as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined, but it is My own true form. Do not tell others that you have seen this form. Keep what you have seen hidden in your heart."

The most merciful Avatār

The hidden treasure of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's divine identity first came out in this way through the heart of Rāmānanda Rāy. Later Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu fully spread this consciousness to Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu wanted the flow of His mercy to continue in this world after His presence here, so when Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu met Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī in Prayag, He personally taught Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī everything He had revealed to Rāmānanda Rāy. Later, Mahāprabhu told all His devotees, "I have given everything to Rūpa Goswāmī." In this way He identified Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu as His successor. So there is no question whether there is a continuation of the flow of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy.

Later, by Mahāprabhu's mercy, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu composed some verses which gloriously and perfectly explain Mahāprabhu's appearance and gift to the world:

**namo mahāvadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-chaitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ**
(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 19.53*)

Mahā is used as a superlative in this verse: "No one is more merciful, or has ever given more, than Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared to distribute Kṛṣṇa-prema to everyone."

Only Mahāprabhu can be known as the mahāvadānya Avatār because only He has fully distributed Kṛṣṇa-prema to the world. So many forms of the Lord have appeared in the world to bless the jīva-souls. Among them Kṛṣṇa and His Vṛndāvan-līlā are supreme, but Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu is more merciful than Kṛṣṇa. Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing in the form of His devotee. A devotee's nature is to distribute Kṛṣṇa, and

when Kṛṣṇa Himself is a devotee, then He distributes mercy to the conditioned souls in the most merciful mood. And there is no question whether He can bestow His own mercy!

Sometimes we see that when the government of a country changes or some very respectable persons come to a country, prisoners are released. Sometimes thousands of prisoners are released. Similarly, when Kṛṣṇa appears as a devotee, everything changes, and He freely gives the souls His full mercy. He can give Himself, and there can be no opposition to that by any law. So Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev is the supreme giver of His own self, and by His merciful appearance all souls can receive the supreme spiritual fortune: Kṛṣṇa-prema.

Distributing pure love

The souls of this Kali-yuga are so fortunate because they are receiving the most special form of mercy in a very wide way. Without Mahāprabhu it is very rare to get a connection with Kṛṣṇa and His līlā in Vṛndāvan, where He plays with the gopīs. Kṛṣṇa has so many Avatārs: Yuga-avatārs, Līlā-avatārs, Manvantār-avatārs, Śaktyāveś-avatārs, and so on. To get a connection with Kṛṣṇa in His original form, the ever-playful Sweet Absolute, who is enjoying with the gopīs in mādhyama-līlā, is very rare. Only when Kṛṣṇa Himself wants to distribute that is it possible to enter there; only through Śrīman Mahāprabhu's audārya-līlā can we enter Kṛṣṇa's mādhyama-līlā.

In a more exclusive way we can say that Kṛṣṇa does not have full right to distribute Himself or entrance into His Pastimes. Only Kṛṣṇa's chief potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who has 'all rights reserved' over Kṛṣṇa, can fully distribute Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa-prema. When Kṛṣṇa appears as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, with the heart and halo of His supreme devotee, Rādhārāṇī, He has the opportunity to distribute Himself, that is, Rādhārāṇī distributes Her own divine mood of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.

The mood of a devotee is to always distribute, and Rādhārāṇī is always merciful. She does not want to taste the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes alone. *Ānuṣaṅge prema-maya kaile tribhuvana* (Cc: Madhya, 8.280): Mahāprabhu, as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined, could not hide His mood; He distributed Kṛṣṇa-prema to everyone, and for that He is truly the supremely merciful form of the Lord (the mahāvadānya Avatār). The Lord proved that He is infinitely merciful and that He attracts all souls and fills their hearts with ecstasy (Kṛṣṇa-prema) by appearing as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

The golden gift of the golden Lord

Mahāprabhu appeared as the Yuga-avatār to rescue the conditioned souls through Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan. This is the external cause of His appearance, but there is also some speciality within that. Mahāprabhu is the combined form of Rādhārāṇī and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. When He comes in that way, the power of His gift in saṅkīrtan is much more than that of a general Yuga-avatār, who comes in other Kali-yugas to spread the yuga-dharma. If normally someone would feel 10 per cent of the power of saṅkīrtan, then they will feel 50 per cent or 100 per cent of Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan's power when it is distributed by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu described the gift which Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu distributed with His supreme power:

anarpita-charīm chirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śachī-nandanah

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 1.4)

Anarpita-charīm chirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau: so many forms of the Lord have appeared in this world—Matsya, Kūrma, Vāman, Balarām, Kṛṣṇa, and so on—and so many previous Yuga-avatārs have appeared to fulfil Their purposes. But in

this Kali-yuga, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has given the world the most hidden treasure that has never been given before by anyone at any time anywhere.

Samarpayitum unnatojvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam: Mahāprabhu not only gave the greatest mercy to the souls, with the greatest power through saṅkīrtan, He also gave them the highest possible attainment: the supreme process of serving the Lord. *Unnatojvala-rasām* means the most elevated rasa: madhura-rasa. Mahāprabhu gave souls entrance into that most elevated type of love, attachment, and service. The five rasas—śānta, dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya, and madhura—are compared to types of metals: copper, silver, gold, and so on. Gold holds the highest rank, and Mahāprabhu Śrī Gaurāṅgadev, the golden Avatār, who appeared in Rādhārāṇī's golden colour, gave the highest, golden rasa of madhura-rasa.

Hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ: throughout His Pastimes the condensed brightness of Mahāprabhu's beautiful golden form appeared more exalted than freshly cut, glimmering gold.

Sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ Śachī-nandanah: we pray that the golden Lord Śrī Gaurāṅgadev may reveal His full golden form and golden gift in our hearts.

It was only possible for the Lord to show the exclusive and supreme position of extreme paramour love in madhura-rasa, in His Pastimes as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Only when the Lord appeared with Rādhārāṇī's heart and halo, with Her ati-gūḍha mahābhāva (most confidential ecstatic love) could the glory of madhura-rasa be fully revealed. The other Kali-yuga-avatārs do not appear with Rādhārāṇī's heart and halo; the other Kali-yuga-avatārs distribute Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan, but they do not taste Rādhārāṇī's love for Kṛṣṇa internally. Only in Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa's special appearance as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu does the Lord engage in those Pastimes. He does that for Himself, for His own interest, but at the same time the souls in this Kali-yuga become most fortunate.



Śrī Gaurāṅgasundar presides in the Temple of Union in Separation at Śrī Chaitanya Śāraswat Maṭh in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām, beside the embodiment of service in perfection, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's glory

We can truly understand the identity of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is ever-playful in Vṛndāvan with His flute and the gopas and gopīs, through the appearance of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

sarvādbhuta-chamatkāra-līlā-kallola-vāridhiḥ
atulya-madhura-prema-maṇḍita-priya-maṇḍalaḥ
tri-jagan-mānasākarsī-muralī-kala-kūjitaḥ
asamānordhva-rūpa-śrī-vismāpita-charācharaḥ

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 23.82–83)

“Kṛṣṇa’s divine Pastimes astonish everyone, His mādhyura-līlā is supreme, His flute melts everyone’s heart, and His divine form’s beauty is incomparable.”

These are the most exalted glories of Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvan-līlā. Everyone is astonished by Kṛṣṇa: Nārāyaṇ, Baladev, and even Kṛṣṇa Himself. That is why Kṛṣṇa-līlā is supreme. Kṛṣṇa Himself is enchanted by His own Pastimes, and He proved this by appearing as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s appearance also shows Rādhārāṇī’s supreme position. When Kṛṣṇa wanted to appear to taste Himself fully, He did so by taking Rādhārāṇī’s heart. We can understand through Kṛṣṇa’s choice that Rādhārāṇī must have the topmost devotion for Kṛṣṇa. Beyond this we can also understand that Her devotion makes Her position even higher than Kṛṣṇa’s because He desired to taste Her mood.

Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar has described these confidential aspects of Mahāprabhu’s appearance:

śrī-rādhāyāḥ praṇaya-mahimā kīḍṛśo vānayaivā-
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kīḍṛśo vā madīyaḥ
saukhyaṁ chāsya mad-anubhavataḥ kīḍṛśaṁ veti lobhāt
tad-bhāvāḍhyaḥ samajani śachī-garbha-sindhau harīnduḥ

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 1.6)

“When Kṛṣṇa wanted to know how deeply Kṛṣṇa-prema is present within Rādhārāṇī’s heart, how much She tastes Him, how

She serves Him, how She feels separation from Him—when Kṛṣṇa wanted to know everything in this way—He appeared from the ocean of Mother Śachī Devī’s womb as *Harīndu*: the golden moon Śrī Gaurāṅga. With the stolen heart and halo of Rādhārāṇī Kṛṣṇa engaged in tasting Rādhārāṇī’s ecstasy (mahābhāva).”

When the Sweet Absolute wanted to taste His own super-sweetness, His own loving mood, and the supreme love expanded from Goloka Vṛndāvan, He manifested in the form of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. This is the only way Kṛṣṇa could taste Himself fully. Rādhārāṇī has the highest mood of devotion, and without Her mood He could not taste Himself fully.

