

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,

śṛṇvantu 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. *Śṛṇvantu 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

(*Kaṭha-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 rarājoḍupaś chhannaḥ sva-jyotsnā-rājitair ghanaiḥ
aham-matya 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 chidābhāsa, 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 Śrīdhara 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 kuṇṭha 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 mūrti 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 Ṭhākura tried to understand why Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja 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-bhāṣya* 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 Ṭhākura with this verse of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī. Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravartī Ṭhākura was so learned, but he could not understand this point made by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja 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 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī explains here that the Kāma-gāyatrī-mantram is Kṛṣṇa-svarūpa: 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 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī’s expression,



Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī
writing Śrī Chaitanya-
charitāmṛta on the bank of
Rādhā Kuṇḍa.

“*Trijaṅgaṭ 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 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja 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 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī says *trijaṅgaṭ 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 Temple 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-prakāśaṁ 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, “*Vikṛīḍitaṁ Vraja-vadhūbhir idaṁ 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 emphasise that Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from Viṣṇu so that no one would conceive of Kṛṣṇa’s rāsa-līlā in a mundane way.

vikṛīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir
idaṁ cha viṣṇoḥ
śraddhānvito ’nuśṛṇuyād
atha varṇayed yaḥ
bhaktiṁ parāṁ bhagavati
pratilabhya kāmāṁ
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.”

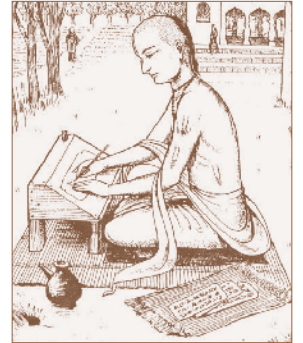
From general to specific

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.

ārādhya bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kāchid upāsanaṁ vraja-vadhū-vargeṇā va kalpitā
śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalam premā pumartho mahān
śrī-chaitanya-mahāprabhor matam idaṁ tatrādaraḥ 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 worshipping 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
bhedābhedha-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanam śuddha-bhaktim

(Daśa-mūla-tattva-niryāsa)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura 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, "*Bahūnāṁ janmanāṁ 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 svarāt
tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ
tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo ’mṛṣā
dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ param 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 Paraṁ 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.

muktiṁ 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 Śiva, “Go and preach māyāvād.”

**māyāvādam asach-chhāstraṁ prachchhannaṁ bauddham uchyate
mayaiva vihitam devi kalau brāhmaṇa-mūrtinā**

(Padma-purāṇa: Uttara-khaṇḍa, 25.7)

rājan patir gurur alaṁ
bhavatām yadūnām
daivam priyaḥ kula-patiḥ
kva cha kiṅkaro vaḥ
astv evam aṅga bhagavān
bhajatām mukundo
muktiṁ dadāti karhichit
sma na bhakti-yogam

(SB: 5.6.18)

[Śukadev Goswāmī says
to Mahārāj Parīkṣit:]

“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 Purī 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-bhinna-
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

(Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā: 5.40)

Brahma, or Brahmaloḥka, is the plane of divine light beyond all the material universes which is described by the Upaniṣads. Many jñānīs 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 paramātmetye 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 Brahmaloḥa, is Vaikuṇṭhaloḥa, the variegated spiritual world.

jyotir-abhyantare rūpaṁ atulaṁ śyāma-sundaram

(Nārada-pañcharātra)

If you enter into the glow of Brahmaloḥa, you will see it is actually the effulgence of Kṛṣṇaloḥa, 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 worshippingable. 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 sukr̥tam uchyate iti
yad vai tat sukr̥tam 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 breathe? 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. *Aṇor aṇīyān 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 tāms 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 Vaikuṇṭhaloka: Goloka Vṛndāvan, where fully auspicious happiness exists eternally.

muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ

(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 bhinnāṁsāmś cha jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāṁś cha bhāvāt
bhedābedha-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanam śuddha-bhaktim**

(Daśa-mūla-tattva-niryāsa)

When the jīva-souls are *prakṛti-kavalitān*, covered by illusory matter, they live apart from the Lord. And when the jīva-souls are *vimuktāṁś 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 kṛpāṇāḥ 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 sukr̥ta-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. *Yajño 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 pāṁtha 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 bhavāṛjuna
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 tattvaṁ 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 paramaṁ 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 māṁ 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 Ṭhākura, 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 Ṭhākura

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 tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo 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 bhaktyā 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 nityābhiyuktānām 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 bhulī' 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-maithunāṇi 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 tvāṁ 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 śuchaḥ*). 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 pāṛtho 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 cow-herd 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-vīrala-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
pravṛttiṁ cha nivṛttiṁ cha śrotavyaṁ śrutam eva cha
mām ekam eva śaraṇam ātmānaṁ 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 Ṭhākura explained the word *utsṛjya* in this way. I heard from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj that Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura used a word in the Oriya 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. *Pravṛttiṁ cha nivṛttiṁ 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 Ātmānaṁ 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 suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte

(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-paṅkair
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 śāśvach-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 Ṭhākura 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, *kṣīpram bhavati dharmātmā śāśvach-chhāntim 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 hṛdi 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 toyaṁ 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 kiṁ 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, ārati, 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.”