Loving affairs

If we want to try to understand the supreme position of Rādhārāṇī’s devotional mood, which Mahāprabhu appeared to taste, then we must understand something about the loving affairs of Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa. Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa lived together in Their youth in Vṛndāvan, enjoying the play of Their intimate love. Eventually Kṛṣṇa, externally, left to protect Vṛndāvan and fulfil His mission as the Yuga-avatār. For Rādhārāṇī, both Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvan-līlā and His Mathurā-līlā—His līlā outside of Vṛndāvan—are filled with mahābhāva, supreme ecstasy.

After Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvan, Rādhārāṇī felt unlimited separation from Him. During Her separation from Kṛṣṇa the depths of Her ecstatic love were revealed. And Kṛṣṇa, wanting to know the depth of the love for Him which She felt in separation, appeared as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

Rādhārāṇī felt many different types of separation from Kṛṣṇa, and those moods have been expressed by different Vaiṣṇava poets. Śrīla Bilvamaṅgal Ṭhākura wrote,

tvach-chhaisavaṁ tri-bhuvanādbhutam ity avehi
mach-chāpalam cha tava vā mama vādhigamyam

O Flute Player, You know that
Your youth astonishes the three
worlds, and both You and
I know of My anxiousness
(because of it). What can I do,
O Flute Player, to fully
behold Your beautiful lotus face
again in solitude?

tat kiṁ karomi viralaṁ muralī-vilāsi
mugdhaṁ mukhāmbujam udīkṣitum īkṣaṇābhyāṁ

(Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta: 32)

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī translated into Bengali
this verse from *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* which expresses Rādhārāṇī's
feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa:

tomāra mādhurī-bala, tāte mora chāpala,
ei dui, tumi āmi jāni
kāhā karō kāhā yān, kāhā gele tomā pān,
tāhā more kaha ta' āpani

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 2.62)

“The attractive power of Your sweetness, the wonder of Your Pastimes, and Your flute-playing in Your youth are impossible to imagine. How much My activity mixed with Your activity in Our youth is known only to You and somewhat to Me. Only You and I know how We played together during Our youth. No one else can understand this. What right or wrong We have done, what good or bad We have done in Our youth, that even We cannot understand. But it has happened. We did not know then how I became attracted to You and how You became attracted to Me. Now those days have passed, and with the property of Our relationship in My heart, I am feeling separation from You which is too painful for Me. What shall I do now?”

Rādhārāṇī's deepest mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa is called *vipralambha*: union in separation. We cannot express this type of separation. We do not know how to express this type of separation, and our language will never be sufficient to express it. But we can express something that we have heard from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj.

Within the deepest friendship, the deepest relationship in madhura-rasa with Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī felt separation from Kṛṣṇa to be like a fire-bed. *Vipralambha* means the most extreme mood of separation. After Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvan Dhām, Rādhārāṇī tasted that most extreme sentiment: union in separation.

sthāvara-jaṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūr̥ti
sarvatra haya tāra iṣṭa-deva-sphūr̥ti

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.274)

In the mood of vipralambha, when Rādhārāṇī was separate from Kṛṣṇa, She would see Kṛṣṇa in front of Her, all around Her—everywhere—and try to embrace Him.

kṛṣṇa-mayī—kṛṣṇa yāra bhitare bāhire
yāhā yāhā netra paḍe tāhā kṛṣṇa sphure

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 4.85)

Everywhere Rādhārāṇī would see Kṛṣṇa with Her. When She would go for a walk She would see Kṛṣṇa all around Her, and everywhere She would try to embrace Him. She would be separate from Kṛṣṇa but feel filled with Kṛṣṇa's presence. From moment to moment She would feel Kṛṣṇa's presence and then feel separate from Him. Every day, all the time, union with Kṛṣṇa would come to Her and then leave Her. Lastly, She would think Kṛṣṇa was only a dream, feel hopeless, and show Herself in the most helpless way. Rādhārāṇī's love for Kṛṣṇa is most rare and exists only in Goloka Vṛndāvan. Her prema is known as *ati-gūḍha mahābhāva*, the most confidential form of ecstatic love.

The extremes of separation

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's most extreme mood of vipralambha is expressed in this verse,

ayi dīna-dayārdra-nātha he
mathurā-nātha kadāvalokyase
hṛdayam tvad-aloka-kātaram
dayita bhrāmyati kiṁ karomy aham

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 4.197)

Her mood here is like someone who was extremely wealthy but has lost all of Her wealth and now has no property at all. *Ayi Dīna-dayārdra-nātha he*: She cannot feel Her own property and calls out to Kṛṣṇa as though She is very, very poor.

*O Lord whose heart is melted
with mercy for the poor! O Lord
of Mathurā! When shall I see
You again? In separation from You,
My broken heart trembles.
O Beloved! What shall I do now?*

devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā rādhikā para-devatā
sarva-lakṣmī-mayī sarva-kāntiḥ sammohinī parā

(Bṛhad-Gautamīya-tantra)

Rādhārāṇī is the supreme proprietor of everything—love, beauty, charm, attachment, wealth, and so on—but in separation from Kṛṣṇa She feels She has nothing. She cannot feel Her own wealth because of the intensity of Her feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa. She gives up everything and expresses Her feelings to Kṛṣṇa: “You are My dearmost, and I cannot tolerate Your separation. But I cannot say that fully because I am not getting any hope from You. My dear friend, You have not given Me the wealth of any hope. *Ayi Dīna-dayārḍra-nātha*: You are merciful to those who are very poor. Can’t You see Me in front of You? I am very, very poor!

“O Mathurānāth, before You were Vṛndāvanēśvar [the Lord of Vṛndāvan]. You were Rāseśvar [the enjoyer of the rāsa dance]. You were Rādhā Ramaṇ [He who pleases Rādhā]. You filled My heart with joy in Our intimate relationship. You were fully present in Your Vṛndāvan-līlā with Myself and all the Vraja-gopīs. But now You have left and become the king of Mathurā Maṇḍal. Now You are Mathurānāth, the Lord of Mathurā. You are no longer Vṛndāvannāth, the Lord of Vṛndāvan. What can I say? *Kadāvalokyase*: I want to see You. At least I want to see You. *Hṛdayaṇi Tvad-aloka-kātaram*: not seeing You has given so much pain to Me, to My heart. *Dayita bhrāmyati kim karomy Aham*: what shall I do now? I do not know. I feel there is nothing I can do, but I also cannot tolerate Your separation. Feeling such extreme separation from You, I cannot leave My body, but I also cannot stay within My body.” This verse is the heart-expression of Rādhārāṇī.

mahābhāva-svarūpā śrī-rādhā-ṭhākurāṇī
sarva-guṇa-khani kṛṣṇa-kāntā-śiromaṇi

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, 4.69)

“Rādhārāṇī is Mahābhāva Herself, the supreme servitor of Kṛṣṇa.”

Who can express what is in Her heart? Who can feel and express Rādhārāṇī's deepest, hopeless mood of separation?

ei śloka kahiyāchhena rādhā-ṭhākuraṇī
tāra kṛpāya sphuriyāchhe mādhavendra-vāṇī

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 4.194)

Only She Herself could reveal the full depth of Her separation from Kṛṣṇa. By Her grace only, Her feelings manifested in this world through the heart of Mādhavendra Purī. Mādhavendra Purī tasted Rādhārāṇī's ecstatic mood of separation through this verse, *ayi Dīna-dayārdra-nātha he*, as he departed from this world.

śeṣa-kāle ei śloka paṭhite paṭhite
siddhi-prāpti haila purīra ślokera sahite

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 4.196)

When Mādhavendra Purī was leaving his body he constantly recited this verse and expressed its meaning. Later, Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev tasted Rādhārāṇī's mood of devotion through this verse of Mādhavendra Purī. In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* it is described that when Mahāprabhu visited the Temple of Gopīnāth in Remuna He was overcome with the mood of vipralambha expressed in this verse. He recited this verse only once or twice and then was unable to speak any further.

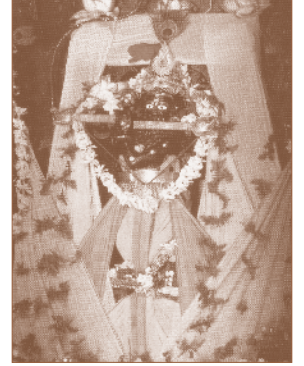
'ayi dīna, ayi dīna' bale bāra-bāra
kaṅṭhe nā niḥsare vāṇī, netre aśru-dhāra

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 4.201)

He could only say, "Ayi dīna! Ayi dīna! I am so poor! I have nothing!" Over and over again this was all He could say. Crying in this mood of vipralambha, He fainted and fell to the floor of Gopīnāth's Temple.

kibā gaurachandra ihā kare āsvādana
ihā āsvādite āra nāhi chauṭha-jana

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 4.195)



Kṣīra-chora Gopīnāth, at whose lotus feet Mādhavendra Purī tasted Rādhārāṇī's feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa.

“Mahāprabhu tasted the meaning of this verse and in that way opened the door of Kṛṣṇa-prema. No fourth man in this mundane world has tasted this verse like that. Only Rādhārāṇī, Mādhavendra Purī, and Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev have tasted the meaning.”

This verse and the description of its manifestation in this world is explained by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī in his *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, so we can also say that Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī has given us this verse. He tells us that no one else can understand this verse’s meaning. He means that the deepest meanings of this verse cannot be opened by anyone. But Kavirāj Goswāmī himself opened a door to this verse for us through his *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*. He did not open every door; He opened one door. Through that he gave some nourishment to others. There are many other doors to this verse, and he said, “Now I will not say anything more. What will be will be.” So we can say that he knows the meaning of the verse perfectly and that he is the fourth man who can taste it because he knows and is telling us that no one else can taste its meaning.

We will also say though that by the grace of Rādhārāṇī, Mādhavendra Purī, Kavirāj Goswāmī, and our Guru Mahārāj, we can feel something of this verse’s meaning. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was very much intoxicated with this verse and many times we heard from him his heart’s expression of this verse. By the grace of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj we know something of what is inside this verse. But what I have explained here about this verse is, no doubt, external. It only follows the language of the verse and is an explanation of this verse’s external meaning.

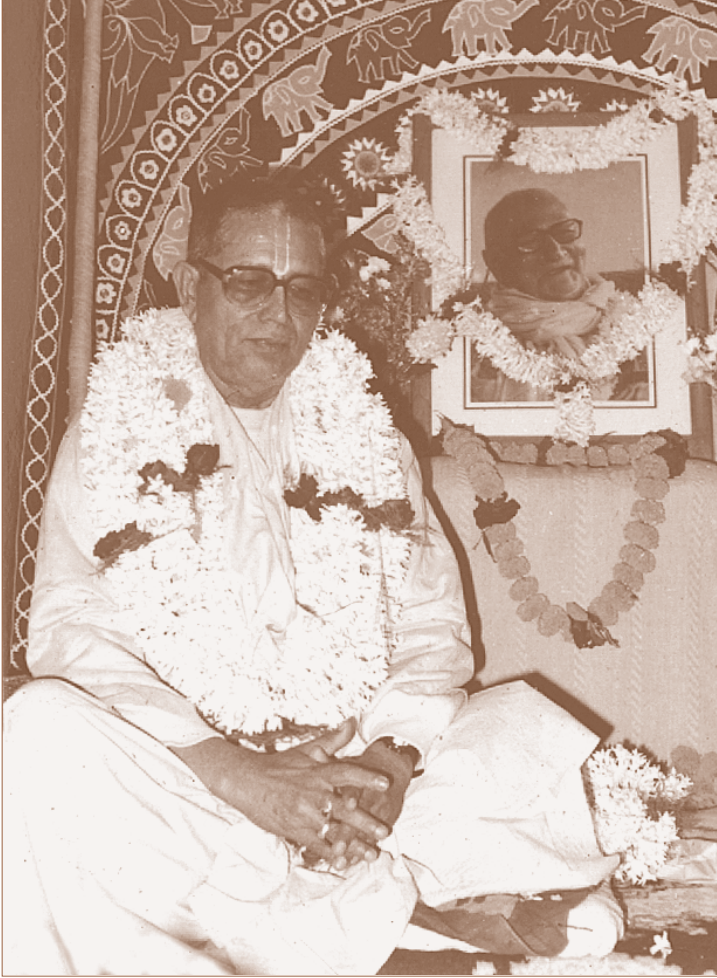
kṛṣṇa-lilā amṛta-sāra,
tāra śata śata dhāra,
daśa-dike vahe yāhā haite
se chaitanya-lilā haya,
sarovara akṣaya,
mano-hamśa charāha’ tāhāte

(Cc: Madhya, 25.271)

“May the swan of your heart
play in the inexhaustible
reservoir of Śrī Chaitanya’s
Pastimes, from which
hundreds of streams of the
ultimate nectar of
Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes flow in all
directions.”

Rādhārāṇī’s love and Kṛṣṇa’s desire

We can understand that Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s Pastimes come as the next edition of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s eternal Pastimes. Kṛṣṇa wanted to taste the depth of Rādhārāṇī’s love and feelings of separation from Him; He wanted to taste His own beauty and love through Rādhārāṇī’s supreme devotional



mood. He Himself took Rādhārāṇī's heart and halo to appear in the form of Mahāprabhu, merged into His Kali-yuga-avatār form, and descended to the material world with His associates, abode, and so on. Śrīla Svarūp Dāmodar has explained this clearly for us:

rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād
 ekātmānāv api bhuvī purā deha-bhedam gatau tau
 chaitanyākhyam prakāṣam adhunā tad-dvayam chaikyam āptam
 rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalitam naumi kṛṣṇa-svarūpam

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Ādi-līlā, 1.5)

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, but He has now become the divine form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined to taste Rādhārāṇī's Kṛṣṇa-prema. Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu are actually nondifferent. Mahāprabhu appeared to taste the divine ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa-prema in the way that Rādhārāṇī tastes it and to see the way She gives Kṛṣṇa super joy and ecstasy through Her love, affection, charm, beauty, and so on. That is the hidden purpose of Kṛṣṇa's appearance as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Finest Conception

When you are conscious, you want to eat something, you want to feel something, you want to do something, you want to enjoy something. You want a life in which everything is palatable and beautiful. In your room you choose your lights, your windows, different kinds of decorations, and so on. You make everything the way you like it. Your very nature shows that you want a beautiful life.

Where does beauty exist? How can we find beauty? There is a nice story in the Purāṇas about Mother Lakṣmī Devī's owl-carrier which explains this. Once, Mother Lakṣmī Devī tested her owl by giving her a garland of pearls and saying, "Give this garland to whomever you think is most beautiful. Go out and search. When you find someone who appears most beautiful to you, give them this garland."

The owl went out and searched all over the whole world for anyone, any animal, human or thing, who had completely attractive beauty. Everywhere she went, she could always find some deficiency. She saw so many persons who were beautiful but she could always find some deficiency in them. Finally she became thirsty and returned to her home. When she saw her

child, she immediately felt, “Oh! So beautiful!” and gave the pearl garland to her child. Later Mother Lakṣmī Devī asked, “What happened in your search?” The owl replied, “I went around the whole world but I did not see anyone who was perfectly beautiful. Finally I became thirsty and went to my house. There I saw that my own child was *so* beautiful! I gave the garland to her.”

Vision of love

So, where is beauty? Beauty is in the heart. We see beauty through the love and affection in our heart. If someone wants to dissect everything then everything will appear ugly to them. Sometimes people say, “That person has a beautiful face.” Where is the beauty of that person’s face? If you perform a dissection in a laboratory will you find the beauty of that person’s face? No. You will find blood, tissue, DNA, and so on.

You will never find beauty if you search for it externally. Beauty exists within our consciousness. When we understand this then everything around us will become auspicious and beautiful to us through the love and affection we hold in our hearts.

*I serve the inconceivable,
original Lord, Śyāmasundar
Govinda, whom the sādhus
always see within their hearts
through eyes of devotion
tinged with the salve of love.*

**premāñjana-chchhurita-bhakti-vilochanena
santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti
yaṁ śyāmasundaram achintya-guṇa-svarūpaṁ
govindam ādi puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi**

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.38)

Nothing will feel beautiful to you if you do not have love and affection (prema) within your heart. When your heart’s eyes are decorated with love and affection then everything in front of you appears very beautiful. The vision necessary to see universal beauty comes to us through devotion (bhakti).

Many times Śrīla Guru Mahārāj explained, “Beauty is controlling everything.” His expression, “Search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Reality the Beautiful” means that beauty is controlling everything.

How does beauty come to us? Through love and affection for our Lord. We actually want to play and stay with our Lord in a beautiful place filled with beautiful paraphernalia and surrounded by a beautiful atmosphere. The first condition for this is devotion, and devotion will come through dedication. So everything—love, affection, beauty, devotion, dedication—is related and exists within the one chamber of our hearts.

sādhyaṁ tat-prītim evety upadiśati janān gaura-chandraḥ svayaṁ saḥ

(Daśa-mūla-tattva-niryāsa)

Sādhya means what you want, your destination, your ultimate hankering. Mahāprabhu taught us, *sādhyaṁ tat-prītim*: our *sādhya* is love for the Lord, as well as love for ourselves. When you have love for the Lord, love automatically returns to you.

tach chātmane prati-mukhasya yathā mukha-śrīḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 7.9.11)

If you put on tilak, in the mirror you will see that your face is beautifully decorated with tilak. Everything you give to your Lord returns to you a thousand times more beautiful. That is prīti, Kṛṣṇa-prema, our supreme aspiration, and Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has given that consciousness to us.

Full nourishment

The practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is our life, and it is necessary to practise that in a fair and perfect way. In our practising life, faith is the basis and love is our food. If our love for Kṛṣṇa increases then everything increases. If we realise what we have received from our Gurudev—pure consciousness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—then in everything—every song, every verse, every advice, every thought—we will feel, “My existence is present there.”