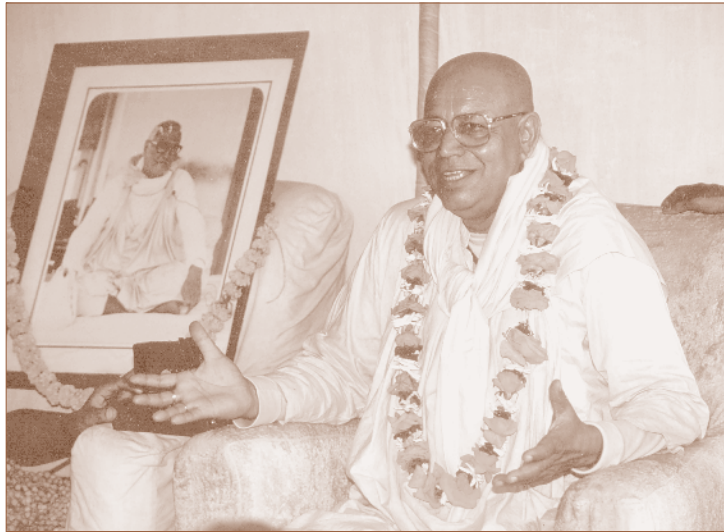
The Lord was not happy to be with someone who was simply following the rules and regulations of the Vedas. What the brāhmaṇ did was not wrong; it was correct according to the

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, *māṛjara-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.

**krṣṇa āmāya pāle rākhe jāna sarva-kāla
ātma-nivedana-dainye ghuchāo jañjāla**

(Śrī Prema-vivarta: 7.7)

Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura 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 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 param 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 gr̥hastha, 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

smarantaḥ smārayantaś cha
mitho 'ghaughā-haraṁ harim
bhaktyā sañjātayā bhaktyā
bibhraty utpulaḥ 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.”

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

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 Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāja, have tried to give the conditioned souls inspiration to surrender. This is the primary purpose of their teachings.

When Śrīla Guru Mahārāja 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 Mahārāja 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
rakṣiṣyātīti viśvāso goptrtve varaṇam tathā
ātma-nikṣepa kārpaṇye ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ
(*Śrī Sāvata-tantra*: 73)

Śrīla Guru Mahārāja 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 Mahārāja 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 Mahārāja
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Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāja
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Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam.*



bhagavad-bhaktitaḥ sarvaṁ ity utsṛjya vidher api
kaiṅkaryaṁ kṛṣṇa-pādaikāśrayatvaṁ śaraṇāgatiḥ
(Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam: 1.35)

Here Śrīla Guru Mahārāja expresses that śaraṇāgati means faith that *Bhagavad-bhaktitaḥ sarvaṁ*, 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 worshippingable 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 sthīratarā 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 sarvaṁ*).

Then Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said *ity utsrjya vidher api kainikaryam*: 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 kainkaryam* 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-bhāvitah
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-bhaktiṭaḥ sarvam ity utsrjya vidher api
kainkaryam 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
abhayaṁ sarvadā tasmai dadāmy etad vrataṁ 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
 Kālīya'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 'Govinda'. 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
 carelessly protect him.

ātma-samarpaṇe gelā abhimāna
 nāhi karabū nija rakṣā-vidhāna
 tuyā dhana jāni' tuhū rākhabī nātha!
 pālya go-dhana jāni kari' tuyā sātha
 charāobi mādhaba! yāmuna-tīre
 vaṁsī bājāota ḍakabī dhīre
 agha-baka mārata rakṣā vidhāna
 karabī sadā tuhū gokula-kāna!
 rakṣā karabī tuhū niśchaya jāni
 pāna karabū hāma yāmuna-pāni
 kāliya-dokha karabī vināśā
 śodhabī nadī-jala bāḍāobi āśā
 piyata dāvānala rakhabī moya
 'gopāla' 'govinda' nāma tava hoyā
 surapati durmati-nāśa vichāri'
 rākhabī varṣaṇe giri-vara-dhāri!
 chaturānana karaba yava chori
 rakṣā karabī moye gokula-hari!
 bhakati-vinoda tuyā gokula-dhana
 rākhabī 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 Ṭhākura we get the gist of all the scriptures. If all the scriptures disappeared from this mundane world but Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura'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 Ṭhākura 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 rākhabi 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 dūragah
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 Prabhupāda 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.

om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śālākayā
chakṣur unmilitaṁ 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 vaikuṇṭha 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 Vaikuṇṭha! 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 Śaṅkar 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.”