All Kṛṣṇa conscious expressions have a very sweet nature.

tad eva ramyaṁ ruchiraṁ navam navam

tad eva śāśvan manaso mahotsavam

tad eva śokārṇava-śoṣaṇam nṛṇām
yad uttamaḥśloka-yaśo 'nugīyate

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 12.12.50)

Tad eva ramyam: Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very tasteful, beautiful, and ecstatic. *Ruchiram navam navam*: it can reveal new light and inspiration at every moment. As someone hears about Kṛṣṇa consciousness he will not be satisfied by hearing only a little bit of discussion; he will want to hear more and more. *Tad eva śaśvan manaso mahotsavam*: Kṛṣṇa consciousness always gives everyone's heart the transcendental feeling of a great festival, just as we always happily expect there will be many varieties of very palatable mahāprasādam on a festival day. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like a generator: it may be a little difficult to start, but once it is going and giving power it will run happily and give more and more light to everyone's heart. When Kṛṣṇa consciousness once enters the heart and receives good nourishment there, it will sprout, grow happily, and become strong enough to bind an elephant. Parīkṣit Mahārāj said,

yach-chhṛṇvatām rasa-jñānām
svādu svādu pade pade

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.1.19)

“If you discuss Kṛṣṇa consciousness as much as possible at every moment, very tasteful nectar will come to you again and again and take on newer and newer forms.”

Vedavyās also said,

nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 1.1.3)

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like a very sweet ripened fruit that has neither skin nor a seed. As you taste it, at every moment it gives you more and more ecstatic feelings and strength.

bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir
anyatra chaiṣa trika eka-kālaḥ
prapadyamānasya yathāśnataḥ syus
tuṣṭiḥ puṣṭiḥ kṣud-apāyo 'nu-ghāsam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 11.2.42)

How will you know whether you have Kṛṣṇa consciousness or not? You will feel it just as a hungry person feels the effects of taking prasādam: with every mouthful that prasādam gives good taste, good nourishment, and removes hunger. When Kṛṣṇa consciousness is revealed in our hearts, our devotional feelings and activity will increase, we will feel the joy and happiness of a connection with Kṛṣṇa in our hearts, and we will experience detachment from mundane attractions, the end of our hunger for material things.

Hankering for Kṛṣṇa-prema

Kṛṣṇa consciousness has no end. The Upaniṣads say,

om pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam
idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udachyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya
pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate

(Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-upaniṣad: 5.1.1)

“Kṛṣṇa consciousness is infinite, and a sincere seeker will really get that type of ecstasy—infinite ecstasy—through Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

As Kṛṣṇa consciousness reveals itself more and more in our hearts we may even become mad. What did Mahāprabhu Himself say?

na prema-gandho 'sti darāpi me harau
krandāmi saubhāgya-bharam prakāśitum
vaṁśī-vilāsy-ānana-lokanam vinā
bibharmi yat prāṇa-pataṅgakān vṛthā

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 2.45)

“Really, I have no love for Kṛṣṇa. If I did then how could I be alive? I am living without Kṛṣṇa, so how can I say I have love for Kṛṣṇa?”

Mahāprabhu is full of Kṛṣṇa-prema, but His heart’s expression is, “*Na prema-gandho ’sti darāpi Me Harau*: I do not have even a little bit of hankering for Kṛṣṇa.”

Actually, Mahāprabhu was hankering for Kṛṣṇa-prema so much, and He showed us the degree of hankering that is necessary for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He showed us that if we clearly and perfectly, without any haziness, realise that we need Kṛṣṇa-prema, then even Kṛṣṇa will not be able to check us. We will get it. If I am very disturbed by the mundane environment and I sincerely pray to Kṛṣṇa, “Please give me Kṛṣṇa-prema”, then Kṛṣṇa must give that to me.

Kṛṣṇa knows everything, and Kṛṣṇa understands everything. Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, and His divine play as the Sweet Absolute never stops. Even if Kṛṣṇa does not want to give Kṛṣṇa-prema to us, His devotees will (*patitānām pāvanebhyo*). Sometimes Kṛṣṇa likes to hide, but His devotees are always merciful. If they see anyone drowning they will rescue him. The devotees will always give full support to a hankering soul.

Even if Kṛṣṇa ousts me from His jurisdiction, I still have hope if I have hankering for the service of Kṛṣṇa under the affectionate guidance of His devotees. That is my life experience; it is not only a theory. I have seen many things in my life, and through that I am sure that even if Kṛṣṇa wants to oust me, He will not be able to if I have the affection of His devotees. So only self-realisation is necessary: “Do I want Kṛṣṇa-prema or not?”

*Purchase ecstatic devotion
to Kṛṣṇa wherever it is available!
The only price is hankering.
It is not attainable by acting
piously (practising vidhi-bhakti)
for ten million lifetimes.*

**kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ
krīyatām yadi kuto ’pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalaṁ
janma-koṭi-sukṛtair na labhyate**
(*Padyāvalī: 14*)

We need transcendental ecstasy. We do not want sadness, sorrow, or inauspiciousness. We always need the opposite. We need something eternal, glorious, and beautiful. There is only one way to get that: hankering. Hankering gives us real property in our spiritual life.

If I have hankering for Kṛṣṇa-prema then I must search, “Where is Kṛṣṇa-prema?” It is very rare, but if I find anyone who has Kṛṣṇa-prema in their heart, then I must try to get his association. Through that person I can understand what Kṛṣṇa-prema is, how much I need it, how much I will be satisfied by it, and so on. I will be able to understand everything through the sādhu who has Kṛṣṇa-prema in his heart.

All the scriptures always praise the sādhus. A sādhu is chaste, honest, and dedicated to the Lord with extreme love and affection. If we have a connection with a sādhu, with our Guru, and we are conscious about that, then we can receive prema, love and affection, from him on the conscious level. Love and affection are transmitted from consciousness to consciousness, from heart to heart.

The presence of love within the sādhu’s consciousness can be transmitted to you and transform your consciousness. Hankering is our first necessity. Without hankering we will not find that sādhu or Kṛṣṇa-prema. Many frustrated persons are searching in the wrong way. Our search should be filled with happiness, peace, and beauty. In that way we will seek, “Is it here or there?” If we are frustrated in one place then we must look in another place, and wherever we can find the devotional mood of Kṛṣṇa-prema we must immediately buy it with our hankering. Hankering can give us everything. But *krīyatām* does not mean, “Try to buy it.” *Krīyatām* means, “Buy it!” The price of Kṛṣṇa-prema is hankering. Without hankering, without intense desire, we will never get Kṛṣṇa-prema, even if we have an ocean of sukṛti. The only qualification and means is hankering, and without that we will not get anything.

Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī
 Ṭhākura leading devotees
 through the streets of Kolkata
 towards the Bag Bazaar
 Gauḍīya Maṭh (pictured below).



Intoxicated with mundane activity

During the Ratha Yātrā Mahāprabhu prayed to Lord Jagannāth:

nāhaṁ vipro na cha nara-patir nāpi vaiśya na śūdro
 nāhaṁ varṇī na cha gṛha-patir no vanastho yatir vā
 kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramānanda-pūrnāmṛtābdher
 gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 13.80)

“We are not brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, or śūdras. We are not sannyāsīs, vānaprasthas, gṛhasthas, or brahmachārīs. Our identity is not mundane. We are eternal servants of the servants of the servants of Reality the Beautiful Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ*: we are the servants of the servants of the servant of the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvan who is the protector, prestige, and everything of the gopīs. That Kṛṣṇa is our enjoyer, and all our service is meant to supply enjoyment to Him.”

This is the conception of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, and through His conception we are approaching Guru-Vaiṣṇava with strong faith and hankering to be engaged in service. How



we can properly serve the servants of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa according to Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's conception in our lives has been revealed by Prabhupād Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur.

Our Param Gurudev, Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur, composed a Bengali song during the inauguration festival of the Bag Bazaar Gauḍīya Maṭh in Kolkata. Before that ashram opened Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur and his disciples stayed in a rented house in Ultadanga. One gentleman, Jagabandhu Prabhu, donated three lakhs of rupees to Prabhupād so that he could establish the Kolkata headquarters of his Mission. Today that would equal a donation of at least one crore of rupees. All of Prabhupād's disciples were very happy and enjoyed their new ashram very much. All the activities of an ashram externally look like material activities (*viṣaya*). Internally they are the service of Guru and Gaurāṅga, but externally they look like material activities: eating, sleeping, singing, dancing, and so on (*viṣaya-raṅga*).

When the festival was held for the inauguration of the new ashram a Ratha Yātrā style procession brought the Deities Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Gāndharvikā Giridhārī from Ultadanga to Bag Bazaar. At that time Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur composed this line explaining the activities of his Mission:

pūjala rāga-pātha gaurava-bhaṅge
mātala sādhu-jana viṣaya-raṅge

Here Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur explains that the *sādhu-jana*, the devotees, all appear very intoxicated with mundane activity (*viṣaya-raṅge*), but their activities are actually not mundane at all: they are regulated worship of the higher path of *rāga-mārg*, the path of loving service to the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur gave everyone the divine knowledge that we should not emotionally jump into the external activities of the residents of Vṛndāvan. Rather, we should respect and honour their service as above us and pray for their mercy. If we try to jump from our egoistic mountain to the highest



Śrīmad Jagabandhu Bhakti Rañjan



plane of divine līlā we will fall down very close to where we started. It is not the proper procedure to try to enter the higher plane from our existing position. We need to transform ourselves and be empowered by the residents of that higher plane before we can enter there.

Hanumānjī can jump from mountain to mountain because He acts solely for service of His Lord, Rāmachandra. We need to have power like him, that is, a pure serving mood, before we can jump from our position into the divine Pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. *Pūjala rāga-pātha gaurava-bhaṅge*: until we are qualified with a pure serving mood we will honour the Divine Couple's Sweet Absolute Pastimes from a respectful distance.

The posture of Mahāprabhu's saṅkīrtan

When I wanted to make a diorama expressing Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's siddhānta on the front of our Maṭh in Nabadwīp, I used this verse. However I changed one of the lines in the verse with the permission of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. Through Śrīla Guru Mahārāj we can understand the desire of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and for preaching purposes I changed this verse to make it more understandable to general people. I engraved these two lines on our naṭ mandir:

mātala hari-jana kīrtana-raṅge
pūjala rāga-pātha gaurava-bhaṅge

Later, I also posted this expression on the wall of my veranda so I could see it every day. Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's phrase *viṣaya-raṅge* is very deep. To say that work and activity which may appear completely material are actually completely transcendental is not easy for the public to understand. I wanted to show in the diorama that it is through Mahāprabhu's saṅkīrtan that we must worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Kali-yuga. For that reason I used the phrase *mātala Hari-jana kīrtana-raṅge* instead. It means that devotees are intoxicated with the practice of Mahāprabhu's saṅkīrtan. They are hearing and chanting the Holy Name and the glories of Mahāprabhu, and through that they are serving and satisfying the Divine Couple Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, whose nondifferent form is Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. In the formal posture (*gaurava-bhaṅge*) of Mahāprabhu's saṅkīrtan the devotees are offering their worship to Rādhā-Govinda and Their intimate servitors.

At present we do not live in the domain of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and we are not trying to forcefully enter that abode. Rather we are trying to honour that abode through our life in Kali-yuga under the proper shelter of the practice of saṅkīrtan at the lotus feet of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. So we are proceeding systematically towards the goal of our lives, the service of Rādhā-Govinda, under the guidance of Their intimate associates headed by Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu.

Intoxicated with the joy of saṅkīrtan, the surrendered souls worship rāga-mārg from within the posture of vidhi-mārg.



*Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara
Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj's Bhajan
Dhām at Śrī Chaitanya
Sāraswat Maṭh, Nabadwīp.*

Service in Gupta Govardhan

Once when we were painting Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's building in Nabadwīp I decided to put a verse on the front of the building above his veranda.

śrī-rādhāra bhāve yini suvarṇa varaṇa
sāṅgopāṅge navadvīpe yāra saṅkīrtana
kalite upāsya sei kṛṣṇa gaurahari
navadhā bhaktite tāre upāsana kari

(Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura)

[“Through the nine-fold practice of devotion I worship Kṛṣṇa's golden Avatār in Kali-yuga, Gaurahari, who performs saṅkīrtana in the mood of Śrī Rādhā with His associates in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām.”]

When I had this verse written on the front of his building Śrīla Guru Mahārāj did not say anything. Years later when we were maintaining the building we white-washed all the walls and that verse was painted over. When Śrīla Guru Mahārāj came out onto the roof of the naṭ mandir and saw the wall where the verse had been written he asked me, “Where is that verse? I do not see it.” Then I understood that Śrīla Guru Mahārāj noticed everything and that he was very happy when I put this verse on the front of his building. I felt that Śrīla Guru Mahārāj knew everything I was doing and was always watching over me. Then I had that verse written there again, and still it is there today.

Our Maṭh is located in Gupta Govardhan, Hidden Govardhan, in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām. Govardhan is the primary place of rāga-mārg worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

*O Govardhan, the Divine Couple
liberally enact Their Pastimes
of maddened love in your caves.
Please grant me a dwelling beside
you so I can see Their Pastimes.*

pramada-madana-līlāḥ kandare kandare te
rachayati nava-yūnor dvandvam asminn amandam
iti kila kalanārtham lagnakas tad-dvayor me
nija-nikaṭa-nivāsam dehi govardhana tvam

(Śrī Govardhana-vāsa-prārthanā-daśakam: 2)

Girirāj Govardhan is the highest place in Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's highest līlās happen in the groves around Govardhan Hill. Rādhā Kuṇḍa, Śyāma Kuṇḍa, Govinda Kuṇḍa, Kusum Sarovar, and many, many kuñjas surround Govardhan, and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's confidential līlās happen at different times and in these places around Govardhan.

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa enjoy Their intimate Pastimes around Govardhan as all the sakhīs and mañjarīs busily serve Them day and night. Chiefly Lalitā Devī organises the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and she gives the highest service to the group of Rūpa Mañjarī. *Gokula-pateḥ premāmṛtāplāvanāt*: in this way the nectar of Kṛṣṇa-prema overflows all around Govardhan Hill.

We presented our diorama on the front of our Maṭh to show everyone that through the saṅkīrtan of Mahāprabhu we can properly honour the most worshipping plane of rāga-mārg service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—Govardhan—and that we will automatically enter there when we become qualified through our sincere practice of saṅkīrtan. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj accepted all of my ideas. In that way we decorated the front of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh and adjusted Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura's expression.

The shelter of the sakhīs

If you want entrance into Kṛṣṇa-līlā's special chamber of paramour love then you must go to the sakhīs, Rādhārāṇī's associates. All rights are reserved by the sakhīs in those Pastimes. You must go to the sakhīs, surrender to them, and get a visa from them to enter those Pastimes. If the sakhīs do not give you a visa then no one—neither Kṛṣṇa, nor Lord Śiva, nor anyone—can give you entrance into the Pastimes of paramour love. Lakṣmī Devī Herself was denied a visa. All rights are reserved by the sakhīs. In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* it is written,

sakhī vinā ei līlā puṣṭa nāhi haya
sakhī līlā vistāriyā, sakhī āsvādaya

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: Madhya-līlā, 8.203*)



Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh,
in Śrī Gupta Govardhan of
Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām.

“The sakhīs provide all the nourishment necessary for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes of paramour love. The sakhīs personally taste these Pastimes, and only they have the power to distribute them. No one else has the right to taste them, and without the sakhīs’ consent no one gets entrance into them.”

Rādhārāṇī is the leader of all the groups of sakhīs. She has eight principle sakhīs: Lalitā, Viśākhā, Chitra, Champakalatikā, Tuṅga Vidyā, Indulekhā, Sudevī, and Raṅga Devikā. They are the group leaders of all the servitors of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The mañjarīs, the younger sakhīs, serve under the eight primary sakhīs. The mañjarīs are led by Rūpa Mañjarī and her associates: Lavaṅga Mañjarī, Anaṅga Mañjarī, Rati Mañjarī, Guṇa Mañjarī, and so on. Rādhārāṇī serves Kṛṣṇa directly while all of Her associates assist Her under the guidance of Lalitā Devī and Rūpa Mañjarī. Rādhārāṇī also sometimes sends Kṛṣṇa to satisfy the sakhīs. The sakhīs do not expect they will associate with Kṛṣṇa alone, but Rādhārāṇī makes many tactful arrangements for them. Rādhārāṇī wants to satisfy Kṛṣṇa and side by side all of Kṛṣṇa’s servitors.

In this way the Pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa go on, and service-entrance into those Pastimes is only available by surrendering to the sakhīs. Without their mercy no one can expect to serve Rādhārāṇī or Kṛṣṇa. The service of Rādhārāṇī is very rare to get, and without the mercy of the sakhīs no one will get it. The sakhīs give power to the mañjarīs, so if anyone can receive the mercy of Rūpa Mañjarī, the leader of the mañjarīs, then they will get full entrance into the service world of Goloka Vṛndāvan.

If we proceed properly we must get the association and mercy of the Divine Couple’s associates, the sakhīs, one day. That is our life’s goal. But before that it is necessary for us to understand the identities of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī, and Their associates, as well as our own identity and necessity. We need realisation of these things, and we need to approach that highest plane through the proper channel. If we can approach properly then we reach our life’s goal.

mātala hari-jana kīrtana-raṅge
pūjala rāga-pātha gaurava-bhaṅge

Our target is the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī's associates, but if we think we will get that very easily then we will be cheated. It is first necessary to practise Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan properly and try to attract Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to appear in our heart by the grace of Their associates.