Through this verse we can understand the fundamental position of the Lord's prasādam, how it becomes transcendental through a connection with the Lord in the spirit of devotion. This is a higher conception and platform of spiritual life than the idea that everything is transcendental simply because it comes from Brahma or exists within Brahma.

Controlling the senses by Kṛṣṇa's mercy

Because it is not so easy to understand the transcendental position of the Lord's remnants and honour them properly we recite a verse spoken by Nārada Ṛṣi whenever we honour prasādam:

mahāprasāde govinde nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave
svalpa-puṇya-vatām rājan viśvāso naiva jāyate

(Mahābhārata)

“Those who do not have sufficient sukṛti [spiritual fortune] cannot faithfully honour mahāprasādam, Lord Govinda, the Holy Name, or the Vaiṣṇavas.”

At the time when I joined the Mission of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, this Śrī Chaitanya Sārasvat Maṭh, everyone would chant this verse as well as a poem of Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura before they took prasādam. Śrīla Bhakti Vinod Ṭhākura composed a very simple poem that explains the divine position of prasādam very perfectly. It is very short, but it is an extremely valuable composition for us. It is a Bengali poem, but everyone in the Maṭh would chant it before they took prasādam as though it was a Vedic mantram. Everyone would chant this poem, offer their daṇḍavat praṇāms to the mahāprasādam, and then eat with the remembrance that they were not actually eating but serving the Lord by honouring His remnants.

śarīra avidyā jāla, jaḍendriya tāhe kāla,
jīve phele viṣaya-sāgare
tā'ra madhye jihvā ati, lobha-maya sudurmati,
tā'ke jetā kathina samsāre

The body is a net of illusion, and the material senses are one's enemies; they throw the soul into the ocean of mundanity. Among the senses, the tongue is the most voracious and wicked; it is very difficult to conquer the tongue in this world.

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 Ṭhākura 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 Ṭhākura 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 Ṭhākura 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’

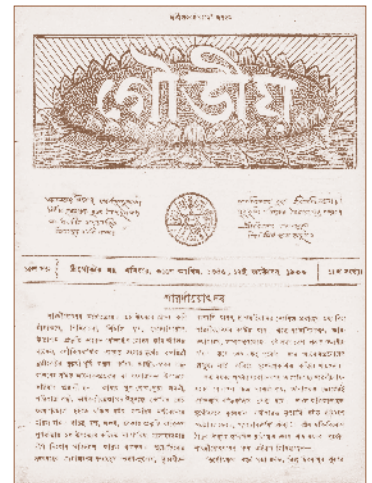
(Gītāvalī: Prasād-sevāya, 3.3)

“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 *Gauḍīya* to give everyone proper consciousness about this transcendental practising process:



The Gauḍīya, Śrī Gauḍīya
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 nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu
veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān parityāge ’py anīśvaraḥ
tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ śraddhālur dṛḍha-niśchayaḥ
juṣamāṇaś cha tān kāmān duḥkhodarkāṁś cha garhayan**

proktena bhakti-yogena bhajato māsakṛṇ muneh
kāṁā hṛdayā 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. *Kāṁā hṛdayā 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? *Duḥkḥodarkāṁś 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*’ *sādhū-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 worshippable 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 dṛṣṭe ’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.”

Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākur understood everything about the position of the conditioned souls. He presented these teachings of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu in a very condensed form to make the essential nature of transcendental service very clear to us. He wrote,

“If any apparently material thing or desire can be connected with the Lord through devotion, or is favourable to His service, then it is a mistaken illusion to think it is mundane or useless, and renounce it. We must live without attachment to anything *and* connect everything to the Lord, feeling that the Lord is the actual proprietor of everything and we are His servitors.”

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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 Ṭhākura showed us this mood. He prayed to the Lord,

tomāra saṁsāre, kariba sevana,
nāhiba phalera bhāgi
tava sukha yāhe, kariba yatana,
ha’ye pade anurāgi
(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, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha, or sannyās. 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 Ṭhākura'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
শ্রীশ্রীরাধাগিরিদ্বারীজীর প্রকট



Translation of the inscription: 'Taken on the appearance day festival of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gīrīdhārī in the home of Śrīpād Sakhī Charaṇ Rāy Bhakti Vijay Prabhu, 13 Āśvīn 1364 (30 September 1947)'. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj is seated in the third chair from the right. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj is seated on the right holding a mṛdaṅga.



*Sanātān Prabhu, 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 Prabhu. 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. Prabhupāda Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura 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 Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja, and my Guru Mahārāja. 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 tām**

(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 vandanaṁ dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 7.5.23)

Śravaṇ means hearing Kṛṣṇa-kathā [glorification of Kṛṣṇa] from a Sādhū, 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

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 Vaikuṇṭha, the Lord's transcendental abode. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself even says,

nāhaṁ tiṣṭhāmi vaikuṇṭhe yogināṁ hṛdayena cha
mad-bhaktāḥ yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada

(Padma-purāṇa: Uttara-khaṇḍa, 92.21-22)

"I am not really present in Vaikuṇṭhaloka 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.



Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya
Mahārāj leading kīrtan in
Śrī Ekachakrā Dhām.

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 hr̥ṣīkeśo 'yaṁ maṅgalāyatano hariḥ
viṣṇūchchāraṇa-mātreṇa kṛṣṇasya smaranād-dhareḥ
sarva vighnāni naśyanti maṅgalaṁ syān na saṁsayah

(Bṛhad-Viṣṇu-purāṇa)

“The Supreme Lord, who has many Names, like Viṣṇu, Madhusūdan, Hr̥ṣīkeś, 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 parigītaṁ
śraddhayā helayā vā
bhr̥gu-vara nara-mātraṁ
tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma

(Skanda-purāṇa)

“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-nāma-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-Nārada-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 pānaṁ 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 Saraswatī 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 dāsyā-rasa, sakhyā-rasa, vātsalyā-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 udeti bhavato
nāma svarūpa-dvayaṁ
pūrvasmāt param eva hanta
karuṇaṁ tatrāpi jānīmahe
yas tasmin vihitāparādha-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 kāmśāre hare vaiṣṇava 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 worshipping 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 Vedavyāsa. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu has prayed,

nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-mālā-
dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-paṅkajānta
ayi mukta-kulair upāśyamānaṁ
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.

tuṇḍe tāṇḍavīnī ratīm vitanute
tuṇḍāvalī-labdhave
karṇa-kroḍha-kaḍamvīnī ghaṭayate
karṇārbudebhyaḥ spṛhām
chetaḥ prāṅgaṇa-saṅginī vijayate
sarvendriyāṇām kṛtīm
no jāne janitā-kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ
kṛṣṇeti varṇadvayi

(Cc: Anṭya, 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 Kṛṣṇa."

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
 gatiṁ iha na bhavattaḥ kāchid anyā mamāsti
 nipatatu śata-koṭīṁ 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! dayāṁ 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 pān 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-parah
parama-śochyatamo na cha mat-parah
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

yena 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.

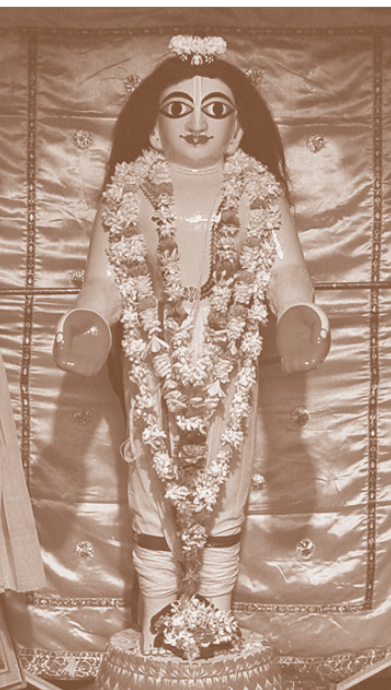
You can live anywhere in any position. It is not a question of your situation or lifestyle. It is only necessary that you remember Kṛṣṇa and try to serve Kṛṣṇa. Then the whole illusory environment will leave you, and you will immediately be promoted to life in the transcendental service world where you 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-vitarāṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varadhanam 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-sākṣātkār: 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 smaraṇe na kālāḥ
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 mantras 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 vaikunṭho viṣṭaraśravāḥ
dāmodaro hṛṣīkeśaḥ keśavo mādhabaḥ svabhūḥ
daityāriḥ puṇḍarīkākṣo govindo garuḍadhvajah
pītāmbaro 'chyutaḥ śārṅgī viṣvakṣeno janārdanaḥ
upendra indrāvarajaś chakrapāṇiś chaturbhujah
padmanābho madhuripur vāsudevas trivikramaḥ
devakī-nandanaḥ śauriḥ śrī-patiḥ puruṣottamaḥ
vanamālī bali-dhvaṁsī kaṁsārātir adhokṣajah

(*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 smaraṇe 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,

etādṛṣī 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 hṛdayaṁ batedaṁ
yad gr̥hyamāṇair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ
na vikriyetātha yadā vikāro
netre jalaṁ 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-mūlaṁ 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-āparādh, 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:

ṭṭṇād 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 yatrādharmāś 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 śravaṇ, 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 ahaituki-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).”