Mature taste and immature imitation

At present Rādhā-Govinda-līlā is so far from us because we are bound by our material senses and have no control over them. We have a materialistic conception, and through that we fall into the garbage of illusion again and again. A proper practitioner who is qualified to remember Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā under the guidance of his Guru has no attachment to this mundane world. He has no lust, anger, greed, or illusion—nothing. But we are conditioned souls who are polluted by māyā, and we will be cheated even more by māyā if we are not careful and prematurely try to enter into the higher plane of Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvan Pastimes.

So many so-called big personalities and sādhus may preach about Vraja-bhajan, but before the stage of ruchi we are not qualified for that. Ruchi means extreme attachment, affection, and love that is free from anything mundane. Those who have ruchi can think about the Pastimes of Rādhā-Govinda, their position in those Pastimes, the aṣṭa-kāliyā-līlā, and many other things. But if we still have any anarthas [mundane desires], then any practice of that will be imitation. And imitationism, sahajiyāism, takes us to hell.

We have seen many bābājīs singing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā and crying so much: singing and crying, singing and crying, and finally foaming at the mouth. But simply showing many symptoms of ecstasy is not real Kṛṣṇa-prema. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur clearly expressed in his song,

ki āra baliba tore mana
mukhe bala prema prema, vastutaḥ tyajiyā hema
śūnya-grantha añchale bandhana

(Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru: Upadeśa, 18.1)

“My dirty and naughty mind, what can I say to you? You are always saying, ‘Kṛṣṇa-prema, Kṛṣṇa-prema’, and making an exhibition of the symptoms of Kṛṣṇa-prema, but you actually do not have anything. Your activity is comparable to making a knot in the corner of your cloth to show others that you have a piece of gold there. Inside you have nothing. You think you are carrying a precious golden jewel within you, but actually you have nothing of value. You think your activities are giving you the wealth of Kṛṣṇa-prema but actually they are only deceiving you.”

The ecstasy and nectar of the Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvan can only be tasted by liberated souls. We must wait for the stage of *ruchi* to come to us before trying to enter there. We should first make our heart and mind clean and engage in the service of Rādhā-Govinda under the guidance of a real sādhu, who is properly practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the line of exclusive service. Such a sādhu will guide us properly according to our stage of development. If we try to proceed in that way and engage in Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan as it was given by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu for the Kali-yuga, it will be possible for us to receive the purifying mercy of Rādhā-Govinda. We will be fully satisfied with that.

The treasurer of our fortune

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu appeared to show us the path of our life and the glories of Rādhā-Govinda. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s greatest gift to the world and the way that He distributes it have been explained by Śrīla Guru Mahārāj.

sarvāchintyamaye parātpara-pure goloka-vṛndāvane
chil-līlā-rasa-raṅginī parivṛtā sā rādhikā śrī-hareḥ

vātsalyādi-rasaiś cha sevita-tanor-mādhurya-sevā-sukhaṁ
 nityaṁ yatra mudā tanoti hi bhavān tad dhāma-sevā-pradaḥ
 śrī-gaurānumataṁ svarūpa-viditaṁ rūpāgrajenādṛtaṁ
 rūpādyaiḥ pariveśitaṁ raghu-gaṇair āsvāditaṁ sevitaṁ
 jīvādyair abhirakṣitaṁ śuka-śiva-brahmādi-sammānitaṁ
 śrī-rādhā-pada-sevanāmṛtam aho tad dātum īso bhavān

(Śrīmad Bhakti Vinod Viraha Daśakam: 8–9)

In the highest plane of the inconceivable realm—Goloka Vṛndāvan Dhām—Rādhārāṇī and Her associates serve Kṛṣṇa in the supreme rasa of paramour love. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu appeared to distribute the service of Rādhārāṇī under the guidance of Her associates. Svarūp Dāmodar understood this perfectly. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī, Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī, Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī, and Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī wholeheartedly practised this throughout their lives and showed everyone the proper way to approach it. Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī worshipped it, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī distributed it, Śrīla Raghunāth Goswāmī tasted and served it, and Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī protected it. Śukadev Goswāmī, Lord Śiva, Lord Brahmā, Devarṣi Nārada, Uddhava and others fold their hands and gave their full respect to it. *Śrī-Rādhā-pada-sevanāmṛtam*: the nectar of the service of Rādhārāṇī’s lotus feet, the highest conception of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, *aho tad dātum īso bhavān*: the treasurer of that wealth is Gurudev. Only Gurudev has the capacity to distribute that final destination and highest property to the conditioned souls.

The gist of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s expression in these two verses is, “The strength, quality, qualification—everything—necessary to worship Rādhārāṇī’s lotus feet comes through Gurudev.”

Everything we want to know we can understand through our Gurudev. Gurudev’s position is always supreme. Gurudev is the Lord’s best servitor. In the scriptures it is said:

harau ruṣṭe gurus-trātā gurau ruṣṭe na kaśchana

(Āditya-purāṇa)

“If Kṛṣṇa is angry with you, Gurudev can save you, Rādhārāṇī can save you, but if Rādhārāṇī is angry with you, Kṛṣṇa cannot save you.”

Our protection, our environment, our everything, comes to us through Gurudev’s mercy, and through that we will be gracious, fortunate, and exalted practitioners. In that way we will practise to serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the line of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. That is called Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam: serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

We know that Gurudev is nondifferent from Rādhārāṇī. It is written everywhere in the scriptures, but Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur specially and sweetly mentioned, “If I want to see my Gurudev, I shall see that he is the nondifferent form of Rādhārāṇī. I do not know and I do not want to know the position of another person’s Guru. I only know that my Guru is my rescuer, my master, my everything, and if I want to see him more deeply then I see that he is a nondifferent form of Rādhārāṇī.” Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur expressed his vision in this way, and we honour that fully.

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākur, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur, and Śrīla Guru Mahārāj are all deeply attached to the service of Rādhārāṇī. We shall try heart and soul as possible by us to serve them, our Guru-paramparā, and through that telescopic system our service will go directly and perfectly to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is the finest and highest conception of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are so fortunate to be in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness under the guidance of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur, who are the dearest associates of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and Rādhārāṇī.



Abbreviations

- Bg: *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*
Brs: *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*
Bs: *Brahma-saṁhitā*
Cc: *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*
Gs: *Śrī Garga-saṁhitā*
Īu: *Īśopaniṣad*
Pbc: *Prema-bhakti-chandrikā*
Pp: *Padma-purāṇa*
SB: *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*

Subdivision within texts, such as the lilās of *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, have been abbreviated with numbers.

APPENDIX

Daśa-Vidha Nāmāparādha

The Ten Offences to the Holy Name

Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

*A poetic Bengali translation of the verses
listing the offences to the
Holy Name in the Padma-purāṇa.*

hari-nāma mahāmantra sarva-mantra-sāra
yādera karuṇā-bale jagate prachāra
sei nāma-parāyaṇa sādhu, mahājana
tāhādera nindā nā kariha kadāchana [1]

The Hari-nām mahāmantra is the best of all mantras and is distributed throughout the world by the mercy of the sādhus devoted to the Name. Never criticise such great souls.

vrajendra-nandana kṛṣṇa sarveśvareśvara
maheśvara ādi tāra sevana-tatpara
nāma chintāmaṇi kṛṣṇa-chaitanya-svarūpa
bheda-jñāna nā karibe līlā-guṇa-rūpa [2]

Vrajendra Nandan Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of all Lords. Śiva and all other gods are dedicated to His service. The Name is a wish-fulfilling jewel and a spiritual form of Kṛṣṇa Himself. Do not consider Kṛṣṇa's Name to be distinct from His Form, Qualities, or Pastimes.

“guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā kare bhāgyavāne”
se gurute martya-buddhi avajñādi tyaji
iṣṭa-lābha kara, nirantara nāma bhaji [3]

“The scriptures confirm that Guru is a form of Kṛṣṇa (*SB*: 11.17.27). In the form of Guru, Kṛṣṇa bestows His mercy upon the fortunate.” Give up the conception that Guru is a mortal, and all other types of disrespect, and attain your cherished goal: serving the Name eternally.

śruti, śruti-mātā-saha sātvata purāṇa
śrī-nāma-charaṇa-padma kare nīrājana
sei śruti-śāstra yebā karaye nindana
se aparadhīra saṅga karibe varjana [4]

The Vedas, their mother, Gāyatrī, and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* worship the Holy Name’s lotus feet. Reject the association of any offender who criticises these scriptures.

nāmera mahimā sarva-śāstrete vākhāne
atistuti, hena kabhu nā bhāviha mane
agastya, ananta, brahmā, śivādi satata
ye nāma-mahimā-gāthā saṅkīrtana-rata
se nāma-mahimā-sindhu ke pāibe pāra?
atistuti bale yei—sei durāchāra [5]

The Name’s glories are proclaimed in all the scriptures. Never consider such glorification to be exaggerated praise. Agastya, Ananta, Brahmā, Śiva, and so on are always devoted to chanting the Name’s glories. Who can cross the ocean of those glories? Anyone who considers them exaggerated praise is wicked.

kṛṣṇa-nāmāvali nitya golokera dhana
kalpita, prākṛta, bhāve—aparādhi-jana [6]

Kṛṣṇa’s Names are the eternal wealth of Goloka. Anyone who considers Them imaginary or mundane is an offender.

nāme sarva-pāpa-kṣaya sarva-śāstre kaya
sārā-dina pāpa kari sei bharasāya—

emata durbuddhi yāra sei aparādhī
māyā-pravañchita, duḥkha bhūñje niravadhi [7]

All the scriptures declare that the Name destroys all sin. The wicked who sin all day long in expectation of this are offenders. They are deluded by māyā and suffer perpetually.

atulya śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma pūrṇa-rasa-nidhi
tāra sama nā bhāviha śubha-karma ādi [8]

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's incomparable Name is a brimming reservoir of rasa. Chanting the Name should never be considered equal to pious worldly action (such as adhering to vows, practising renunciation, performing austerities, making sacrificial offerings, and so on).

nāme śraddhā-hina-jana—vidhātā vāñchita
tāre nāma dāne aparādha suniśchita [9]

Those who have no faith in the Name have been deceived by Providence. To give the Name to them is certainly an offence.

śuniyāo kṛṣṇa-nāma-māhātmya apāra
ye prīti-rahita, sei narādhama chhāra
ahaṁtā mamatā yāra antare bāhire
śuddha kṛṣṇa-nāma tāra kabhu nāhi sphure [10]

Those who remain devoid of love for Kṛṣṇa's Name even after hearing His boundless glories are deplorable, fallen souls. The pure Name of Kṛṣṇa never reveals Himself to those who are internally and externally ridden with egotism and possessiveness.

ei daśa aparādha kariyā varjjana
ye sujana kare harināma saṅkīrtana
apūrva śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema labhya tāre haya
nāma-prabhu tāra hṛde nitya vilasaya [11]

Great souls who avoid these ten offences and engage in Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan attain unprecedented Śrī Kṛṣṇa-prema. The Name Himself plays within their hearts eternally.





Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

About the Author

gurvābhīṣṭa-supūrakam guru-gaṇair āśīṣa-sambhūṣitam
chintyāchintya-samasta-veda-nipuṇam śrī-rūpa-panthānugam
govindābhidham ujjjvalam vara-tanuṁ bhakty anvitam sundaram
vande viśva-guruṁ cha divya-bhagavat-premṇo hi bīja-pradam

“I offer my obeisance unto Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, who perfectly fulfils his Gurudev’s most cherished desires; who is fully adorned with the blessings of his Gurudev’s associates; who is expert in all aspects of Vedic knowledge, both conceivable and inconceivable; who is the pre-eminent follower of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu’s line; whose beautiful, exalted, effulgent form is filled with devotion; who is the Guru of the world; and who distributes the seed of divine love for the Supreme Lord.”

His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj made his appearance in this world on 17 December 1929 in the holy land of Śrī Gaura Maṇḍal in a village known as Bamunpara within the Burdwan district of West Bengal, India.

Like the sun rising and inspiring lotuses to bloom, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj appeared in a brāhmaṇ family and filled the land of Śrīman Mahāprabhu with joy. His family’s ancestors were followers of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, and from his boyhood he engaged in the service of his family’s Deities, Śrī Śrī

Rādhā-Gopināth, who were installed by Nityānanda Prabhu's son Vīrachandra Prabhu. At the age of seventeen he met his Divine Master, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.

Gurvābhīṣṭa-supūrakam

He perfectly fulfils his Gurudev's most cherished desires.

Almost immediately after he arrived, Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj recognised his divine qualities and publicly declared that he would prepare him to be the future Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj's mission was to propound the glory of Śrīman Mahāprabhu according to the teachings of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu and his followers, led in modern times by Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj acted to fulfil this desire of his Gurudev in every possible way. He set up a printing press and published numerous books and magazines filled with the writings of the Rūpānuga sampradāya's Āchāryas. He led tours to the pilgrimage sites all over India that are associated with Sāraswat Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. He established the annual Śrī Nabadvīp Dhām Parikramā festival at Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, which has continued without interruption since 1948. He made the arrangements for the installation of the Maṭh's Deities Śrī Śrī Gāndharvā-Govindasundar and collected the funds needed to construct the domed Temple in which They reside. He travelled to towns and villages both near and far to spread Śrīman Mahāprabhu's Nām-saṅkīrtan-dharma and inspire souls to take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru. The countless endeavours he made in service to his Gurudev cannot be summarised.

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj also served Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj intimately as his doctor and confidant. Their relationship was so developed that many have described them as a shining example of the perfect Guru and perfect disciple. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has described himself as being "bound by affection"

to his Gurudev's feet, and Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj felt such attachment to Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj that at times he could not tolerate his separation for even a few hours.

Guru-gaṇair āśīṣa-sambhūṣitam

He is fully adorned with the blessings of his Gurudev's associates.

Over the course of the forty-two years that they lived together, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj had the fortune of serving many of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's godbrothers and observing their loving interactions with Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj.

Leading preachers like Śrīpād Bhakti Sāraṅga Goswāmī Mahārāj, Śrīpād Bhakti Prajñān Keśava Mahārāj, Śrīpād Bhakti Vichār Jājāvar Mahārāj, Śrīpād Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāj, and Śrīpād Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Mahārāj would come to Śrī Chaitanya Sārasvat Maṭh to honour Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj, and while there would always affectionately encourage Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's sister, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupād's sister Bhāvanī Didi, and Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's sister Ramā Didi, and other noble ladies, also blessed Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj during his youth.

During the late '40s and early '50s Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupād ran a preaching centre on behalf of Śrī Chaitanya Sārasvat Maṭh in Kolkata. As a young brahmachārī, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj would stay with Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj for a few months each year. Daily, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj would teach him verses from *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, and he would cook for Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj. During this time Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj also trained him as a preacher by engaging him as the first distributor of *Back to Godhead* magazine. When Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj started Śrī Chaitanya Sārasvat Maṭh's *Śrī Gauḍīya Darśana* magazine, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj wrote a letter of appreciation for his service: "[Your writing] is not only very amusing but instructive. ... In time you can become a great transcendental humourist in the art of journalism. You have

complete mercy from your Divine Master and you can depend on his blessings for your future improvement. I sincerely wish you all success. Undoubtedly you are now in the highest order of varṇāśram-dharma, but we cannot forget that you belong to the category of our affectionate sons. We cannot forget all such filial love for you, and when we see that you are improving in all respects it gladdens our heart.”

Chintyāchintya-samasta-veda-nipuṇam

He is expert in all aspects of Vedic knowledge, both conceivable and inconceivable.

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj’s command of the revealed scriptures amazed everyone who met him. From his childhood he had a remarkable memory, and when he came to the Maṭh he quickly memorised hundreds of songs and thousands of verses on his Gurudev’s order. From that time until his final days he could readily recite *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, large portions of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and countless verses from other texts. Within two or three years of joining he could lecture with more authority than many of his Guru’s godbrothers. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj’s capacity to recount and explain the scriptures pleased Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj so much that when Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj was a brahmachārī of only two years, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj gave him the title ‘Vidyā Rañjan’ [one whose knowledge delights others].

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj also later stated in his last will and testament: “Above all, he [Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj] is well-known and unanimously acclaimed as being firmly established in the philosophy of the perfect axiomatic truth of bhakti as propounded by both myself as well as by my Divine Master.”

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj wrote numerous poems and articles in Sanskrit and Bengali, which he published in the magazine he ran on behalf of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, *Śrī Gauḍīya Darśan*. His writings blend siddhānta with wit, sweetness, and humour to melt both the heart and mind. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj’s

godbrothers sometimes mistook his compositions for those of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj, which they revered as nondifferent from Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu's writings.

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's expertise also went beyond scriptural theory; he was adept at leadership, organisation, fundraising, construction, cow care, gardening, and cooking. As the Maṭh's manager, he excelled at all services by virtue of his extraordinary intelligence and could expertly put the teachings of the scriptures in practice according to time, place, and circumstance.

Śrī-Rūpa-panthānugam

He is the pre-eminent follower of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu's line.

Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj was empowered by Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura to be the self-effulgent Āchārya of the Rūpānuga sampradāya. At the time of his departure, Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura requested Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj to sing the sampradāya's anthem, *Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī Pada*. As Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's beloved disciple, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, and only Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, sang this song for him on suitable occasions. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj served Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj as a servant, a friend, and an affectionate guardian. All the stages of the relationship between Guru and disciple described in the Rūpānuga sampradāya were present between Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj and Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's service to Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj illustrates the meaning of *Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī Pada*, that the service of Śrī Rūpa (Śrī Guru) is one's life, wealth, joy, fulfilment—everything.

Govindābhidham

He is known as Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj.

In 1985 Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj conferred sannyās upon Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, giving him the name 'Bhakti Sundar Govinda'. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj once asked Śrīla Śrīdhara

Mahārāj about his name, and Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj replied, “My Deity is Govinda and my kuṇḍa is Govinda, so your name must be Govinda.”

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj established his Maṭh on the bank of Śrī Govinda Kuṇḍa and Śrī Govindasundar as its central Deity. Holding both this place and this form of the Lord most dearly within His heart, he gave the name Govinda to his dearest associate, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, who he treasured like his most precious jewel (*Govindābhidham Indirāśrita-padam hastastha-ratnādivat*).

Ujvalam vara-tanum bhakty anvitam sundaram

His beautiful, exalted, effulgent form is filled with devotion.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj has the deepest esteem for Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. He remarked, “Actually in many ways he is more qualified than I am.” Also: “He came [to me] with some previous wealth”; “He is a natural paramahaṁsa”; “His service never leaves the nirguṇa plane”; and “If you get to know him more intimately, you will come to understand what sort of transcendental character he has.”

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj created the atmosphere of Vraja Dhām wherever he went. His seemingly simple, yet deeply loving and profound personality can only be understood as a manifestation of the aprākṛta realm. His seniors, peers, and followers all marvelled at the beauty of his form and the sweetness and strength he exhibited as he related naturally and intimately with all. His captivating affection awakened the dormant spirit of devotion from within the hearts of thousands and forcibly inspired them to dedicate their lives to the service of Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga.

Viśva-gurum

He is the Guru of the world.

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupād requested Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj to tour the world with him in the mid '70s to

preach to his disciples. Because Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj was Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's personal doctor and Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's health was unstable at that time, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj declined. At that time both Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj and Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj prophesied that in the future he would tour the world and inspire their followers on the path of pure devotion.

In the early '80s, when Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj's disciples and admirers, who were mostly Westerners, started to frequent Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, seeking guidance and shelter, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj did not readily accept them because of his advanced age and ill health. It was only when Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj promised to look after them following Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's passing that Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj sheltered and initiated them.

Following the disappearance of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj in 1988, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, as the President-Sevāite-Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, toured the world twenty-four times over the course of eighteen years. He oversaw the opening of over 100 centres on six continents and the distribution of over 350 publications in twenty languages. He crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries and inspired thousands of people of all ages by communicating with them heart-to-heart. He would often recall with a beaming smile, "The sun never sets on Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh."

Divya-Bhagavat-premṇo hi bīja-pradam

He distributes the seed of divine love for the Supreme Lord.

In 1986 Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj fulfilled the desire he had cherished for almost forty years and established Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj as the President-Sevāite-Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh and all of its centres worldwide. Thereafter Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj initiated the sincere seekers who approached Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh into the service of Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga. Initiation is compared to the planting of a seed, the seed of divine love, within the heart. As seeds must be

nourished and protected in order to bear fruit, so Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj affectionately guided the disciples of Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj, and himself in their practising lives. His wisdom, experience, character, and charm inspired deep faith within all, and his instructions dispelled all inauspiciousness. He encouraged everyone, regardless of the position they were in, and emphasised chastity, sincerity, love, and affection. He showed by example that serving Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇava and practising Śrīman Mahāprabhu's saṅkīrtan-dharma is the real path towards the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja Dhām. His foremost advice was to adhere to Śrīman Mahāprabhu's formula for chanting the Holy Name: to be humble, be tolerant, and give honour to others without expecting it for oneself.

Beyond

His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj departed from this world on 27 March 2010. Since then his Samādhi Mandir, the Temple of Love and Affection, has been erected in his honour at Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh Nabadwīp, and his faithful followers continue to serve Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga according to his instructions.

Before his departure, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj declared Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj to be his Successor as the Sevāite-President-Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, and appointed Āchāryas from Western countries to lead the development of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh worldwide.

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's divine grace continues to shine brightly in the hearts of his sincere followers and through his divine instructions.

Summarising the glory of His Divine Grace is an impossible task, yet Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj himself has done so in a poem he wrote in his youth, in which he expressed his aim in life.

Svarūpodbodhana

Awakening the True Self

Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

Originally published in *Śrī Gauḍīya Darśan*:
Volume 1, Issue 4, Tuesday, 15 November 1955

āmi guru-dāsa—nahi anya

I am a servant of Guru—nothing else.

āmi kariba bhramana chaudda-bhuvana
svarūpe sabāya kari' udbodhana
hāte la'ye yāba premera niśāna
dharāba svarūpa chihna [1]

I will travel throughout the fourteen worlds awakening everyone to their true self. I will go with the banner of divine love in hand and cause everyone to recognise the sign of the true self.

āmi chhāḍāba sakale sarva-dharma
kariba chūrṇa jñāna o karma
rachiba viśāla bhakati-harmya
guru-dāsa nahi anya [2]

I will induce everyone to abandon all religions. I will demolish the pursuits of liberation and worldly enjoyment. I will construct a grand palace of devotion. I am a servant of Guru—nothing else.

āmi bhāṅgiba chhanda lāgāba dhanda
vāchālera mukha kariba banda
mṛtyure dhari dāniba śanda
nāhi kapaṭatā dainya [3]

I will break the customs, bemuse everyone, shut the mouths of the garrulous, hold back death, and distribute good fortune to all. I will do so humbly, without deceit.

sei mahābhāratera mahān parva
yāhāra prakāśe hayechhe kharva
dekhāba tāhāra asīma garva
kaitave kari khinna [4]

I will show the unlimited glory of He whose manifestation brought the great portion of the Mahābhārata to an end, and efface all duplicity.

āmi bājāba jagate vijaya-ḍaṅkā
ghuchāba sakala dvandva-śaṅkā
bahāba viśve bhakati-gaṅgā
tuṣī' hari labhi puṇya [5]

I will sound the kettle-drums of victory throughout the world, dispel all quarrel and fear, and cause the Ganges of pure devotion to flow throughout the universe. Satisfying the Lord in this way, I will attain good fortune.

āmi āryānārya mlechchha sabāya
lāgāiba ba'le kṛṣṇa-sevāya
chaḍāiba sabe golokera nā'ya
pṛthvī kariba sūṇya [6]

I will forcibly engage all—the noble, the ignoble, and the barbarous—in Kṛṣṇa's service. I will board them all in the boat to Goloka and empty the earth.

āmi chālāba sakale guru-pada bale
vādāma tuliba hari-bola bale
mahāmāyā-vinī chhalanā chhalile
kariba chinna-bhinna [7]

I will guide them all by the power of my Guru's feet. I will hoist the boat's sails by the power of chanting 'Hari'. If Mahāmāyā presents any illusion, I shall cut it asunder.

āmi chinmaya-dhāme chālāiba tarī
chatur-bhuja habe yata nara-nārī
sthāvara jaṅgama sabe labhi hari
habe deva deva mānya [8]

I will drive the boat to the spiritual world, and all the men and women will become four-armed. All moving and inert beings will attain Hari and become worshippable to the demigods.

sabe eka parichaye dibe parichaya
labhibe svarūpa amṛta-maya
pūjibe śrī-hari dibe jaya jaya
nehāri' ha-iba dhanya [9]

Everyone will identify with the same identity, realise their immortal self, worship Śrī Hari, and call out, 'Jay! Jay!' Seeing this, I will be satisfied.

āmi guru-dāsa nahi anya

I am a servant of Guru—nothing else.

Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

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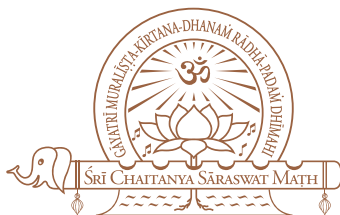
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Om Tat Sat



Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh

The Home of Pure Devotion



“Displaying the victory flag of its celebrated glory, the great Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh shines near the bank of the Ganges in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām within Śrī Koladwīp, Śrī Gupta Govardhan. There the followers of the conception coming from Śrī Gaurāṅga to Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur, who eternally aspire to serve Śrī Guru, Śrī Gaurāṅga, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda in the line of Śrī Rūpa, chant Śrī Gaurāṅga’s glory.”

Stating his ideal in this way, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj founded Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh in 141₉. He was joined by his beloved disciple Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj in 741₉. Together they created a shelter for surrendered souls to dedicate their lives to the cultivation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava siddhānta, which may be summarised as follows: Kṛṣṇa is supreme and all fulfilment is found in Him; the soul is Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant; pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa is the way; and love for Kṛṣṇa is the goal.

Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj and his followers, led by Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj, have expanded Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh throughout India and around the world by publicising the teachings of the Rūpānuga sampradāya’s Āchāryas, establishing centres where they are practised, and engaging everyone in Śrī Hari-nām-saṅkīrtan, the congregational chanting of the Lord’s Holy Names.

Valuing quality over quantity, substance over form, depth over breadth, sincerity over recognition, truth over persuasion, beauty over power, and sacrifice over acquisition, Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh is the home of those who idealise union in separation from the Lord and aspire only to relish the prapanna-jīvanāmṛta, the nectar in the life of a surrendered soul.

निगमकल्पतरुर्गलितं फलं
शुकमुखादमृतद्रवसंयुतम् ।
पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं
मुहरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ॥

“O devotees! O relishers of rasa! Until your death in this world constantly drink the rasa of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the ripened fruit of the wish-fulfilling tree of the Vedas enriched with nectar from the mouth of Śukadev Goswāmī.”

